

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Our Live Coverage Of St. John Festival Activities Has Been Cut Short Because Of Poor Internet Service

VIC News / **Published On July 01, 2017 09:55 PM /**

Staff **July 01, 2017**



ST. JOHN -- The Virgin Islands Consortium had agreed to stream live on its Facebook platform this year's St. John Festival Village, j'ouvert and parade activities, and situated its employees, along with hosts who were set to conduct interviews throughout the events, on St. John.

But the company's founder, Ernice Gilbert, early Saturday decided to cut short the effort, as the internet, provided by Viya has been unable to maintain bandwidth that would see The Consortium providing a service to Virgin Islanders and diasporas alike that would, at the least, be watchable.

The Consortium had requested about 100 Mbps upload speeds and 50 Mbps down. Viya said the most it could do is about 40 Mbps up, and so The Consortium requested that amount for Thursday, after Wednesday night's internet service [fell below 1 Mbps upload speeds](#), forcing the company to shutdown the feed altogether and delete all videos that had been live-streamed, because of the extremely poor quality.

But on Thursday, things did not change; the internet speeds continued to drop, and the company was again unable to provide live coverage of the festivities. By then, The Virgin Islands Consortium had decided to cut short the effort, but Mr. Gilbert, along with team members, determined that a final attempt would be made.

On Friday night, while the service was poor, our equipment -- built to work on minimal to abundant bandwidth -- managed to stream [most of the Xpress Band's performance](#). But by the time [popular Bajan artist Alison Hinds](#) came on stage, the internet failed again, bringing The Consortium's live stream coverage to an end.

"We decided that it was better to cut short our coverage instead of providing a service that would be substandard," Mr. Gilbert said. He revealed that he had spoken to a Viya executive multiple times on Thursday trying to resolve the matter, but although the executive attempted to allay the problem by placing a Viya employee in St. John on call to help with technical issues, that did not help.

"Continuing the live stream with such poor internet would not only hurt our company, it would hurt the St. John Festival Committee as well. We believe we made the right call," he added.

Mr. Gilbert said finding reliable, mobile internet in the territory for the type of service his company is in the early stages of offering, has proved difficult. Although the Virgin Islands boasts some of the fastest internet speeds in the world with Global Crossing -- a former Virgin Islands Next Generation Network CEO [once spoke of St. Croix as being the Caribbean's Silicon Valley](#) -- the territory is still far behind in providing affordable, high-speed internet to its residents. Currently, Viya's [highest residential offering](#) gives 100 Mbps down and 10 Mbps up for \$150. A relatively new company, Orbitel, headquartered in Gallows Bay, St. Croix, has as its highest offering 100 Mbps for \$100. The difference with Orbitel, however, is that it offers the 100 Mbps up and down.

Mr. Gilbert also expressed regret, and apologized for the inconvenience the issue has caused. "We understand that Virgin Islanders at home and abroad are looking for live coverage of the festivities," he said. Mr. Gilbert said those looking for live coverage of the parade, which takes place on Tuesday, will find great coverage from WTJX.

And he said The Consortium is currently looking into ways of solving the internet problem. "Most of the world, especially Millennials and Generation X consume their video content over the internet. It's far past time that local companies improve on their services, while making them more affordable," he concluded.