

Government Submits Self-Assessment Report To Complete COI Implementation

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The Government of the Virgin Islands has formally submitted its Self-Assessment Report on the Implementation of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) Recommendations, signifying the completion of a critical phase of governance reform. Premier, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley announced during a press conference on Friday, 9 May.

The Premier confirmed that the report was approved by Cabinet on 30 April, tabled in the House of Assembly on 6th May, and submitted to the United Kingdom Minister for the Overseas Territories on 8th May. The submission, which complements the Governor's Final Review and other inputs, will inform a final decision on lifting the Order in Council.

Describing the development as a "significant milestone" and a moment of "Virgin Islands pride", Premier Wheatley stated "Today, I can announce with a strong sense of Virgin Islands pride that we have submitted the Government of the Virgin Islands Self-Assessment Report on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the COI Report."

The Premier also acknowledged the Final Review of COI Implementation presented that morning by His Excellency Governor Daniel Pruce, describing it as "balanced" and affirming that Government and Governor remain aligned on the majority of the key reforms:

"I thank Governor Pruce for what I believe is a balanced report in which we are aligned for the most part," Dr. Wheatley noted.

Governor Pruce's Final Review, along with the Self-Assessment Report, FCDO analysis of specific recommendations, and public submissions, now form the comprehensive body of work to be assessed by the UK Government. The outcome will determine whether the Order in Council being held in reserve, which threatened partial suspension of the Territory's Constitution in 2022, will be lifted.

Premier Wheatley also confirmed that all 48 recommendations under the Framework Agreement have been implemented, except for two that require external constitutional or judicial action: judge-only trials, which require a constitutional amendment, and the Criminal Procedure Rules, which must be

addressed by the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court.

The Premier highlighted major legislative milestones, including enacting the Crown Land Management Act, 2024, and the upcoming enforcement of the Immigration and Passport (Amendment) Act, 2024 and the Public Assistance (Amendment) Act, 2024, both of which will come into force on 30th June 2025. Supporting regulations are currently being finalised by Cabinet.

“We are 100% committed to ongoing reforms as doing so strengthens the self-government mandate in our Constitution,” said Premier Wheatley.

Premier Wheatley expressed optimism to the House of Assembly last week that the Order in Council would be lifted, saying “We have done the work, now let us look forward to brighter days for our beloved Virgin Islands.” Governor Daniel Pruce in his Final Review concluded that, “At this time, I do not judge those additional powers are necessary.”

Reflecting on the three-year reform journey since the publication of the COI Report in April 2022, Premier Wheatley extended heartfelt thanks to public servants, political colleagues, recommendations reviewers and oversight bodies for their tireless contributions.

Special recognition was given to the Permanent Secretaries, the Attorney General, the Cabinet Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the COI Implementation Unit, and the Governance Reform Delivery Manager and their respective teams for their unwavering commitment throughout the process.

Premier Wheatley also acknowledged the Governor, his team, and the UK Government for their collaboration and support.

“I also wish to thank His Excellency the Governor and his team and the United Kingdom Government for the collaboration in implementing the recommendations,” he said. Above all, the Premier thanked the people of the Virgin Islands for their patience and trust.

The Government of the Virgin Islands is committed to transparency, accountability, and good governance. The Government aims to build a stronger, more resilient

Virgin Islands while advancing the Territory's aspirations for greater self-governance and prosperity through sustained public sector transformation and a comprehensive legislative reform agenda.

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