

The Virgin Islands Consortium

BVI House of Assembly Reconvenes to Address Residency and Belongership Status of 688 People

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Although it was [dissolved](#) on March 10 to pave way for the general election later this month, the British Virgin Islands House of Assembly reconvened on Monday for an emergency sitting.

It was discovered during a recent audit of the territory's fast-track program that hundreds of applicants had been simultaneously granted residency and Belongership status. By law, a person must be a legal resident of the BVI for at least a year before becoming eligible to apply for Belongership.

Monday's House sitting was to validate the status of the 688 people who were subject to this administrative snafu, which arose out of what Premier Dr. Natalio Wheatley called "an honest oversight."

During the session, Kye Rhymer blamed the previous Attorney General for the error. "The Cabinet was initially legally advised that these persons qualified who were then approved. The Attorney General has recently advised that this initial advice was not correct."

Prior to the sitting, Governor John Rankin had said that because many of those affected are registered to vote in the April 24 election, it was imperative to regularize their status immediately so as to not risk subjecting election results to challenges because of questions surrounding voter eligibility.

"Accordingly, I believe it's important that the House of Assembly and the wider public were made aware of this matter and that the House of Assembly be invited to consider the best way of resolving it," Governor Rankin said.

After a sitting that lasted over 10 and a half hours, the Immigration and Passport Amendment Bill (2023) was passed with no "Nays" heard from the floor.