This past February saw the temporary closing of the Simpson Bay Resort and Marina and the Villas at Simpson Bay Resort and Marina in St. Maarten (formerly known as Pelican Resort Club and Pelican Marina Residences).

While this could have been a major setback for the island’s tourism market, the St. Maarten Timeshare Association (SMTA), working with its members, was quick to execute a proactive solution. During the time of the closing, timeshare owners were provided alternate accommodations at timeshare resorts and hotels. Exchange companies also stepped in, and timeshare owners lost no weeks or points.

St. Maarten has had timeshare consumer legislation in place since 2003. In the wake of the short-lived closing, elected officials reacted by calling for overreaching changes to current law. In September 2011, the SMTA formed a joint committee with ARDA-Caribbean to offer a comprehensive and credible alternative to what the government proposed.

During the initial phase of the project, four joint committee conference calls were conducted to discuss and agree upon guiding principles for the draft legislation. Since October 1, the group has met every week to discuss and draft comprehensive legislation. The committee is working to have a draft ready for introduction in February 2012.

The SMTA and ARDA-Caribbean would like to thank the members of the committee for their leadership, commitment, and hard work on this important project. We believe their efforts will result in innovative draft timeshare legislation that will serve as the new model in the Caribbean region.

St. Maarten Timeshare Association & ARDA-Caribbean Form Joint Committee

by Keith Stephenson

Keith Stephenson is a director of state government affairs for ARDA, based in Orlando. His e-mail is kstephenson@arda.org.