

TOURISM DIRECTOR SUSPENDED

GRENADA BOARD OF TOURISM CONTINUES ITS REVIEW

St. George, December 8, 2009 -- Director of Tourism with the Grenada Board of Tourism, William Joseph, has been placed on a two-week suspension while an investigation continues into the failure of his agency to greet the inaugural flight of Sunwing Airline two weeks ago.

Following what was an unusual departure from the normal practice of welcoming inaugural flights into Grenada, Joseph and the GBT's head of marketing, Raelene Lazarus both came under severe criticism -- both from the general public and tourism stakeholders. Much of this stemmed from efforts on the part of Ms. Lazarus to explain away why no officials of the GBT were on hand to welcome the flight.

Although new arrivals have traditionally been officially welcomed by the Grenada Board of Tourism, it is now becoming apparent that there is no published protocol saying that this should be so. Yet, high profile industry officials --- including Chairman of the Airlift Committee, Michael McIntyre; retired airline and travel industry executive, Bill Otway and President of the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association, Russ Fielden, along with others --- have voiced grave disappointment that the courtesy was not extended on such a crucial occasion.

At the time of the flight's arrival, Joseph --- along with the Board's public relations officer, Edwin Frank, were at the Maurice Bishop International Airport waiting to board the same aircraft for complimentary flights back to Toronto.

This prompted the Board's chairman, Richard Strachan to call for a report into the incident which is still currently under review. Strachan told GrenadaBroadcast on Tuesday that, upon completion of the review, a report will be submitted to the Tourism Minister, Glynis Roberts who returned to the state last Friday.

Word of today's suspension took some industry observers by surprise since they were uncertain whether there were provisions in either the GBT's statutes or Joseph's contract which provided for the suspension of officers.

And, in a stern letter to the Minister of Tourism from the President of

the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association, Russ Fielden, Minister Roberts was reminded that only recently, the former attorney general, Jimmy Bristol, was terminated for writing a letter which had no impact on the nation's economy.

The GHTA's letter read, in part: "The GHTA feels most strongly that there is need to have a professional level of accountability; without this, we will continue to be seen as mediocre in an industry which requires perfection at the highest level. With power comes responsibility, and with responsibility comes accountability. We dismissed the last Attorney General for writing a letter which had no effect on the economy, and therefore we must ask ourselves what is a fitting redress for a fiasco such as the non-event of this inaugural flight."

The Grenada Board of Tourism's constitution does not make provisions for input by the Minister into the firing of the director.

Tourism stakeholders have warmly welcomed the Sunwing service which fills a major void in airlift from Canada. Additionally, whereas government subsidizes several other carriers operating into Grenada from the United States and Europe, Sunwing has made no such demands. Furthermore, the carrier intends to operate a weekly flight from Toronto, year-round, and two flights per week during the high season.