GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

STATEMENT

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Statement By Premier and Minister of Finance Honourable Natalio D. Wheatley on Consumer Protection

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Madam Speaker,

I rise today to inform this Honourable House and the people of the Virgin Islands that His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Daniel Pruce, has assented to the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act, 2026, thereby completing an important legislative process that strengthens protections for consumers across our Territory.

Madam Speaker, while this legislation is important, at its heart this is not simply about laws, regulations or government administration. It is about people.

It is about the mother standing in the supermarket aisle trying to stretch a paycheck a little further.

It is about the pensioner worrying whether rising prices will leave enough at the end of the month for medicine and daily necessities.

It is about working families who are doing everything right, working hard, paying their bills, and yet still feeling the pressure of higher food prices, higher shipping costs, and the rising cost of everyday living.

As a Government, we understand those concerns because we hear them every day. We know that many families continue to face challenges despite signs of economic growth and recovery. We know that when the cost of basic goods rises, it affects household budgets, family well-being and peace of mind.

That is why this Government has not stood on the sidelines.

We have introduced electricity relief measures. We have reduced customs duties on selected essential goods. We have lowered wharfage and container-related charges. We have adjusted customs valuation arrangements to reduce the cost of bringing goods into the Territory. These measures were designed with one objective in mind: to put more money back into the pockets of Virgin Islands families and provide relief during a period of global economic uncertainty.

But Madam Speaker, the people rightly expect that when Government takes action to reduce costs, those benefits should be felt where it matters most, at the checkout counter, in household budgets and in the everyday lives of our people.

Government relief should not stop at the port. It should reach the people.

That principle is one of the reasons why this Amendment Act is so important.

The Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act, 2026 strengthens the framework needed to ensure that consumer interests remain at the centre of decision-making. It clarifies responsibility for administration of the Act, strengthens implementation mechanisms and establishes the Consumer Affairs Tribunal to provide an independent avenue for the resolution of disputes.

For ordinary consumers, this means greater confidence that complaints can be heard, concerns can be addressed and rights can be protected.

For businesses, it provides clarity, accountability and a fair process.

For the Territory as a whole, it supports a marketplace built on trust, fairness and transparency.

Madam Speaker, one of the most significant provisions of this Amendment Act is the expansion of the regulation-making powers relating to essential goods. This creates the legal framework that would allow Government, where necessary, to act to ensure that concessions and relief measures intended for consumers are reflected in the prices they pay.

Let me be clear. The Virgin Islands remains committed to a free-market economy. Responsible businesses remain vital partners in our development, and my Government values the contribution they make every day.

However, we also have a responsibility to ensure that when Government provides relief on behalf of the people, the people themselves benefit from that relief.

This legislation gives Government the tools to protect that principle in a measured, balanced and responsible way.

Madam Speaker, the people of the Virgin Islands want more than promises. They want practical action that improves their daily lives.

This Government has been listening and putting the necessary measures in place.

We have acted to reduce the burden of rising costs. We have invested in relief measures. And now, through the implementation of the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act, 2026, we are further strengthening the protections available to consumers and families throughout this Territory.

At a time when many households continue to face economic pressures, this Government remains committed to standing with the people, advocating for fairness, and ensuring that the benefits of our policies reach the households, families and communities they are intended to serve.

This legislation sends a clear message: the people of the Virgin Islands are not on their own. Their government sees their challenges, understands their concerns and remains committed to improving their quality of life.

That is the work we will continue to do.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Additional Documents or Media

- consumer_protection_act_updated.pdf