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Bryan to Call for Transferral of WICO Ownership to Port Authority During SoTA, Allowing WICO to Control All Cruise Ship Ports in USVI (Update)

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Wonder of the Seas, an Oasis Class Ship By. ROYAL CARIBBEAN

Updated at 5:35 a.m., Tues. Jan., 26: *As reported by the Consortium, Governor Bryan called for the unification of WICO and the V.I. Port Authority in his State of the Territory Address Monday night.*

Original Story: Governor Albert Bryan during his State of the Territory Address tonight will call for ownership of the West Indian Company (WICO) to be transferred to the V.I. Port Authority, a move that would see WICO controlling all cruise ship ports of call as part of the transfer.

That's according to Mr. Bryan's 38-page SoTA, which will air live tonight at 7:00 p.m. (watch it live on VI Consortium's website and Facebook platforms).

In his address, Mr. Bryan is expected to say that the current climate is "ideal" for a merger, pointing to economic headwinds WICO faces as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. March will make a full year since a cruise ship docked at WICO.

"WICO has been severely impacted by the lack of cruise activity and has reduced staff, salaries, and hours of operation," Mr. Bryan is expected to say, according to a copy of the SoTA document obtained by the Consortium. "They are quickly approaching a financial wall that is catalyzing this need for consolidation. WICO is currently a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Public Finance Authority. We are proposing that this ownership interest be transferred to the Port Authority and that WICO be given full responsibility for the management of all cruise ports in the Territory."

Mr. Bryan's speech adds, "This makes sense and would create synergy in our efforts to promote the Virgin Islands as one destination in the cruise industry. We have begun the discussions about the most efficient way to make the transfer and will be executing this long-awaited merger. The new structure will be efficient and finally allow the Virgin Islands to negotiate all three major cruise ports in both districts from one unified vantage point."

The governor's plan to push merger during his SoTA tonight will not be the first; Mr. Bryan has long supported the merger, but in December 2019 — a few months before the pandemic took hold — he said his administration would no longer push a merger because there were other projects at both entities that took precedence at the time. For VIPA, the [Schooner Bay Channel](#) in Gallows Bay and the north birth at Crown Bay; for WICO, the Long Bay Landing Project, which was stymied by [a lawsuit filed by Yacht Haven](#).