

BAY GARDENS RESORTS CUSHIONS STAFF FROM COVID-19-INDUCED HOTEL CLOSURES

SAINT LUCIA, March 20, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Facing the prospect of zero occupancy due to global travel restrictions, the Bay Gardens hotel group is resisting immediate closure of its properties and focusing on ensuring its 300-plus staff members are cushioned from the worst economic effects of the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Sanovnik Destang, Executive Director of the locally-owned and -operated group, told his staff that with over 800 room nights canceled or rescheduled, the worldwide travel bans have cost the company hundreds of thousands of dollars in the short term.

Despite the fact that forward bookings have all but dried up, and hotels in St. Lucia and around the world were laying off employees, Destang told staff that other considerations must come into play for Bay Gardens.

"Your well-being and safety as team members are of paramount concern to us. As St. Lucia's largest locally-owned hotel chain, we simply are not able to contemplate a situation where you all go without any source of income whatsoever for the month of April," he said.

To ensure the resort group is fair to all he stated that it will not be business as usual and sacrifices will be necessary all around, with adjustments made to staffing levels in the form of redundancies. "But these are not expected in the immediate future to affect more than five percent of our workforce of 300-plus," Destang advised.

The 95 percent of staff remaining on the permanent employ list will be on a reduced rotational schedule. Destang stressed all staff, including the management team, were being asked to make this sacrifice for the month of April, and that Bay Gardens would endeavor to provide working



Sanovnik Destang, Executive Director, Bay Gardens Resorts



Saint Lucia, WI

hours (and hence income) that represents a minimum of 50 percent of everyone's base salary up to a maximum of 75 percent of base.

Destang noted that it was not an easy decision to make but with hotels that are practically empty, there is no business reason to have persons who work in operations, in particular, be paid at all. He told staff that the company was making its own sacrifices because it was concerned about the impact of this loss of income and that Bay Gardens is willing to make the sacrifice as a company and carry staff through the month of April. This will likely cost the company in excess of EC \$500,000 (US\$185,000) in salaries, national insurance contributions and staff meals, even at the reduced levels of employment and working hours.

In view of the health dangers posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Destang impressed on staff the importance of maintaining their health insurance coverage and pledged: "We will cover the entire cost of your health plan for the month of April, so this is one less deduction for you to worry about at this time."

While the resort will cover the majority of its employees for the month of April, Destang cautioned the resort group could see extremely low occupancy in May as well if the situation is not brought under control. "We cannot at this point confirm that we will not have to follow the trend of other hotels in St. Lucia and around the world and close for May and lay off all but essential staff for that month. We truly hope this will not be the case but please be frugal with your personal expenditures for the month of April," he encouraged.

Urging his staff to take care of themselves and their families, he reminded them that in the last 25 years the travel industry "has weathered many a storm and our Bay Gardens brand is strong in the marketplace and always comes roaring back once the recovery comes."

Destang added that this is "an unprecedented situation for the entire world and the tourism sector has been hit the hardest." He urged staff to remember that "we are all in this together", and advised that Bay Gardens would cover the costs of counselling sessions for employees to safeguard the mental, emotional and physical impact COVID-19 was having on the nation.

While recovery may take a few months or longer, Destang reported there was already pent up demand for travel in the summer, fall and winter 2021. In the interim, the leadership team would focus on maintenance, deep cleaning and staff training.

About Bay Gardens Resorts

Bay Gardens Resorts is a group of locally-owned and -operated award-winning hotels all located within, or near, Rodney Bay Village, St. Lucia's entertainment capital. All five of Bay Gardens Resorts' properties - Bay Gardens Inn, Bay Gardens Hotel, Bay Gardens Beach Resort & Spa, Bay Gardens Marina Haven, and Bay Gardens Waters Edge Villas - are close to more than 40 restaurants, entertainment venues, duty-free shopping malls, Treasure Bay Casino and Rodney Bay Marina. All properties offer comfortable accommodations, traditional Caribbean cuisine, and warm Caribbean service and hospitality. Bay Gardens' Splash Island Water Park, the first open water sports park in the Eastern Caribbean, is a popular attraction off St. Lucia's Reduit Beach.

For further information, visit www.baygardensresorts.com.

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