



Press Release

TOURIST BOARD TO MAKE NEW TAXI TARIFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Road Town, Tortola, October 5, 2009 – Chairman of the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board, Myron Walwyn, is encouraging taxi drivers in the Territory to continue to exercise patience as discussions are ongoing about a new transportation tariff.

Walwyn's appeal comes as the tourism industry in the Caribbean prepares to begin its 2009/10 season and as one Caribbean island is making international headlines over an incident involving American tourists and transportation fares. Last week Carnival cruise line announced the termination of their weekly stop in Antigua, a call they have done for several years. On September 3, six Carnival passengers were detained in Antigua after getting into a scuffle with local authorities as they refused to pay a taxi fare they viewed as excessive. The passengers were detained and are on trial in Antigua.

Starting January 3, 2010 Carnival will substitute its Antigua call with St. Martin. The cruise line maintains it simply updated its schedule to offer variety to its customers. Due to this change, *Travel Weekly* estimated that Antigua's tourism industry will lose \$5.6 million.

Walwyn says the unfortunate situation is a teachable moment for the rest of the region. "It is important for us to monitor this situation and learn as much as we can from this unfortunate incident. The Tourist Board wants to ensure no guest of the Virgin Islands will have to go through such a situation and also that our tourism professionals are properly compensated for their services."



Walwyn adds that the Tourist Board is well aware and is in support of the need to update the present taxi tariff in the Territory. “We fully understand that the taxi tariff that is on the books is not reflective of today’s economy. Staff from the Tourist Board have met with drivers and taxi associations and have prepared a new tariff recommendation that will be forwarded to the Ministry of Communications and Works later this week.” Until a new tariff is approved, the Chairman is emphasising the need for drivers to adhere to the present officially authorised fees to ensure uniformity across the transportation sector and to avoid a similar situation faced by the Antiguan tourism industry.

Walwyn maintains that the Territory’s tourism sector must reflect the international industry standards, which includes wages of its professionals. “While we know we must continue to work on different service standards, we have to ensure that as we are aiming for those standards, compensation standards for persons employed in the industry are also evolving and reflective of the time. A balanced approach to improving all standards will help us remain competitive across the industry.”

The Chairman of the Tourist Board is also encouraging drivers to take part in the Board’s upcoming workshops for taxi drivers and tour operators, scheduled for October 20 – 24. The workshops present an opportunity to update drivers on their sector’s best practices. Items covered will include managing emergencies and incidents while transporting passengers. Drivers may call the Tourist Board directly at telephone number 284 494 3134 for Tortola, Anegada and Jost Van Dyke registration and 284-495-5181 for registration on Virgin Gorda.

Walwyn says once a new tariff is introduced, tour fares will be posted to ensure consistency across the transportation sector. He adds that such tariffs will also benefit resident patrons of the Territory’s transport professionals.

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Note to editors:

Photograph of the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board Chairman, Myron Walwyn is attached.

