

MEET THE REGULATOR FORUM

**Remarks by Kenneth Baker
Managing Director/CEO, BVI Financial Services Commission**

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Eileen L. Parsons Auditorium, HLSCC

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today at this very special Meet the Regulator forum to celebrate the House that Mathavious built. I am most grateful to you, Dr. Georges, HLSCC President, for asking us to arrange and for hosting this event.

As many of you will know, it is usual at a Meet the Regulator forum for the Managing Director/CEO of the Financial Service Commission to set out the Commission's plans and priorities as the basis for a discussion with the industry.

I will be doing just that early next year at my first such forum as Robert Mathavious' successor. But that's not what today is about.

As a result of the Covid pandemic, we've had to wait a year longer than we should have but I'm really pleased that at last we can come together to thank and honour the man who has done more than any other to make the British Virgin Islands one of the world's leading international financial services centres.

I recognise there are many people here today who have had an important hand in building this success. But without Robert Mathavious' leadership, I think I can safely say that our path would have been more uneven, our pace slower and the outcome less extraordinary.

Working with Dr. Mathavious, as I had the pleasure of doing for 21 years, you learn quickly to appreciate his many qualities.

You learn how he combines a visionary approach with a large world view, and a quick, shrewd and original mind with an unstinting work ethic. You recognise his powerful patriotism.

Not least, you learn how he has a rare knack for reading people. He has a true leader's ability to identify that special something in someone and then to support and inspire them constantly to do better.

Over many years, Dr. Mathavious spotted the talent in BVI college graduates and brought them into the Commission. And once there, he ensured they received high quality training to develop and hone their professional skills and expertise.

Today, nearly all of the staff at the Financial Services Commission are BVI Islanders, a home-grown, expert team. This is a tangible part of Dr. Mathavious' legacy.

Dr. Mathavious also has the confidence to do things differently, as I remember from my unorthodox interview with him for the job of Inspector, Banks and Trust Companies at the Financial Services Department.

We hadn't seen each other for a number of years so we had half an hour of chit chat. And then he said, "Do you have a resume with you? Leave it with me and I'll get back to you."

A week or so later, he invited me to lunch and to my surprise offered me the job. The chit chat had been the interview.

Another very tangible legacy is the Financial Services Institute which he chaired until his retirement. Dr. Mathavious worked tirelessly with the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College to establish the FSI in 2002. He then gave it every support to become a recognised centre of excellence in training in professional qualifications and skills in the financial services industry.

One reason I am so pleased by today's event and the other celebrations during this week, is that I fear Dr. Mathavious has often been more recognised outside the BVI than within it. His vast contribution to our country's wellbeing needs to be more widely appreciated here at home.

This lack of recognition may be because he was off-island so much over the years, fighting the BVI's corner in numerous international fora – and winning friends and influencing people to our Territory's advantage.

Time after time when colleagues and I went to international gatherings, people would send their regards, praise his positive impact on our industry or our region – or talk about some personal act of generosity he had performed for them.

The Commission staff knew that generosity well, and not only in the way he encouraged and supported us throughout our careers.

We are just a few weeks from Christmas. I won't be the only person at the Commission who misses the guava berry liquor Dr. Mathavious used to make himself and give as a Christmas present – or who misses the gift of a book that he has carefully selected according to the recipient's personality and interests.

He has left me very large shoes to fill – in every sense!

Dr. Mathavious, for the immense improvements which your life's work has made to our beloved BVI and for all you have done for us personally, on behalf of all your former colleagues and friends at the Commission, I offer you a heartfelt thank you.