



Parliament of Sint Maarten

Staten van Sint Maarten

Parliamentary Year 2024-2025-181

**National ordinance amending the National
Ordinance Budget 2024 (National Ordinance
Budget amendment 2024)**

**Report
No. 5**

Parliament in its meeting of the Central Committee has exchanged views with the Government on the Draft National Ordinance amending the National Ordinance Budget 2024

Parliament considers the present draft to be adequately prepared when the questions below are answered in time for the public meeting so that the draft can be discussed in a public meeting.

The Unified Resilient St. Maarten Movement-faction has taken note of the draft with interest and commences with the Ministry of Justice. The faction inquires if any justice workers had received their payments already. How much percent of the justice workers have had their rechtspositie (legal position), their LBs, signed? How much is still remaining?

The faction inquires about the payment that the Justice workers are expecting. When can they expect such payment for the ones that didn't object? Has this total amount been budgeted for? Where can the faction find that?

When can the Justice workers who have received their LBs expect their first payment? The faction was informed that certain payments are in the tranches. Hence, when can the Justice workers expect their first payment?

The faction would like to know how the Justice Ministry is ensuring growth and safety while the budget has been cut.

The faction mentions the Crime fund and states that based on the law in regards to the Crime Fund it mentions that

every year, by submitting the budget, the Minister needs to submit a “Beleidsplan” a plan where it is specifically mentioned which projects will be tackled in that year. Also, the finances in regards to that. The faction would like to know where this plan is and where can this be seen in the budget? The faction has looked but has yet to find it. What is the amount in this Crime Fund? To which projects have the funds been going to? The faction states that we are at the end of the year, and the faction has been looking for the different projects in regards to tackling the crime, especially seeing the rising crime, and the factions has not seen this.

The faction continues and mentions the draft legislation. The Minister of Justice wrote an article that there is a new draft legislation in the making to tackle the crime fund, so the faction would like to know how far that draft legislation is. When can it be expected?

The faction states that, seeing that it is currently not clear which projects are currently in the Crime Fund, the faction would like to know budget-wise where this can be found. Especially more so in today's newspaper article where the Minister of Justice has decided that there is a need for police cars and that there are currently few police cars available. Hence, the Minister has decided to purchase police cars through the Crime Fund. The faction would like to know based on what that decision has been taken. Was it already budgeted based on the plan and regulations the law gives the Ministry of Justice?

Additionally, why has the Minister of Justice yet to decide to use the same method to tackle the holding cells and not request assistance through BZK? Why was it decided to tap into the Crime Fund? Furthermore, in regards to the holding cells, the faction is happy y to see that the newspaper has also shown that the Minister of Justice is actively busy and that the holding cells, which is a very important topic, especially seeing that at this moment the holding cells are not how they should be, are being repaired. The faction refers to the holding cells not in Point Blanch but at the police station in Philipsburg.

How are we making sure that there is no violation regarding those holding cells, taking into consideration the European Court for violation of human rights? Therefore, what is being done budget-wise to tackle that matter? The faction would like to know where those funds will be coming from.

The faction mentions that it understood from the Minister that based on the law, there should be an annual plan, but there is currently no annual plan, or it is not finalized. How is it possible that there is no policy plan, but yet the crime fund has been used in the past and is currently being used? How is it possible that there is 3.6 million guilders of BZK in the Crime Fund? The faction understood from the Minister that there is 8.2 million guilders currently in the Crime Fund, but how is it possible that BZK funding, which is not meant to prevent crime, is currently in the Crime Fund?

The faction understood that one of the previous projects was the placement in Brasami. The faction would like to know how that is possible. The faction acknowledges that this did not happen under this Minister but the previous, but unfortunately, the faction will have to ask the current Minister. How was the placement in Brasami covered for by the Crime Fund? What other projects that the Crime Fund was used for?

Is it correct that 4 million guilders has been spent from the Crime Fund? If so, what was that amount spent on? Can an exact breakdown of this use of the Crime fund be given? Placement of Brasami. How was it determined that this was a project for the Crime Fund? Give precisely how much was spent on Brasami and all other projects.

The faction also inquired about receiving a detailed plan for the previous years. If there was no plan, the faction would like to receive the legal basis on which those projects were executed. The faction would like to receive a list of the projects.

The faction mentions the police vehicles and that the Minister mentioned that it was budgeted for, but

unfortunately, it was not enough, and the Crime Fund will be used for the remaining amount. How much will it cost to use part of the Crime Fund for the remaining cars? How many cars will be purchased through the budget, and how much will be purchased through the Crime Fund, and for what amount? And after purchasing those cars, what is the remaining amount that will remain in the Crime Fund?

The faction acknowledges the fact that the Ministry needs funds for police cars and that police cars are one of the important subjects in tackling crime. However, the faction is posing this question in detail and specifically about the Crime Fund because the faction would like to know when it will be used for the rehabilitation and resocialization of repeat offenders. This fund was initiated to combat and prevent crime in the community. Hence, the faction is wondering when Sint Maarten can also have a few projects ongoing like that in Curacao with their 18 projects. When can Sint Maarten have at least one, two, or three projects going on? Hence, the reason the faction is so hard on the Crime Fund.

The faction mentions the lottery and casino holders that cannot open a bank account but need to be able to also bring funds into the coffers of Sint Maarten. What is the short-term solution to tackle that matter? Seeing now that the Caribbean guilder will be coming to Sint Maarten to make that transfer from the Antillean guilder to the Caribbean guilder, the faction would like to know what will be in place for those lottery and casino holders who cannot open a bank account at this moment?

The faction continues and mentions the legal help desk. When will the new start date be? The faction would like to avoid unnecessary misinformation or confusion. The faction would like clarity for the people of Sint Maarten so that the vulnerable community that is in need of legal assistance can get that legal assistance through the help desk and that they can have a date to look forward to instead of it being communicated that there is no date as yet.

The faction understood that the hiccup was in regard to the participation of the lawyers needed. After the article in today's newspaper, the faction received several calls from lawyers in regard to this project, especially seeing that they have informed the faction and also the Ministry that they are willing to assist. Seeing the remarks in regards to the hiccup of the lawyers, the faction made it its business to also pile up that information for the Ministry to make it easier for lawyers to commit. There are currently 6 law firms that are interested in participating, so therefore, to make sure that everyone who has a legal background or is legally minded can participate in this project because the more, the better, and it will benefit the people of Sint Maarten, the faction would advise the Ministry to make sure that it is communicated through the social media channels when this project will start and how other legally minded people can also apply to participate in this project.

The faction states that it is aware that we are here for the budget amendment, and often we hear there are no funds available on Sint Maarten, but now we have a project that will not cost any money and will be beneficial to the people of Sint Maarten. The faction, therefore, believes that we all need to come together and make sure that this legal help desk can start.

The faction states that it is indeed correct that based on the law in Article 5, every year, when submitting the budget, the Minister needs to provide a policy plan that clearly outlines which projects are to be tackled in that budget year.

The faction inquired about the current draft policy plan. How do we have a draft policy plan, which is still in the draft phase, but we still have to tackle justice matters? Hence, if there is a draft policy plan, when will this draft policy plan be finalized? Additionally, can the Members of Parliament be provided with this draft policy plan before the Public Meeting, even if it needs to be confidential? The faction would like to see this draft to know what is in it and the Minister's explanation.

Also, it was explained by the Minister that police cars, which the faction understands are also important to tackle the current rise in crime, but based on what legal basis are the police cars being purchased through the Crime Fund? Can a breakdown also be given regarding the different projects? It was mentioned that we would receive that in writing before the Public Meeting and then have it specified exactly what project and for what amount. For example, mental health patients, Brasami for what amount and the date and year.

The faction mentions a question from the UP faction regarding the policy for releasing persons. Can that explanation be repeated?

The faction would like to know when those police cars will be purchased. Or have they been purchased already?

The faction references the cuts and has the following questions. Are any of these cuts directly or indirectly affecting our seniors or other vulnerable groups?

The faction understood that there was a cut with regard to the Ministry of Education and mentioned the breakfast and meal program for our children who go to school. Does the cut in the Ministry of Education affect what is currently being made available to schools for certain meal or breakfast programs?

We speak of ways of generating funds. The faction mentions the BOA program. Is this a project that is completely cut out of the budget, or is it something that we are going to see within short? Or was it overlooked?

The faction would like to know what conditions the ministries are in. Is this 2024 budget cut going to be reflected in the 2025 budget?

The faction mentioned that there are many cuts in personnel and expertise. Considering that there is so much technical assistance that is going to be needed for pending legislation, are these cuts limited to only 2024 and will be

restored in 2025 for acquiring expertise from outside of government where needed?

How do these budget cuts relate to the employee survey recently conducted and to the proposed cuts to personnel? One of the things that ministers and departments complain about is a shortage of personnel. The faction believes that it is important to invest in our people in order for our people to give us the service we deserve in the community.

Are the cuts also, when it comes to personnel, a result of the recent increase in the situation where a lot of our civil servants are leaving government service in order to go to the private sector? Is that one of the reasons why you see a drop in certain areas within the budget?

The faction thinks that the presentation given by the Minister was very clear. The faction would like the Minister of Finance to explain why that amount was required, the amount for the budget to be adjusted by. Is it possible for the Minister to explain why that request was made? The faction understands that some of it was based on the recommendation, but perhaps there is something else in addition to that as well.

The faction would like to know if it was the Minister who was directly instrumental in the cuts or if it was the Minister of Finance or someone else or a different organization within the Ministry. The faction thinks it is very dangerous to mess with our national security, especially when cutting such an important aspect of our budget. Who was actually responsible for it?

The faction mentions the scanner for containers. The answer given in an earlier meeting was that a quotation was asked. The faction looked through the budget to see if there was a quotation or an amount for it but still hasn't seen it—perhaps it was overlooked. So, can the Minister indicate whether or not it's there or if it's something that will be placed in the 2025 budget? The faction believes that this is very

important because crime is on the rise. A lot of our children are finding themselves with weapons, with drugs that they're actually using. So, for the faction, it's very important that this is added, whether in the 2024 or 2025 budget. The faction would just like an update on this.

The faction notes that an increase in security with VKS walking at night in the town area has been seen. The faction would like to compliment the Minister and also the men on the floor, in the districts, and in the community who are protecting us. The faction knows they are doing the best they can, and it is appreciated.

The faction would like clarification as the cuts affect the truancy department, which actually has four FTE but currently only has two truancy employees, and this would remain so. One of the tasks of a truancy officer is to tackle the issues of students being truant, dropping out, and being absent from school. One of the responsibilities, or so-called authorities, that a truancy officer should have is the ability to give fines. The faction would like to know if it is the plan to perhaps do whatever has to be done with regard to giving those truancy officers the ability to write fines. Is that one of the plans for the rest of the year?

As it regards people traveling with their students unlawfully, is there an interministerial agreement between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of ECYS so that when parents break the law, some form of fine or sanction can be given to them?

The faction also notes that it was stated that the cuts do not affect the breakfast program, which is a good thing. The faction would like to know what happens to the rest. Right now, Public schools receive funding. Is it the intention, or is it possible that the other schools, subsidized schools, can also receive similar programs?

Does the Ministry of Education have any outstandings when it comes to vendors? How much are these outstandings? When is the intention to start to pay these vendors so that the

supplies can reach those who need them the most — our students?

The faction continues and mentions that a lot of our schools, especially in the classrooms, are meeting challenges with regard to children with behavioral issues and even mental issues. The faction knows that in the past, there was supposed to be an institution by the former Bell School that was supposed to be organized. The faction understands that after the hurricane, that was destroyed, and that the plan is now currently at NRPB with regard to the rebuilding of that institution. But in the meantime, the situation is getting worse in the classrooms. The faction would like to know what is being done in the meantime until that building is completed and can be occupied? What is being done in the meantime to help the teachers and the schools with regard to dealing with these children with behavioral issues and also mental issues as well?

The faction continues to reiterate the point of the meal program for our students. The Minister has indicated that schools have not indicated that there is a need for such. The faction advises the Minister to please reach out to the schools again individually and request this information—how many students are in need of some form of meal program? Is there an organization already supporting it? How much are they short of? There are still a lot of students who go to school hungry, and the coverage is not enough, even with the help of the private sector and organizations. The faction believes that the meal programs are much needed.

The faction mentions the process of truancy. The faction wanted to highlight that this is an area where we can gain additional funds for a ministry that is in dire need of more funds.

The faction states that it reaches a point where the students or the parents arrive at the airport, and that's where the gap lies—there's no way to hold them accountable, no way to fine them. That's the direction the faction would like to go. Is it possible to look into a ministerial agreement with the

Inspectorate of Education and Immigration at the airport to find some way, for example, before the parent takes off, they have to pay a fine as long as they don't have the approval letter from the school? This can be additional income for the budget, whether for this budget or for the future budget of 2025.

The faction continues and mentions that a former Minister took away the mandate from the inspectorate. Can we get an update on this? Does the inspectorate now have its mandate completely so it can execute its task? The faction believes that it is very important for the inspectorate to have its mandate to do what it has to do in order to prevent these young children from escalating—from being dropouts to becoming criminals on the streets and ending up our houses doing things they are not supposed to be doing.

Can the Minister give an update as to what exactly is going on with the original Prince Willem Alexander School in St. Peters? What are the future intentions for this school?

The Democratic Party-faction has taken note of the draft. The faction mentions that there has been news about a beach bar around the Simpson Bay area near the beachside. The faction would like some clarity on this from the Minister of VROMI. The faction understood it is not allowed to build on our beaches. Hence, the faction would like the Minister to elaborate on what is happening there. Is there going to be a stop to this?

Furthermore, the faction states the following. The faction is consistently hearing about revenue-generating ideas from colleague Members of Parliament. However, they also spent four years within the Government and had plans that did not seem to have any execution. Hence, the faction would like to give the current Minister of Finance the chance to come back with the 2025 projections and budget and provide those revenue-generating ideas. Also, the faction wants to remind everybody that we are working with a budget that the previous Government brought forward. This is being amended

by our current Government for the next three months, not the following year, 2025.

The faction mentions that it also agrees with the UP faction regarding having a closed-door meeting to elaborate on revenue-generating ideas for 2025 moving forward.

The faction continues and inquires about the status of our stoplights, the one stoplight that we have in Sint Maarten. What is the status of it? Is it in the planning to get them back up in order?

The faction would like to know how we are prioritizing the beautification of Philipsburg.

The faction also mentions the EDC. If the faction is not mistaken, there was a director. What was accomplished during his tenure? What is the financial status of the EDC?

The faction continues and mentions our justice chain. The faction would like to know how many personnel are in each part of the chain. The faction would like a complete breakdown of how many are in immigration, police, prison, coast guard, and so on. Also, the faction would like to know how many are on sick leave.

Which parts of the Ministry are understaffed? How many justice workers received their new LBs, and how many are pending?

There has been a serious increase in crime associated with scooters. What can be done to tackle this problem?

The faction would like the Minister of Justice to provide a percentage (%) breakdown of the crimes committed by nationality. One of them that interests the faction is, in particular, the percentage of total crimes committed by Americans.

The faction mentions the prison and would like to know how many people are awaiting the carrying out of their sentences. Seeing the amount of time they have been waiting

to sit their sentence, is there a maximum time you can wait until one sits? The faction has heard stories of people being called in 5 years after they received their sentences. The faction inquires if this was normal. Is this also within human rights?

What is the ratio presently of prison guards to inmates on a shift? Is this ratio acceptable and safe?

The faction would like to know if the prison has enough guards. Are there any programs after a prisoner is released? Programs to help them get back into society. The faction would like to get a detailed explanation of how this is done in terms of assistance with housing, job enlisting, or any help to resocialize them. Who determines the release of inmates based on the overcapacity issues? The faction would like an update on any possibility of house arrest to ease the overcapacity in Point Blanche.

The faction inquired why the Governor is the one who can give pardons and not the actual Government of Sint Maarten. What policy does the OM use for releasing inmates? Is this based solely on their liking? Shouldn't that policy be transparent?

The faction would like to know, as we approach the budget 2025, being approximately 10 weeks away from the end of the year, and we are talking budget 2024. The faction understands that some serious changes have been made, and of course, those changes need to be reflected in the budget. However, the implementation reports that we get every quarter is extremely important.

The faction would like to reiterate that comparing these reports with the budget is not easy, as recognized by the General Audit Chamber. Nevertheless, we get those reports based on the Kingdom Law Financial Supervision, and they give an accurate account of how the budget is being implemented. In looking more at going towards the discussions on the draft budget to be received for 2025, the faction would like to inquire about the status of the draft budget for 2025.

In the context of looking at next year's budget, the faction would like the Minister to provide Parliament with an overview of our taxpayer base in terms of numbers, of course. How many registered taxpayers do we have? If the numbers are based on estimates rather than registered taxpayers, the faction would like to know how many Crib numbers are in place and a comparison between the two. Do we have an official taxpayers base, and if not, and that is only based on the crib numbers, then how many are there?

Can the Minister get us an update with respect to the overall financial position of the SZV, as well as a similar overview of the APS? The faction would also like to comment regarding the cleanliness of our island. While some may say that we don't have any laws in place, and while we don't have laws covering everything, we do have laws in place, for example, where garbage is concerned. The faction believes that one of the biggest problems is the lack of control and inspection. The faction would like to know if this can be confirmed and if it is so, does the Government have any plans to address this matter?

The faction notes that there are laws, such as the old yet relevant garbage ordinance. Does the Minister concur, and can the Minister find out if her colleagues can concur, that in so many areas TEATT, VROMI, and other, we lack the capacity of inspection and control? If that is felt the same way by the Council of Ministers, can the Council of Ministers prepare a plan to deal with this matter?

The faction mentions the zoning of the country. It was mentioned in the past that the idea of individual district zoning or the intention or efforts has been abandoned, and now it is the idea to come up with a complete overall zoning for the country. The faction would like to know where those plans are.

The faction mentions the collection of fees from casinos, lotteries, and even smaller fees for using public property. There are laws, and while the revenue from such might be small, it also has a deterring effect. Are these being

enforced? Those permissions are necessary and come with a cost, albeit small, but they also have a deterring effect.

The faction notes that with respect to the lottery and lottery booths, late last year, an ordinance containing General Measures was established by the government. One was established for lottery permits, booths, and branches, but the implementation of that LBHAM was left up to the Government to do by a national decree. The faction would like to inquire whether this national decree has been issued, and if not, when is it the Government's intention to issue the national decree to put into force the LBHAM regarding lotteries and the like.

The faction would also like to join its colleague's congratulations on the successful National Job Fair. The National Employment Service Center was created not only to support job matching but also to follow the process of persons being told that they could get employment or even some who received employment or employment offers on the spot. Can we get an overview of that unemployment//employment picture on Sint Maarten, as the unemployment numbers differ depending on what source is used to put forward the unemployment number on Sint Maarten? Talking about sources, the faction knows that the IMF has recently in their report referred to these types of revenues. Has any account been taken of the comments by the IMF?

The faction would like to know about the ring road and surrounding area and mentions the vendors in that area. In the context of offering and or allowing small and micro businesses to exist in a planned way. What exactly are the plans and the plans that the Chamber of Commerce had for this area? What is happening, and is it being coordinated?

The faction noted the upcoming FCCA conference. The faction would like to state that the island is dirty. The outlook of the island is that it's not being taken care of. Where do we stand with the car wreck removals?

The faction would also like to ask if the Government has looked at the results of the population census and if there

are any actions that need to be taken on the results of the census. If so, which actions does the Government believe needs to be taken?

For 2025, the faction would like to see a public budget made available online, where people can understand what the Government has been putting the different revenues toward.

The faction also asks the Minister to provide an update on the laws that are at the Council of Advice, specifically where are those draft laws that needed to be completed having to do with the vacation allowances and pay increases. Where are those laws that needed to be completed ever since the vacation allowance and the increases would be paid?

In addition to the questions posed by the faction's colleagues, the Minister gave an answer with respect to the SZV and also indicated that this will be provided to Parliament. The faction would like to know if those numbers include a breakdown.

The faction states that the Minister indicated that the cuts would have an effect on the social registry. Now, the faction knows that that is a program that was done in the context of the NRPB, so the Trust Fund. What effect exactly will this budget amendment and the cuts under the Ministry of VSA have on that particular project?

The faction would like to know if the agreement with the VNGI has been renewed.

What date was the road fund ordinance implementation to be? Has there been any delegated regulations based on that ordinance? Is there an updated road plan of the Ministry?

Does the Minister have any update on the plans of the Chamber on the Ring Road?

The faction would like to know the state or status of the government property in Cole Bay on Orange Grove Road. What's the status there?

The faction mentions the so-called fuel gasoline excises for the amount of over 11 million guilders. From the numbers in the budget, it is estimated that in 2022 just over 9 million guilders were collected. Can the Minister provide a brief overview on this matter of the gasoline excises that fall under Customs? The faction would like to know what was collected in 2023, as the budget only provides the actuals of 2022, and if a brief overview of the excises on fuel gasoline can be given.

In the budget, we have several justice bodies that Sint Maarten contributes to based on Kingdom Laws. The faction would like the Minister to provide an overview of these, as they are not specified in the budget, but we see them mentioned, the judicial agencies and the amount that Sint Maarten is contributing. The faction would like to stress that we have taken on the responsibility of paying our part in some of these justice agencies, such as the Court of Justice, the Council for the Maintenance of Law, etc. There are several of them in the budget under the Ministry of Justice. Can the Minister provide an overview of those and the agreement based on which, every year, we have to contribute to these services as Sint Maarten? We are part of but are responsible for paying our share.

The faction knows that the Ministry of Justice also uses the services of the VKS. From the perspective of the Minister can we get the status of that? We know that they have presented several proposals to the Government, etc., so if that can be highlighted as well.

The faction notes the issue of vaping amongst our young people has been of concern to the faction, not only today or yesterday but for several years, as this phenomenon continues to grow in Sint Maarten. In questioning the Government over the years, it was understood from the former Minister of Justice that this matter is so multifaceted that an interministerial group was created to deal with the matter of vaping amongst our young people. It was supposed to include the Ministry of ECYS, the Ministry of Justice, and, the faction believes, TEATT. The faction would like to know if

such an interministerial group has been established. Was the Ministry of Justice part of it? How was it established—was it done by LB or MB—and if so, can this be shared? And this is in respect to the statement of the previous Minister of ECYS.

The faction has already asked the same question that was asked to the Minister in the capacity of Minister of Justice regarding vaping amongst the youth. The faction would like to repeat it here as part of the Ministry of ECYS. It is that Ministry that informed the faction in the past that an interministerial group of civil servants was to be put together. The faction would like to know if that was done. Was it established? With which ministries and with what specific objectives?

The faction believes that it would be important for us to get an overall picture of the counseling and crisis intervention initiatives in our educational system, especially, but not solely, in our high schools. Can the Minister get the state of that type of student service? Counseling and crisis intervention. How much of it do we have? As for Sint Maarten's educational system, how do we fare in that respect?

The faction states that the Special Education policy was finalized and believes that special education is one of the areas in education that needs our attention. With that policy in place, what steps have been taken or will be taken, and according to what timeline will these different steps be taken?

The faction notes that the capital budget for education for 2024 has been reduced by approximately 12 million guilders. Is that reduction the project that was presented by the Government at the time for the Charlotte Brookson Academy? Since that was taken out of the budget for 2024, and in the budget, it is anticipated that in 2025, a capital project for a high school will be included; the faction would like to know if that is the same thing. The amount in 2025 is less than 12 million, but is it the same thing, or is this high school projected in 2025 a public high school on Sint Maarten?

The faction would like to refer to information that was received—answers that were received as Parliament—from the question regarding what is taking place on the Ring Road. What are the plans from the Government building right down to the traffic light? What are the Government's plans, and where the Ministry of ECYS is concerned? The faction took note that the plans of the Chamber of Commerce include a Performing Arts Center. The faction would like to know if the Minister is aware of these plans. What exactly should the faction imagine when it is stated that a Performing Arts Center in the building is to be constructed by the Chamber of Commerce on the Pond Fill/Ring Road?

The project that was presented in the 2024 budget for the Charlotte Brookson Academy was to include such a center. The question at the time was if this is going to be for the general population's use. So, the faction is quite interested in knowing if the Minister knows of these plans of the Chamber of Commerce and what exactly is to be imagined when it is stated that it includes a center for the performing arts.

The faction would like to support the request for the report on the state of education.

The faction was able to so quickly forward the investment and diversification policy guide of the Government because the faction had it at hand. Given that policy plan and recommended steps, is there an implementation plan of the Ministry with respect to the particular items that are being proposed? If not, can such be made, especially in the context of when we get to the 2025 budget, so that where funds are necessary to execute certain parts of this investment and diversification guide, it can then be reflected in the budget?

As it regards the agriculture policy that is also there on the books—a very comprehensive one. Can the steps to be taken on an annual basis be identified so they can be reflected, where necessary, in the budget? Minister, referring to the agriculture policy and the efforts in the area of agriculture, the faction wants to know if the Ministry is aware of the recent article written by the local expert in this area,

Mr. Beervoets, with respect to the devastating effects of the invasive species on Sint Maarten on agriculture. If not, the faction can have this sent immediately to the Ministry, as it is extremely important what is written in that latest report by the local expert.

The faction mentions a recent article by Turning Point regarding an offer made to them and their response to that offer coming from a group or company that either has or is expecting permission to have something to do in the area of cannabis. The faction did not fully understand the interaction between Turning Point and the group and would like to know if the Minister can provide some explanation regarding that matter.

With respect to SME development the faction mentions that we also have a policy on SME development. Are there any reports on the execution of this policy? Minister, the Gaming Control Board, the amount in the budget has been reduced by 91,000 guilders, but there is still 84,000 guilders remaining. Given that the plan is being prepared via the *Landspakket*, the faction would like to know what that amount is for that is in our budget.

Given the movement of the vendors at the Philipsburg Market, will they be exempted from paying their monthly/ annual fees because of the uprooting?

The faction asked about the permits and fees in connection with the law that regulates the use of public spaces (*pricario rechten*), and the fees associated with that. The faction asked if these monies are being collected. Recently, a firm made a statement regarding their payment made in order to put down advertisement boards, and a board was vandalized. Are all these fees collected for those making use?

The faction would like to know if the national decree for the lottery booths was issued.

The faction would like to know if there is any way that Union Road could be given some attention, given the developments that are taking place in Cole Bay around Union

Road. The faction believes that we will be seeing some serious issues with respect to traffic movement, pedestrians, etc., and related issues.

The faction notes the ongoing discussion about Winair shares, including whether to sell them or not, and reminds that there was a motion passed by Parliament when the matter of selling Winair shares came up in the budget.

The faction is asking for further clarification on a question regarding the Charlotte Brookson Academy and the amount that was on the Government budget for that school, if understood correctly, in the established budget, there was not only an amount on the capital budget of the Government for that school but a whole presentation was made by the Minister of Education about the plans for this school. With that not being in this amendment, the faction is asking whether the project has been scrapped.

The faction would like to know if the Charlotte Brookson Academy project has been completely scrapped. In 2025, according to this budget amendment, there is a post for 12,100,000 guilders for a high school under the "*Dienst openbare onderwijs*". The faction is asking whether that is a replacement for the 12 million that was in the 2024 budget for the Charlotte Brookson Academy.

So, would there be a National Center for the Performing Arts, whether it be in the building of the Chamber of Commerce, or whether the renovations at John Larmonie are going to be of such a nature since there is only 2 million budgeted for that, that there would then be a center there for the Performing Arts?

The Party for Progress-faction has taken note of the draft with interest and has the following questions. The faction mentions the amendment overview that notes the changes that are made in this budget versus the original budget. Tracing the *baten en lasten* from the 2024 approved budget in March versus this amended budget in 2024, there is a 50,000

difference in the *baten* for the old one. The faction would like to know if this is something very small that could be adjusted. The original amount refers to an amount of 574832303. Can we make sure that that is corrected?

The faction noted the significant reduction significant reduction, as stated by the Minister of Finance, in personnel costs that were overstated by some 12 million. The faction continues and mentions that these are its expectations based on the presentation from the Minister of Finance of the 12 million decreases in budget costs. The faction mentions that was noted for the Ministry of General Affairs is budgeted vacancies of 9 whereas in the original budget it was 5 vacancies. The budgeted personnel vacancies cost this year was 536300, and in the previous year, it was 580906. If our budgeted vacancies count, number of employees, are going up by 4, why are the costs going down? Did the makeup of the 9 employees or the budgeted employees change? Was it persons with less salary, for instance, that would basically match the fact that you have more employees, but they cost less in comparison to the 2024 approved budget of March?

Ministry of Finance. Is there a change in the profile of the vacancies compared to the 2024 approved budget? Ministry of Justice. The budgeted vacancies count in the 2024 approved budget was 53 employees whereas now it is down to 3. The faction continues and mentions that the cost associated with 53 employees versus 3 employees is a significant amount of 2.8 million, which is an expected trend that you will see. You have less people; you have less cost. Can the Ministry explain why we are now budgeting for 50 persons less than in March of 2024?

In the Ministry of ECYS, there was also a big decrease in budgeted vacancies from 24 persons to 6 persons in the right direction. Is this including the actual critical vacancies needed for the Ministry of ECYS considering that is a difference of 18 employees? The faction mentions that the Ministry of VSA seems very straightforward in terms of the changes.

As it regards the Ministry of TEATT, the faction would like an explanation as to why the budgeted personnel for the current year shifted from 185 to 183 persons, but the associated costs for that is about 1.7 million. Can the Ministry explain the 1.7 million costs when we have a change of two personnel? If we're looking at budgeted vacancies for the current year the count went down from 11 persons in this amended budget from 17 in the prior year with a decrease of about 1 million. The faction would like to get an overall understanding, for this one, like the others, if there is a change in the vacancies and the associated salaries with those vacancies?

The faction continues and mentions the Ministry of VROMI. The budgeted vacancies for the current year for the Ministry of VROMI are now 8 in this amended budget, and it changed from 1 in the budget that was approved in March. However, this year's budget for personnel vacancies is 8 persons, which is 28,000 guilders versus 44,000 guilders for 1 employee. The faction is of the opinion that this doesn't make sense unless the 8 employees are getting paid somewhere around less than 3000 guilders a year in total.

The faction also mentions that the budgeted personnel cost for the current year is 112 in this amended budget versus 108 in the approved March budget, but the cost went down. The total budgeted personnel costs are now 8.7 million versus 9.4 million with less employees. The faction would like an explanation as to why we have a decrease in salaries that don't really match with what the vacancies would be. The faction would like a little bit more information on the type of vacancies that are there. The faction would like to avoid that we are playing around with numbers so that we could match the decrease. It is important that we can substantiate that 12 million decrease with actual items that we need to make this realistic.

The faction mentions the Ring Road and would like to know whether or not the Ring Road is still going to be considered as a traffic alleviation route. Besides the vendors that are there, is it going to be used to ease up a little bit of traffic in the town?

The faction mentions the cash burn rate regarding NV GEBE. The faction believes the answer received was 3 million less than the money coming in. The concern of the faction is that you have a significant portion of customers that are not paying because customers have now, unfortunately, not paid on a regular monthly basis. The cash available on hand for GEBE to use to cover expenses is now coming under significant threat. What decisions do we need to take to help GEBE with its burn rate? The faction hopes that it is not 30 days. The faction believes that internal decisions need to be made to make sure we slow down that burn rate. You have to start looking at where you cut costs or where you start collecting cash. If decisions that have been taken lately to help people pay have not worked for the last year, harder things need to happen, uncomfortable decisions need to happen, and cost-cutting needs to happen. We are talking about an existing company and not a start-up. The faction believes that 3 million less is not a sufficient answer.

The faction would like to make sure that the cut that we saw in the 50 had nothing to do with additional persons related to the changes in the function book. The faction would like to verify that there was nothing in there that would affect function book changes related to all the work that had to be done for the persons to bring them up to proper standing within the function book.

The faction inquires regarding the parameters of the loan for GEBE for the generators. What is the plan behind it? What is the concept behind it? Also, what happens in case of disaster to that concept?

Looking down the road, the faction would like to know from GEBE and from the fact that the Minister of Finance has highlighted that our debt position is growing, and we have to manage it carefully. Hence, what are the Government's plans when it comes to Telem and GEBE if any type of catastrophe befalls us?

What consideration is given to the possibility of a disaster that impacts the island and GEBE and thus makes it difficult for them to repay this loan?

The faction inquires regarding the status of the tax reform legislation that the previous Government informed Parliament about. The faction is not yet certain if the document is at the Council of Advice. Can the Minister give an update on that? It continues to be a recurring issue. The CFT signaled and highlighted this issue as well to improve our tax compliance and our entire tax regime so that we can find ways to generate more revenue for the country.

The faction would like to know the Government's outstanding debt to SZV and APS, considering our debt positions.

The faction inquires about the status of the proposed Airbnb/other housing platform tax. The reason for this question is that we hear again that the tourist tax is coming back, but, in the past, it has been shared by our private sector small and large hoteliers that stakeholders have resisted the implementation of such a tax. This is not an unknown thing. Airlines and cruise lines usually say that they only favor such a tax if it is directly reinvested into tourism products. Hence, the faction is assuming that this tax will face the same resistance now under this Government as under the previous Government. So, what is the status of the discussions on whether Airbnb and other housing platforms pay their fair share into the tax coffers?

The faction continues and would like to know, as it relates to the HAP and medical referrals, if there will be some other type of action taken to hold whoever is accountable for fraud. It is a fiscal crime whether it happens here, in Santo Domingo, or in Panama; at the end of the day, what it boils down to is that it's fraudulent behavior with semipublic or public funding, and either way, it is a crime.

The Soualiga Action Movement-faction has taken note of the draft. The faction would like to receive all of the

departure taxes from all of the airports in the region. Sint Maarten, Aruba, Antigua, Anguilla, St. Kitts, Curacao.

Can the Minister provide the financial positions of all government-owned companies? Not only the ones that we know now that are facing challenges, which are TelEm and GEBE. THE faction would also like to know about the harbor and the airport. The faction would also like to know the financial situation of the SZV.

What went wrong with the loan that was approved some years ago for the purchase of two brand new generators for GEBE, but GEBE never drew on the loan? Can the Minister explain why that loan, to the tune of 90 million U.S. dollars, was never drawn on? Why didn't that happen?

How much money does the government owe the SZV? The faction would also like to know who was in government when all of those monies were loaned from the SZV to the government. Can the Minister give the amount of cost-cutting measures that were presented in the 2024 budget that was presented in March? Were there any cuts in that budget, and how much? Can the Minister name the companies that received the tax holiday? Can the Minister tell us who those companies are? As government, what incentives do we offer to investors, whether local or foreign investors? Is there a package that the government has that it offers to its potential investors, whether it be local or foreign?

The faction mentions that we have a population of about 60,000, and we have more than 13,000 persons who are over the age of 60 years old, and we have a problem with our cemeteries. Our cemeteries are 85 to 90% filled. It's a looming problem, and the faction believes that we have to get ahead of it before it becomes a major crisis.

The faction would like to know how long the Minister has been the Minister of VSA. Can the Minister explain, on page 98 of the budget, the drastic drop off where it is showing 1.1224.750 guilders to a reduction of 412? Which projects

were these, and when did they end? Did they yield positive results?

On page 96, *dienst arbeidszaken*, hiring of employees for departments of licenses through the outsourcing agency. Which outsourcing agency is this? Why 115,000 for this process while we have unemployment on the island? Couldn't this be placed in the newspaper, and wouldn't that have been cheaper for the department?

On page 91 there is 125 thousand allocated. Who is this medical advisor? Is it one or more that the Minister is talking about? What is their advice and their findings on Sint Maarten's situation? If so, has the Minister taken any measures according to the advice that the Minister has received? Are these funds being accounted for?

The faction states that it is aware that the government contracts certain medical practitioners to be the doctor on call to do the *overlijdingsaktes*. The faction does not know if that is still the case. It knows that this was the case in the past and that those doctors would be paid through the government. Families are now complaining that when they go for the *overlijdingsakte*, they are being charged by the practitioner for this. The faction would like to know if that funding for those doctors has been discontinued or if it is something now that when the family goes for the *overlijdingsakte*, they pay the doctor directly and they pay for the service. The faction feels that it is unfair for the government to be paying on one end and then subsequently the family has to pay for the *aktes* as well.

The faction continues and mentions the *BIG registratie*. The faction states that it knows that that registration allows primarily for recruitment for medical practitioners out of the Netherlands. Are there any considerations for the recruitment of medical practitioners that can come from within the region to Sint Maarten?

Can the Minister give what the financial consequences and repercussions were for our economy as it pertains to

GEBE? The faction believes that we have to put real emphasis on what the financial repercussions are to our economy and the long-term effect on our economy if we do not get a handle on this GEBE situation.

The faction states that Sint Maarten is dirty. The faction would like to know the plans of the Minister for clean up and a facelift for us to start to take pride in. You cannot legislate decency and pride. The faction would like to know the plans of the Minister for the beautification of this island, especially the areas that are traveled the most.

The faction mentions that another looming crisis is regarding the cemetery. Our cemeteries are at capacity, and with the alarming rate of persons passing away, we will soon find ourselves in a crisis where we won't have places to bury our people.

The faction wanted to know the departure tax of all the airports in the region.

The faction mentions that it always thought that it was important to have a strategy, and not only a strategy but to put things in an investment package, whereas when you go to these trade shows and when you are trying to solicit persons to come and invest in your economy, that you have something that is concrete that you can offer. Whereas it does not come across in Parliament that when the persons on the executive branch do give some kind of incentive to investors, that is something nefarious. The faction believes that this should be done for local investors where local investors, to a certain parameter, are given a tax holiday as well. The faction thinks that this will put a balance between what a foreign investor invest and a local investor, but it also makes the local man, the proverbial small man, feel like government is doing something on their behalf.

What is the economic impact that the power outages of GEBE had on our country? The same small businesses and the same local businesses that we talk about were gravely affected by these constant power outages.

The faction would like to know what GEBE paid in concession fees to the government over the last four years. What was the amount taken out of GEBE in 2017/2018 to balance the government budget? Can the Minister give that exact amount?

The faction mentions the Winair situation. In the opinion of the Minister, is it wise to sell government assets in order to balance the government's budget? The faction states that it is reminded of another scenario where some 20 something million guilders was taken out of another government-owned company to balance the government's budget and now that government company finds themselves in a quagmire in which you have to take capital expenditures to help that very company. Why is it that whenever a company seems to be doing good, it is the first modus operandi to go and, in our local twang, rinse out that company?

The faction states that it is in favor of acquisitions, mergers, and takeovers. The faction would like the opinion of the Minister of Finance on whether it is a wise decision to liquidate the assets of your government-owned companies to balance the budget of the government.

The faction commends the Minister of VSA on the trip she took to get an assessment of what is going on in Panama and Colombia. The faction believes that in 2020, the amount that SZV paid in medical referrals was somewhere in the range of 30 million annually. Can the Minister inform if that price has gone up or gone down? Are there more medical referrals? The faction believes that it is important to also take the persons who are in need of care into consideration. The faction advises the Minister to revisit that whole arrangement and see if it can be tweaked.

The faction mentions Charlotte Brookson. The faction is aware that about a year ago, there was a situation where the financial controller embezzled well over a million guilders from that school of government subsidy. Can the Minister update the Members of Parliament as to what ultimately happened with that?

The faction believes the answer regarding the EDC was very vague. What are some of the accomplishments of the director in the year that the director was there? What was the financial position of the EDC then, and what is the financial position of the EDC now?

What is the annual subsidy from the Government to the EDC?

The National Alliance-faction has taken note of the draft with interest and has the following questions and comments. The faction knows that a couple of months ago, while leaving office, there was a situation where funeral arrangements were made for an active staff member, and it was signed off on before leaving, but there was a bit of controversy as it was stopped. The faction would like to know if the Minister, along with the Government, can consider now structurally putting something else in place.

The faction knows that a certain percentage is covered, but for active civil servants, the faction would like to know if we can at least cover 13,000 guilders for their funeral costs. The reason is that, at the end of the day, we depend on these civil servants to go above and beyond for compensation that cannot compare to the private sector. The faction believes it is only fair to honor their legacy once they have worked and supported the Government; at least, we can consider putting a structured policy in place to cover their funeral costs. The faction would like to know how open the Minister of Finance and the Government are to something like this. The faction doesn't believe that this is a bizarre request, as it is very unlikely for a civil servant to pass away during active duty, although it has happened before. The faction thinks this is a way to show appreciation to the men and women who wake up every day and decide to hold public office in whatever capacity without discrimination as to their function.

The faction knows that there are several housing project initiatives under different mixes, but the faction would

like to zoom in on the one being handled via the Trust Fund. There was discussion about it being halted, restarted, etc., but for the last couple of months, it has been very quiet. The faction would like to know the update on the housing project that is earmarked for Hope Estate. The faction would like an update on that, as there is a dire need for housing, especially social housing, here in Sint Maarten.

The faction has another concern that has been raised over the past few years in various forms but has never materialized. The faction would like to know how open the Government is to allowing not only ex-police officers but also ex-uniformed officers who had permission to carry firearms while executing their duty to keep their firearms for five years after retirement. The reason for this is that officers serve for 30-40 years, often creating enemies, and when they retire, they are told to go home to fend for themselves. The faction would like to know if a special budget can be allocated for this. It is not as if 30-40 officers are going on retirement at one time. The faction would like to know if a structure can be put in place to allow them to be able to have a firearm in order to protect themselves once they retire.

The faction continues and mentions the Ministry of VROMI. The faction is glad to see that the roadworks for the main road project have finally kicked off, although very late, as these documents were signed before the faction left office. Nevertheless, the faction saw that they started in Point Blanche and would like to request a structured schedule as to where is next. As the former Government, it was fought hard to secure these funds for capital expenditure, and the faction would like a clear detail as to the road of priorities. One road that has been emphasized over the last few years is Arch Road, connecting to Madame Estate, which is one of the most deplorable roads on the island. The faction hopes it has not been taken off the priority list.

The faction also remembers that an agreement with the Government was made in 2013 or 2014 regarding the Causeway Project, where the Port would pave Union Road.

The faction thinks that that never materialized, and the agreement was shifted to have the Port contribute to paving the road in Point Blanche. Now that the Government is paving that road, the faction would like to know if the Port is collaborating on this project, and if not, how then will the Port contribute to our infrastructure as agreed back in 2013 to contribute towards Union Road.

The faction also noticed a decrease in the Side Road Project but saw it pick up again over the last two weeks. The faction would like to know if the planning has changed in terms of the format in how the roads are being executed. If so, could a calendar be provided? Can the Government provide a detailed plan as to which roads are next that would help the public understand when their road is up to be fixed?

The faction heard the Minister's presentation regarding long-lease land being allocated and making more money via hotels. The faction would like some clarity so that the faction can confirm that we are speaking about the same thing. Can the Minister provide clarity if the Minister is talking about the same project the faction is talking about?

The faction also has a question regarding the 18 million guilders for the sewage network via the NRPB. There was 15 million guilders put aside via de CAPEX on a multi-annual approach which would have been for three years, 2024, 2025, 2026 for the project, totaling 45 million guilders. The faction would like to know whether the 18 million guilders is separate from this, if the 15 million has been scrapped and replaced, or if it is separate from the regular country budget with respect to the CAPEX.

The faction states that sitting in the seat of Government, there must be creative revenue generation. We must be creative in how we handle certain things. The faction came up with an idea regarding the debt for SZV: to lease SZV a piece of land for which they paid 60 years in advance, and that would come off of what we owe them as a Government. The faction would like to know what creative ways, per the Ministry, are being implemented to generate revenue. The

faction notes that we are just talking about cutting, but the faction is missing the sense of creativity when it comes to ways and means that we could generate revenue and minimize the burden on our people.

The faction states that under the past Government, a task force collection was started. Big businesses that refuse to pay long lease in over 25 or 26 years was collected from, generating millions. The new Government discontinued the task force, stating it could handle it on its own. The task of domain affairs was very heavy, and there was a personnel shortage. The faction would like to know how much money has been generated from people who have owed outstanding amounts for many years. What was the main reason for discontinuing it?

With respect to the loan that was taken out in 2014, the Minister mentioned that it was under the NA Government, but NA was not in Government in 2014. The faction would like some clarity as to who took that loan and who was leading the Government at the time. How much do we owe?

The faction mentions that traffic continues to be a major issue and that it doesn't think that will really change until we get new roads. As this is an interministerial situation, the faction would like to know if the Government would explore the option of setting up a hub system for school buses, possibly at locations such as the Jose Lake Ballpark or the Raoul Illidge Ballpark. Instead of parents driving all the way into Cul de Sac with many vehicles, can something like this be set up? The faction suggests that this could be funded through the regular school bus system via the government, or parents can pay 25 guilders a month, which would be a savings in terms of gas. The faction would like to know if this is something that the Government can consider. The faction is aware that mainly the Education ministry is over transport, but TEATT and Justice play a role when it comes to traffic as well.

The faction mentions revenue generation. The faction believes that we should become more creative and more open-minded. Over the years, there has been this saying that

tinted cars contribute to violence, but the faction doesn't believe in it. Around the world, tint is regulated in different ways, and the faction believes that we now need to move away from that stigma that it is a crime. We need to see how we can legalize it and also be creative in terms of generating revenue. The faction would like to know if the Government is open to, for instance, being tied to your number plate purchase, if you want to have a tinted vehicle, that you pay an extra 50 guilders per year. The faction believes that Curaçao was already busy with legislation where that is concerned, so the faction doesn't think there is a need to reinvent the wheel.

The faction mentions that one question keeps burning. With respect to the loan for GEBE, if we don't have any details on the what the money is being spent on exactly, how can we possibly be taking out a loan without any substance as to what you are taking out a loan for? We are being asked as a Parliament to approve a figure and wait for more details in the future. This doesn't sound realistic to the faction and the faction would like to get some substance and clarity to it.

Related to the aftercare center, the HAP, is the faction to understand that the discussion is ongoing to continue with it or to look for an alternative. The faction believes that this service is quite essential. What is the government's thinking with respect to this? If we are going to have energy for one thing, we should exercise that energy across the board because, with respect to medical referrals, we are not hearing anything about that. There are a lot of questionable things taking place with that.

The faction a couple of weeks ago, there was a situation where a young lady came to the faction with an issue at her job, and based on the faction's knowledge and experience, it was considered a legal situation. Are these situations where a legal help desk can be used in the sense that people are not able to afford it? How does that work? The faction would like to suggest that it be placed on the government's Facebook page and website. This is a great initiative and once our people are able to have resources like

this, they can then better defend themselves. The faction seeks clarity on this point.

The Minister mentioned that a company paid 1.2 million in *erfpacht*. The faction would like to know if the Minister can tell which company that was. Also, the faction asked about the top 10 offenders, and there wasn't a response. The faction would appreciate some clarity there as well.

With respect to the land that was issued or reissued, it seems to be a matter of wordplay. How was the land reissued with respect to the *Didam arrest*? The faction would also like to know which notary allowed this in the absence of the policy or if the policy has been issued, which the faction hasn't seen.

One of the reasons the faction talks about the policy is because the former Minister was back and forth here in Parliament regarding the same policy. It sat by JZW for about 6 months and by the former Secretary General of General Affairs for about 8 months. How far is the policy? Was the policy issued thus far, and is that the reason why that land was able to be issued?

How did this Government take office without any proper research and issue something where a fraudulent case was cited, and someone lost their job? The faction would like some clarity from the Minister on that point.

With respect to the housing project being off the table since 2023. Can the Minister provide documentation stating that these matters were off the table so that we can get some clarity on that? So, the faction would like some clarification on that, and if so, as well, all meeting minutes that correlate with the story of the project being off the table since 2023.

The faction continues and states that it heard the Minister mention priority roads that have an economic impact, which is fine, and the faction agrees to a certain extent, but the faction would like to know what the Minister's sentiments on Arch Road and Madame Estate are. Is it the intention of the

Ministry to handle this as the next road priority? The faction is of the opinion that it is in a deplorable situation right now.

With respect to the building permit that the Minister talked about being signed on May 2nd, the faction would like to know if the Minister can provide this, whether in a confidential or open manner, once respecting the person's situation, to Parliament so that we can justify this.

The faction would like to know if positive advice has been received from the permits department on this building permit project that is taking place in Simpson Bay. What was the advice from the permits department? And how do you, as Minister, assess building permits once received? Do you not trust advice from the permits department once all the checks and balances are there? The faction would like to know how the Minister assesses those and how he makes a decision if a permit has positive advice or not.

The faction would like to know if the Well Road is also on the priority list. What is the intention in terms of the start date for those roads?

As it regards former uniform officers being allowed to carry firearms, the faction would like to know if the Ministry is open to allowing this. What are the thoughts in terms of reaching this goal?

In no way does the faction wish to hamper or interfere with the current school busing system that is in place. The faction is referring to stakeholder engagement, whether it be a meeting with private bus owners and parents or a public meeting, so to speak, where the option can be explored for parents who opt not to drive all the way into the Cul de Sac, instead to allow a sort of system to take place at Jose Lake and Raoul Illidge. The faction is saying something totally separate, which could come as an initiative from the Government in collaboration with the Ministry of ECYS and the Ministry of Justice. Is the Ministry open to exploring such an option?

With respect to the causeway and the permit agreement to build the causeway, there was a clause in there

that the Port would contribute to the repairs of the entire Union Road. That was never done. About two years ago, if the faction is not mistaken, Union Road was repaired by the Government with government funds, and then a discussion started for the Port to repair Juancho Yrausquin Boulevard, which they are busy with now, which is the road leading to the Port. The faction would like to know whether these funds are coming from the Port, or are these funds coming from government coffers, may it be capex or the regular road repair project?

The faction heard a number being mentioned in terms of what is still owed with respect to the causeway loan that the Port is paying. The faction would like to know how much the causeway has cost the people of Sint Maarten. How much is exactly owed? How much has the causeway cost the people of Sint Maarten from 2014 to 2024? The faction knows that the Port was busy exploring different means to try to sell it because, of course, it wasn't serving its purpose in terms of revenue generation that the initial plan was. The faction would just like some clarity on that.

Per Ministry, the faction would like to know how many persons within the Ministry are currently working outside of their function and if they are being properly compensated.

How far along is the Ministry with the STA? The faction knows it has been a discussion for over a decade. Is there any concrete plan from the Ministry as to a potential actual start date? What is the goal in terms of the start date for the STA?

The faction heard the Prime Minister repeatedly refer to the fact that the housing project was canceled in April of 2024. The faction would like documentation to substantiate this.

The faction would like to know once again if we can put in place a structured mechanism where the Government covers the funeral costs up to 13,000 guilders. Does the Prime Minister believe the life of a civil servant who has worked and contributed—whether for a very short time or 30 years, as the

faction does not discriminate—should be honored? The oath of office and the service are quite significant. The faction would like to know from the Prime Minister, who oversees P&O and General Affairs, if the Prime Minister would consider putting this policy in place to regulate so that the funeral costs of an active civil servant be covered by up to 13,000 guilders.

The faction would like to know that with respect to the 4-day work week, the faction believes it can work, but it will require bold moves in terms of decision-making. To give a simple example, the island is plagued with a serious traffic situation. A pilot project could be started via the Government and perhaps spread out to government-owned companies, whereas not all employees start work at 8:00 a.m. Some could start from 8 to 5, and others from 10 to 7, just to see flexibility and mitigate the workload. The faction urges the government to consider these points in one department; for instance, Fridays were a preparation day, so they could prepare for the following week. The faction hopes this can be explored.

Although discrepancies caused the organization to stop functioning, the faction would like to know if an interim solution could be sought, perhaps house practitioners offering care until 12:00 a.m. at the very least, allowing non-emergency cases to be dealt with and easing the load on the St. Maarten Medical Center.

The faction notes that in Latin America, they have 24-hour pharmacy services. Currently, the pharmacy in Maho remains open until 9:00 or 9:30 pm. If someone needs something urgent, they would have to go to the emergency room. The faction would like to know if there are any thoughts within the Ministry regarding a 24-hour pharmacy service or having one open until 12:00 a.m., even on a rotational basis. This rotation could be published for the general public.

The faction notes that with respect to the water parcel that initially the Minister said was collected, then not collected, to be collected, and then the water rights were issued, the faction is trying to understand if the Minister is saying that the water rights that was used for a period of years

was issued in hopes that they might pay the 1.2 million. Initially, the Minister said that they paid the 1.2. The faction is now understanding that it wasn't paid. Can the Minister confirm if it was issued in anticipation of this?

If it was collected or if it is still to be collected in the budget projections, would it be incorporated in the budget? The faction does not see this reflected in the amendment. 1.2 million is quite a significant number and can make a lot of difference, hence the reason for the question and clarification being sought.

The faction heard the Minister mention the weighbridge, a previous administration had paid a company to install a weighbridge. They never complied, and the government took them to court. The faction would like to know if this is the weighbridge that is on its way or if this is a different weighbridge. If this is a different weighbridge, where is the government in terms of the court proceedings with that particular company? The faction is aware that this government has been settling many cases since taking office. There have been a lot of court cases settled with no appeals. The faction would like to know if this was also one of those settled cases where the country continues to lose.

The faction seeks clarity with respect to this May 2 permit that continuous reference is being made to. Is the Minister saying that the permit department's advice misled the Minister? The reason for this question is that there is a continuous sound that the change of purpose was not done, which is a prerequisite, and the Minister is 100% right about that. The parking policy and beach policy were not taken into consideration. The faction states that once a Minister receives an advice, it is advice to approve or advice to disapprove. There are always motives as to why.

The faction would like to know if the former Minister was authorized to sign any documents on May 2, and was that the only document signed? Is the Minister signing documents these days, considering the Minister is also in a caretaker status.

The faction would like to know with respect to the land in regard to Maho and it being signed off because it was already issued and reissued. The faction would like to inform the Minister that the whole situation sparked confusion due to the fact that 2,000 to 3,000 square meters were issued in error or utilized in error for years. This is the reason someone lost their job in the Cadaster. All the evidence is there.

The faction would like a breakdown of the 12-18 months for the land policy, and how do we move forward with those that are pending now?

The faction continues and mentions that the Minister indicated that on April 10, a correspondence the Government was informed. If there is documentation, the Minister of Housing should have the documentation that the project was ending.

The faction wants to know how this was communicated that the project was ending and if it can be proven that it was communicated to the Ministry of VROMI. If it is off the table, how can we assist as Members of Parliament in getting it back on the table?

The faction would like to state that Winward Roads is not doing voluntary work; it is on Windward Roads to regulate their workload. These bids were done early this year, and they knew they won the bid. All these discussions were had in negotiation, even preliminary discussions on priority roads. The faction would hope the Minister would take more of an approach of saying, "I will do everything in my power to get it done ASAP,". The faction hopes that we do not repeat the same mistakes again.

The faction would like to get some clarity because it is not clear whether the Minister said that the decree was signed in 2007 or 2013. The faction would like to know which year the Minister mentioned and which Minister or Commissioner signed these water rights that were never issued.

The faction would like clarity regarding the point of the intent being signed and not being deeded. The faction would

like to get clarity on that so that everyone knows how to move forward.

This faction mentions that it was a surprise to learn from an outside entity during orientation week about a loan for GEBE while the Prime Minister was in Parliament previously. When we look at the budget, it says in the *toelichting* in 3.6 that GEBE is looking for a loan of \$30 million. In the presentation from the Minister, it says that there's a loan for \$75.6 million. The faction would like to confirm: is it \$30 million for the loan or \$42 million? Or is it that we are taking out a loan for GEBE, and GEBE is also looking for an additional \$30 million? This can be found on page 154 in the *toelichting*.

In that same *toelichting*, it mentions that GEBE commits to delivering audits for the fiscal years up to and including 2022 and 2024. The faction would like to know if a deadline has been set for that. And what happens if GEBE does not deliver these audits? What are the consequences for GEBE if they do not deliver these audits?

The faction has noted that some of the questions posed by the legal affairs department remain unanswered. Who exactly is taking out the loan? Is it under the Ministry of VROMI or General Affairs? It also states the start and end date. Does this mean that the agreement between GEBE and the Government begins on November 1, 2024, or does it mean that GEBE will begin making the monthly payments from November 2024?

The faction believes that it was mentioned by the Prime Minister and also in the presentation from the Minister of Finance that we would take out a loan and then lease it to GEBE. The faction would like confirmation: Are we leasing to GEBE, or are we taking a loan for GEBE and allowing GEBE to purchase the engines then? Cause that's two different things. The faction believes if we are leasing it, that means the asset goes by us. The asset should then be reflected by us. The

faction does not see anywhere in the budget where the insurance for the engines is or where it would come from. Can this be made clear to the faction? Where is this insurance taken up? What is the potential cost for us of insuring these engines? If they are going to be loaned to GEBE, like what was done at the airport airport, would we consider this a similar system to the reflows? What interest rate are we expecting? With the Airport, the Government is getting money back from the reflows, so if you're going to loan to GEBE at, let's say, getting a loan at 4% or 5%, are we then loaning this to GEBE at 6% and making a gain? When the airport refinancing was being done, different options were looked at. The faction would like to know from the Government if there are no co-financing options available. Were there no public-private partnerships available?

Between 2022 and 2023, the then-MP Heyliger-Marten kept insisting on a specialist financier, Mr. Midema. The faction would like an update on this from the Minister of Finance. The faction would like to know if the Minister of Finance has had a discussion with Mr. Midema. Have you had a discussion with Mr. Blackman? Have you had a discussion with the Minister of TEATT concerning the refinancing of our COVID loans? That question also goes to the current Minister of TEATT—has the MinisterMinister taken up her own idea and concept of this?

The faction does not see any preparation for the transaction tax in the budget. Where is it budgeted? Is it no longer the almighty "Hail Mary" savior for us when it comes to generating revenues? Because what we see in the budget now is cuts, but when it comes to money-making and generating revenues, the faction wonders if all the great ideas for the last four years just disappeared. We had so many great ideas, but now we don't see them reflected by the MPs that went into ministry to be able to execute.

The faction makes reference to a local paper a few weeks ago that the Government lost the court case for the tax system. The faction also recognizes that the Government did

not appeal, and the faction believes this to be very interesting. What is the impact now on our tax systems? Because we have a lot of questions about money-generating and tax legislation, but if we're going to have another delay of two to four years on the tax system, where are we now? What are the current plans? And what is BZK or TWO saying on this in terms of the money now basically lost? Are we starting now from scratch? What are the steps or the plans going forward?

The faction would also like confirmation if BearingPoint has any staff, former staff, now currently doing any projects in the tax office.

The faction would like to know what the impact of the funds from TWO is, given this project. The faction has noted that the budget has a surplus, but this surplus is mainly due to the unspent monies from the TWO funds actually. So it's not based on money that we generate, but we have a surplus because we didn't spend money. The faction would like to confirm, looking at the multiannual, in particular 2025, that any surplus there does not include the TWO money. The faction would like to know if we minus the TWO for 2024; any surplus we have for 2025 is all money generated from us. If that's the case, what project did we have there in the next few months that's going to generate that money that we missed from the TWO surplus?

The faction makes mention that the budget has a lot of cuts but very little revenue generation. There were a lot of projects that were already started that could have potentially generated revenue for this budget. For example, in the project that started for the parking lot across from the old post office, most of the system was already in place; it was almost ready to go, but the Government changed. So, where is that project now? It was a simple project where we would put a boom and have a payment system; the company was already identified. Where is that system now?

This budget has a lot more potential to generate revenue; we could have actually cut a lot less, especially in education. The current Government has been here since May,

so we have had enough months to generate revenue for this budget. So where is that project now with the boom system, and why isn't that being looked into?

The faction mentions that we are not here just to bash the budget. The faction would like to see things progress, not that every single thing is stopped that the former Government brought forward. The faction emphasized the collaboration with the former Minister of TEATT on the issue of lottery booths and their regulation. We worked on that and started a policy, maybe even legislation, to ensure that lottery booths pay their fair share. Where is that now? The faction doesn't see it reflected in the budget. We are not just looking at the budget and figures, but also the *toelichting*—part of our future revenue generation is this project, and we are starting with this amount of money. It's not in the *toelichting*, so the faction assumes that it's not budgeted.

The faction has posed this question before: Is every lottery booth that we have now legal? Are they legally established? How many lottery booths do we have on the island? If we establish a legal basis for them, how much money will they generate?

Another item brought forward by the Ministry of TEATT was inspection fees. The legislation was very outdated, and the process was far along. Can we get an update on that? Has that process also been stopped, the inspection fees? Is this government planning to continue with that? The former Government started a process of collecting the backlog of casinos. What was collected up to date since May? How many casinos are up to date with their backlog and remaining current? How many are not up to date, with their backlog and remaining current? What is being done to enforce this collection?

The faction continues on the point of the dismantling of the task force in VROMI. This task force brought in a lot of money within a short period. The Minister of VROMI stated that he didn't see the sense in it anymore and that the Department of Domain would take it over. Since the

department took over that responsibility from the task force, how much money has the department collected since then, in particular from the ten biggest offenders? The faction would like to know who the ten biggest offenders are when it comes to a domain itemized. How much has been collected from those top 10 from domain? How many years do they owe?

The Government also came out and said that they are not selling WINAIR shares. The faction believes that this is a missed opportunity as the shares could have brought relief to citizens affected by GEBE today. The faction offers clarification on the process; it wasn't that the former Government alone wanted shares to be sold. WINAIR themselves wanted to sell shares so that the Government would have generated money to be able to put it anywhere. In terms of WINAIR shares, the concept of the former Government was that a portion of those shares would be going to the staff of WINAIR, all shares would be sold to local entities like APS, and a portion of those shares would be sold to the general public which means that instead of taking out a loan at 5% to 6%, the public would be able to participate and invest in WINAIR and be able to collect dividends over the next how many years. The faction again emphasizes that this is a missed opportunity that would have allowed local Sint Maarteners to have something to invest in, as there are not many opportunities for us to invest. The faction believes, again, that this is a missed opportunity, but considering how things are going, we will be back there very soon.

The faction mentions the draft legislation at Parliament regarding, among others, inheritance tax and tax holidays, a variety of them, some of which are actually already here, including the banking law. What's the position of the Minister of Finance on these legislations? Is this something that the Minister still sees herself in—the ones that are at Parliament already—and can we get a timeline on when we could have those meetings or when the Minister will be ready to execute those meetings? The Minister mentioned, in particular regarding ENNIA, that the 4 million dividends from the Central Bank could have gone to education, justice, and civil servants

among others. We need to start to find ways to generate revenue. We need to be able to find new money. However, the faction finds it interesting that the first opportunity that the Government got to generate revenue for the 2024 budget, they gave this money away. When they had the opportunity to collect taxes, this Government decided to give a tax holiday, and that was done as a demissionaire government before elections. The faction would like to know if we are really trying to generate revenue or give money away. In addition, the faction believes that we have a lot of hypocrisy because the former Minister of VROMI was bashed severely for focusing on construction, focusing on development, and making sure that the one pillar that actually brought us out of the pandemic succeeded. It was heavily criticized, but then parties that are part of this Government also supported the same tax holiday, supported the same entity that they complained about during the whole campaign—no more supporting Cupecoy, no more supporting big developments, construction pause. But we still support a tax holiday for that same area. The faction would like to mention that it also came to the former Government, and when it came, what was said was that if you're going to give out any tax holiday, we wanted something in return. And that social responsibility was ensuring that all schools, or all public schools at least, had solar panels with batteries. The faction would like to know what the potential loss in revenue is by giving out that tax holiday.

We have a budget cut for education of 13.1 million guilders. Couldn't that have been filled by the potential revenue lost from this tax holiday?

Again, the faction believes it is hypocritical to sit here and say to the police officers, the teachers, the people at SZV, and the citizens of Sint Maarten that we had to cut so much money because we could not generate funds, yet we gave out millions of dollars, and opportunities waste to collect revenue.

The faction mentions SZV and that there was a draft agreement on the amounts owed. The faction knows that this has been a topic for years, and SOAB and CFT actually said that

the agreement that was reached should be executed and to get it done as soon as possible. But again, looking at the multiannual budget, the faction does not see that agreement impacted in the budget or *toelichting*. The agreement for SZV on the amounts owed—is there an agreement? Is there a timeline for the agreement? And is that reflected in the multiannual budget?

Also, the APS and the SZV management of the building itself, that was also a draft that was left and should have been finalized for execution in 2025, but faction does not see them taken up in the *toelichting* or the multiannual budget or even for this year. The faction does not see it reflected. Where are we regarding the maintenance of the building?

The faction makes reference to an article from the Minister of VROMI, listing accomplishments, and a significant portion of land was given out earlier this year. When you look at the (*RFT*) *Rijkswet Financial toezicht*, it states that over a certain amount of money, a decree has to be made up and published. The faction would like to confirm if this was done for any land given out this year, especially the one mentioned in the accomplishments?

The faction noted a discrepancy and mentions that it was stated for example in one of the answers that a tax holiday does not lead to loss of revenue, but the previous answer states the tax holiday potentially only leads to loss of revenue in the following years. Which one is it? Does it lead to a loss of revenue, or doesn't it? In addition, the answer even stated that it will have a decrease in potential TOT, room tax among other taxes. If it's a decrease in tax, isn't it then a potential loss in income? The faction would like clarification, especially for the public. The public deserves to understand what a tax holiday is. If we are saying it does not lead to a loss of revenue, what is the advantage to the person requesting the tax holiday, and what is the risk for the Government? Because the faction believes there is a gain and there is a loss.

The faction notes the answer provided by the Minister of Finance that we have to look at potential for investment,

we have to attract investors. The faction also notes that the tax holiday was granted, but the investor was already here, already constructing, so then what was the gain if the investor was already attracted? Again, the answers are contradicting.

It was also stated that we can't calculate the expected revenue loss, but in the answer it was stated about future revenue gains. So how can we now not calculate our loss, but we can now predict or calculate our future revenue gains by attracting economic activity? It can't be we could do one and not the other. Again, the faction believes it's contradicting.

Regarding the WINAIR situation, some members of this faction sat on the other side. They are not making things up. The Minister of Finance has access to the Council of Ministers and the Secretariat. In June of 2023, discussions happened. The faction, therefore, requests the Minister to please get the information from the Council of Ministers. This faction has no reason to lie, and at the end of the day, the options and the discussions that were had were in the best interest of Sint Maarten. The faction knows that there is documentation proving that these discussions took place and documentation showing that WINAIR wanted this.

When we came to Government, we were dealing with a situation where an outgoing government on the eve of a transition sent an email out to a company indicating to them that they won the bid, and this was the Chief of Staff of then Minister Perry Geerlings. For the Government to say that the previous Government has messed up the tax system, and we were there for four years, and this situation was dealt with before we came in is very alarming to the faction. In addition to that, the faction reminds the Minister of Finance that there is a sworn affidavit by all the members of the committee who were dealing with the tax system that said we never gave permission to the Chief of Staff to send that email out, and we never awarded that entity the bid. The faction would like to know who messed up the whole tax system. It was definitely not this faction, definitely not the National Alliance government, and the only Government at that time, and the

Minister at that time was the DP Minister Perry Geerlings. The faction is of the opinion that it is very dangerous to be playing these games when the evidence and facts are there.

Reference is made to questions posed by a colleague within the faction regarding the road funds. On September 4, during the press briefing of Government, the Minister of VROMI, mentioned that the road fund would be established in the budget amendment. The faction, however, does not see this in the amendment. The faction is of the opinion that we have to be able to trust the Government. If the MinisterMinister says something in the press briefing, we have to trust that it's true. The reporter at that time even asked a follow-up question, so if we establish a road fund and the road tax is going to the road fund, then there will be a decrease in government revenue. The Minister of VROMI acknowledged this and said yes, we would be dealing with budget cuts. The staff of VROMI have acknowledged that this will impact them, but as a government, we have to find ways to generate more revenue. He further went on and said that as a Council of Ministers, we will be approving this and continuing this discussion on the road fund and finding ways to fill this gap. That's not faction's words, although the faction may be paraphrasing.

The faction is therefore surprised that the budget amendment does not talk about a road fund and does not talk about road tax.

The faction would like to know from the Minister of VROMI if when we as the public watch the press briefing, should we be able to trust the words that are coming out of the mouths of the ministers. The faction just wants to confirm that.

The faction was very happy to see that something the MinisterMinister campaigned on, was going to be in the budget amendment 2024, which was the road fund and the road tax. The faction would like some clarity on this.

The Minister mentioned that the task force was dismantled because it was unclear how much revenue was brought in. Then it was mentioned that the department was able to collect 1.2 million guilders. The faction wants to be very clear—collecting and supposed to collect are two different things. The faction would like to know if that has been recorded in the budget. So, is that a receivable recorded in the budget, and the faction would like that confirmed by the Ministry of Finance.

The question of the top 10 offenders within the domain remains unanswered. It was mentioned that the information has to be retrieved from the receiver's office, etc., The faction expected that the Minister would get the information; why wasn't that done? When the task force was there, they went to the receivers and got the information, and a list was presented. Can the list of the top 10 offenders and the amounts be given to Parliament? The faction can't imagine that the department or ministry doesn't know who owes them.

The faction mentioned that the Minister referred to the side road project. Can the public get a detailed schedule? Can the public get a detailed schedule similar to the side road project for the car wrecks? Also, can the public receive an email address or a phone number where the public can call in or send an email for complaints regarding the Car Wrecks?

The faction would like to know the Minister's Minister's stance regarding the tax holiday. The faction would like to know if the Minister's Minister's, at least if his political stance on overdevelopment has changed since they supported this recent tax holiday. So, has the Minister's Minister's political party's position changed on overdevelopment, and overdevelopment specifically in certain areas?

The faction would like to know, regarding the car wrecks, if we as a government are looking into holding those persons who are leaving the cars accountable. Together with the Ministry of Justice, getting the VIN numbers or perhaps even starting an awareness campaign where if you see it, you

report it. The faction thinks it's a pretty expensive project for persons to be just leaving cars there every month. The faction believes it's unsustainable, and the same goes for trash being thrown in the garbage, especially by Jose Lake Ball field. The faction sees that there are clear signs stating what you cannot throw there, and basically, every day, there's a violation. So, what does the ministry plan to do?

The faction makes reference to a previous speaker who spoke on the cemetery space shortage. The faction believes that the former Minister of VROMI also brought this project to the attention previously regarding the limited space that we have left at the cemeteries. In the budget for 2024, we allocated about 10 million for the purchase of land in the area of Bethlehem from the Plantz family. The faction would like to know if that is still something this Government will continue to pursue and if these discussions will continue. Is it a priority for this Government to get the capex to purchase that land, considering a portion of that land was actually going to be a modern cemetery with a policy? The faction would also like to know if the Government is working on such a policy so that the maintenance and burial of individuals become self-sustainable, as it is in other countries. Is that a priority for this Government as well?

As it regards *Erfpacht* the Faction states that the task force actually collected about 2 million guilders when it was established. The total amount at that time was 14 million outstanding, so now it has been reduced to about 11-12 million guilders. And again, the faction asks the Minister of VROMI to contact the Ministry of Finance to maybe even get the list of top 10 offenders so you could continue to work on this so that we do not need to have so many budget cuts in 2025 and actually go after those persons that owe us. Some of the locations and businesses are exploiting the land they have and they are making money, but they're not paying Government their dues.

The faction would like to address a few points regarding the budget and allocations of funds for the GEBE.

Specifically, the faction inquires what the *rente las norm* will be for the collective sector. When was this last calculated, and has that been updated to include the current loan we have in the budget? The faction would like to know what our limit is and by us taking on this loan, would it then exceed this limit.

The faction seeks clarification on the current status of the lottery booths. What is the legal basis for the booths we have now, and do they all possess the necessary licenses to operate? The faction asks what licenses do they have to operate are required for lottery booths if the operators are paying taxes, such as SZV, and whether they have a BV or NV. They collect money and distribute money, so what gives them the legal right to execute this task?

The faction notes that the Minister mentioned there are 106 booths and would like to know how many sale points they have, such as grocery stores or gas stations being able to sell these items. On what basis are they allowed to execute this? Is anyone allowed to sell lottery tickets or numbers?

The faction inquires about the inspection revenue generating scheme and the dated inspection policy. Is that a plan to continue with the vehicles whether there are plans to continue this under the current Government?

The budget projections were cut, so the cost wasn't cut, but the projections were cut because of revenue generation. So there were items like the WINAIR, the tax levy, the one cent per liter, and inspections, among others. What revenue generation items were presented by this Government for this budget amendment? So again, yes, the faction agrees that cuts will come if the Government removes any sort of revenue generation—that's logic. But what it was replaced with is more important.

The faction states that it would also mean that if all these items are removed in 2024, the Minister of Finance mentioned that for the budget 2024 and 2025, no policy changes are coming. That would mean that the current Government is not planning to make any policies regarding

revenue generation, which is very rare to the faction. The faction would like some clarity on that. Is the Ministry of TEATT not working on any policies regarding revenue generation?

The faction has a final opinion on the WINAIR discussion. The Minister mentioned that the board members stated they didn't have any information, but as a Council of Ministers, we don't depend on external parties to update us. We have what we call the Secretariat. Any information that you want regarding meetings that have been held, you ask the Secretariat, you ask your staff. So it's very concerning to the faction that on three occasions, it was said these meetings never happened, but the Government itself didn't notify the Minister.

The faction mentions the answers provided to questions on the Tax Holiday. It was also stated that during the tenure of the last Government, five were given out. The faction believes in avoiding misrepresentation of the truth. A tax holiday was given out to a project that consisted of multiple entities, but it was approved by the relevant departments—the Ministry of TEATT and also approved by the Fiscal Affairs Department, and the Council of Ministers. This was a time during the pandemic, and like the Minister said in one of her answers, and a time when even the Parliament of Sint Maarten, was stating we have to do our best to attract these individuals, to bring in companies, especially dealing with the Netherlands and finding money on our own. So, with the support of Parliament, yes, every single approval was given, not one negative advice at that time for the project.

The Minister mentioned the reason why we give tax holidays, and there are some reasons, for example, why the Ministry of TEATT would not give a tax holiday. For example, the Ministry of TEAT, which gives advice first before it goes to Fiscal Affairs, would mention things like maybe overdevelopment in the area. They would mention things such as an entity already receiving significant economic benefits, such as tourists already buying condos. They might mention

that construction in certain areas may lead to gentrification. They might also mention that there's already separate financing and other examples of concerns. Were these in place with the approval? What would the reason be if it was approved against all the answers the Minister gave herself for the reasons why to give? If the reasons were given why we give a tax holiday, but the advice given by the ministries was exactly the opposite or negative of those same answers, then why?

To be clear, it's not that the faction is against or for tax holidays. The faction is highlighting the hypocrisy—the fact of saying one thing and doing the exact opposite of those things.

The faction would like to know if the Minister knows about the governmental trend of divesting companies over the last 15-20 years. Why are they going through this process around the world? So, this is not a local trend. The faction thinks we're one of the few in the world that still have so many or 100% shareholders of government entities. Does the Minister view, for example, a difference with selling an asset and selling shares in a company? In addition to that, does the Minister believe in strategic mergers and acquisitions? Do you believe in selling shares to gain a partner? For example, with GEBE, if you have a big solar company that has the ability to buy shares within GEBE, GEBE now has a strategic partner within their reach that could not only give advice but, because they are invested in the company, they can say, "Hey, if we need a generator, we'll put the money in." Because by bringing a generator in, X amount of revenue is generated.

The faction would like to know if the Council of Ministers is following the cabinet policy in terms of hiring.

Regarding this budget amendment, the faction believes the main topic here would be the loan for the generators. Among us as MPs, we've had many discussions on this, and the Prime Minister also mentioned that since June, he went to the Netherlands, and there have been discussions since then. The faction notes that we're a few months removed from June and would like to know if we can get an update on what the

potential terms of the agreement would be with the Ministry of Finance and BZK. Have you had even informal discussions on that? Do these terms or agreements look anything similar to that of the airport terms and agreement on their refinancing? Were these in any way part of the discussions?

Once the Parliament approves this budget, the faction understands that we basically give carte blanche for you to continue this process, so the Prime Minister doesn't necessarily have to come back to Parliament to do the tendering process. What the faction would like to know is: before the agreement is finalized, will you be updating Parliament on what this potential agreement is? Because now, once you approve this, the Prime Minister has that power already. What we've also done in the past is get agreements and then come to Parliament to amend a budget because we already know the terms, and Parliament is then empowered. So now we're kind of doing it backward. The faction would like to know if the Prime Minister is going to inform Parliament or the public of what these agreements are or what the terms are. There was also a question posed by a previous speaker regarding GEBE to the Minister of Finance, and in there it was stated that the 1.5 million budgeted was an expected dividend. Has GEBE paid dividends before, and what's the likelihood of them being able to pay the 1.5 million guilders in dividends? Also, has any government-owned company paid dividends in the last few years?

The faction mentions the three-month trial last year within the Ministry of Finance from November up until December. The process started with a survey and an exit survey. In that survey, there were 20 questions to gather their sentiments. The results of the survey actually showed, especially since it was mostly women who participated, that most persons within the department actually valued their time almost more than money. The faction was even surprised by that. Persons valued their time, and for example, one person said, you know, I would have more time with my kids. Another person said, you know, I'll have time; at least I could focus on one day where I can focus on my hobby that could generate

revenue instead of, let's say, having to rush from work or after work participating in this hobby.

There is a possibility to have that implemented, and the faction would like that we actually look into that. The faction believes our staff has been neglected with COLA for years, more than 10 years, while inflation continues to rise, and this would be one way to be able to give back to our civil servants and show them that we care not just about their work but their quality of life while they work.

Regarding the questions about the legal help desk, a few months ago, the faction saw two articles come out. The faction wants to know which concept we are working with for the legal help desk, the one from MP Roseburg or former MP Akeem Arrindell.

The faction doesn't get why we just can't start because if there are no financial consequences, why can't we just start? The faction encounters a lot of individuals who can't read Dutch, and they ask for help, and they have no place to go. Also, for a person who has never been introduced or never gone to a lawyer for, let's say, non-criminal reasons, for example, or never had to go to a notary, it's very intimidating for them. So if they know that this entity is set up where they're able to just get advice—not even, let's say, go to a court procedure—just get advice. The faction was very shocked to see how much request just for information, just for knowledge on how to proceed in certain matters. The faction believes that this is a very good setup for Sint Maarten, and the faction would just like to know when we could get an official start date. If not, why? The faction saw that there were a few lawyers. How can we maximize the list? How come you get most of the lawyers on board? Can we increase the number of lawyers to the legal help desk? The faction believes that the ministry needs to take ownership of it now and just start promoting the start date because the faction thinks this is something very much needed for our community.

The faction noted that the list of planned road schedules for the side roads will be sent in writing. The faction

hopes that that'll be done before the public meeting, but the faction also asked if you could have it done for the public in general. The faction mentions that the former Minister published the schedule for the general public, especially those that will be affected by the road schedule, months in advance. Can that and when will that be done for the public?

Minister, the Faction noted that you mentioned the timeline for the aesthetics policy. The faction believes there was already a draft in Government. What is the timeline of the Minister for this aesthetics policy? When will this be presented to us, and actually going into implementation? The Minister mentioned privacy with the top 10 offenders, but the faction never asked for the names of these top 10 offenders. The faction asked for the amounts, so what are the top 10 offenders, and what are those amounts? In addition to that, what is the ministry doing to go and actually collect this money?

The faction noted that it was anticipated of one entity collecting 1.2 million. The faction would like to know if that's reflected. Has that been communicated to the Ministry of Finance? Is that supposed to be collected this year? Is that part of the current budget amendment?

The faction is referring to the schedule of the side roads. The faction mentions that Windward Roads is not the only company that has the contracts for side roads. The faction is again asking if the schedule for the side roads can be published and keep the public up to date. Can it be sent to us and the Minister's priority list in terms of the roads that are up next?

The faction is still very confused regarding the 1.2 million guilders. The faction heard the Minister mentioned that there was a letter of intent by a minister to give the land. Then, after, you're planning to issue it; isn't that then a new issuance? Because a letter of intent doesn't mean that it has been issued. Intent isn't the same as actually issuing the land out or deeding the land out. The faction would like some

clarity on that. Is it part of the budget or not? Is it expected to be collected for 2024 or not?

The faction congratulates the Minister of VROMI for restarting the road resurfacing projects, specifically the one where they are busy on Pointe Blanche Road. The faction has questions concerning that with reference to the July 10th article. The Minister made some claims about taking the road resurfacing projects, going forward, to another level when it comes to quality. Mention is made of a couple of things regarding the thicknesses of asphalt. The Minister mentioned 6 to 7 cm or 6 to 8 cm of asphalt, and all these numbers have a trickle-down effect on the expenditures of the project. The faction would like to know the thickness of the construction that is being done now on Pointe Blanche Road.

The faction takes notes of the statements of the MinisterMinister regarding tackling drainage systems, stating that fewer meters of road would be done but with more in-depth work to tackle all the challenges related to the roads. The faction would like to know what is being done concerning that on the Pointe Blanche Road?

The faction mentions the Prince Bernard Bridge. The faction reminds the Minister of a tender to repair the bridge, some 500,000 plus guilders. Since then, the faction has noted the construction of a stone tablet with the name of the bridge on it, as well as painting and a lot of superficial things being done to the bridge. What is the timeline for the exact construction elements for the bridge? When will it be repaired? What are they doing, and who is doing it?

The road fund. The faction references a statement of the Minister of VROMI about the road fund being part of the 2024 amendment. The faction did not see it reflected in the amendment. The faction understands that the aim is to reallocate the road tax to the road fund along with other revenue-generating ideas. What are the exact current ideas for revenue generation other than corporate social responsibilities? Is the Minister of the opinion that reallocating the road tax funds to the road fund should be done in a more

phased manner? The faction is of the opinion that reallocating the funds, even for the 2025 budget, could mean moving one problem into another, while the faction understands the long-term vision behind it.

The faction refers to a press briefing where it was stated that the tender for the tiles in the classrooms is now out for the MLK. The faction is concerned that the roof of the school was handed over in February, and, between February and now, only things being discussed is paint, windows, and tiles. The Faction question what has been done in the meantime and what is the timeline moving forward? What do we plan to do and use the school for between now and the next school year?

Furthermore, there's been a cut in school funds of 13.1 million. The faction would like to know what the plans are to mitigate the loss in school material funds. A lot of the different schools and teachers are frustrated with the fact that they do not have the proper school materials to teach the kids.

What is the Minister of Finance's stance on securing funds for a proper forensic lab moving forward? The faction would like to know about the plans for establishing a forensic lab.

The faction is concerned about a tax holiday being offered to a major developer. The faction requests access to the documents outlining the agreement, specifically what it entails in terms of corporate social responsibility, where it will be directed, and to whom. The faction hopes it will benefit an area in need rather than those who already have.

The faction has questions concerning revenue-generating ideas and the stance of the Minister of Finance concerning these. For example, operational licenses per branch instead of per entity for lottery booths.

There are some 200 slot machines in grocery stores—what are the thoughts on taxation for that?

There's a lot of things to consider regarding the lottery category that hasn't been implemented yet. The faction is curious about the Minister of Finance's position on those moving forward, especially since we need to be creative to generate funds. With 100 booths and over 200 slot machines, which is a lot of potential funds that could be generated there.

The faction continues and states that there have been drastic cuts in the sports budget for local and regional tournaments, which are essentially the means of exposing our athletes and getting them the needed experience and development. While the faction understands that cuts have to be made, are there any strategies to mitigate these and to try to get our athletes the attention they deserve?

Since we are giving away tax holidays to major developers, if that is true, the faction would like to know what about tax holidays for small business owners, especially startups, for the first two years? What is the Minister's stance when it comes to that?

The faction would like to know the status of the legal helpdesk.

The faction mentions the stoplight. The old system that we used for the stoplight was basically a time-based system. The faction agrees with the current Minister of VROMI that we should take infrastructure to the next level and would like to know if we replacing that with the same system, or are we going to go over to an intensity-based system, where, for example, at late at night, you don't have to sit at a red light when there's zero traffic on the road?

As it regards the road resurfacing project, the faction would like to know if there are any height surveys being done for the roads of choice before any grading or construction of the road is taking place. So, are there any height surveys being done?

The faction has questions about the reflows as the airport project is slated to be completed this year. Are the reflows supposed to start with immediate effect? If not, do

they have a grace period? And if there's a grace period, until when is this grace period? The faction would also like to know what the Government's plans are concerning the reflows of the airport.

The Prime Minister indicated that the cost of the rental for the new generator will not be passed on to the consumer. Can the Government provide an overview of the fuel clause rate from 2021 to present? Can that overview also include factors with reasons for the increase, other than the fuel costs?

The faction mentions that the calculation of fuel clauses is still fascinating. What is the current percentage of the cost not related to the cost of fuel and the throughput fees in the makeup of the fuel clause? Please specify exactly what these costs are, if any.

Is the electricity concession ordinance of 2014 with GEBE still valid? Yes or no, please.

There are a lot of questions concerning the loan for the new generators. It is unclear if the information that is lacking from our end is being withheld for loan purposes or negotiation purposes. The faction would suggest, if that's the case, that we can have a closed-door meeting where those documents or whatever are seen as classified documents, and we could have an open dialogue concerning everything where the loan is concerned to avoid any misunderstandings for when the time for voting comes around.

The faction understands that the MinisterMinister is waiting on the lawyers to get back to the MinisterMinister. What is the exact tentative date for the start of the legal helpdesk? The faction hasn't seen any promotion as yet. The faction would like some more clarity where that is concerned.

One of the main costs that plagues SZV are the enormous medical costs when it comes to patients that are sent abroad, and even though the care is cheaper than in some other places in the region, it's still expensive cumulatively when you add it all up.

What are the checks and balances moving forward that the Government plans to initiate concerning the handling of patients abroad?

Right now, the SZV has an intermediary in places like Colombia, etc., that handles the communication between the hospital and Sint Maarten, basically SZV. The faction is of the opinion that the third party is the judge, jury, and executioner for all patients and chaperons abroad. Oftentimes, the SZV doesn't have the necessary communication with the patient, and everything is trusted to this third party or these third parties. The faction mentions that sometimes a patient who is supposed to be over there for two weeks ends up staying two months or three months, and the costs keep going up and up, higher and higher.

Does the Government have any plans to implement anything to mitigate these things from happening? This would also raise the quality of the service, or basically the customer experience, with the customer being the patient's experience. Does the Minister have any plans for this moving forward for the ministry?

Are there any plans concerning the function book of the ministry of VSA? The faction mentions that there a lot of employees functioning outside of their position that has a lot of implications when it comes to salary or expectation or being able to be properly evaluated. What are the plans when it comes to the updating of the function book of the ministry?

Concerning the car wrecks and the cars on the side of the road, the faction would like to bring up a particular area, namely St. James Estate. Although a private area, it is often used as a place to store cars and, in particular, wrecks. The faction would like to know if that area is under the Minister's purview to also clean up when it comes to car wrecks. Because it's private property, it's an added expense for the landowners in the area. Can the Minister look into this as well?

When it comes to the priority list for the side roads—because St. James was also once a priority road on the side

road project— the faction would like to know if it is still there. Is it the next road to be done, or is it going to be something that's going to be pushed off again because St. James Estate still has overhanging GEBE lines? The faction states that it is not customary to pave a road and then address the lines. The faction knows that, in the past, GEBE has had contact with the landowners regarding signing over the necessary permission to be able to put the lines down. What is the status of that, and is that going to be done prior to St. James being up for the next road to be paved?

As it pertains to the road surfacing, in particular the Point Blanche part of the project, the faction asked if there were any height surveys being done, and the MinisterMinister said no. Going off the Minister'sMinister's article, he stated a couple of months ago that 6 cm would be kind of the base minimum that they will be operating from and where needed, more.

The reason why the faction is asking these questions is because, aside from the customary 4 cm, which the MinisterMinister claimed would be done in the past, the faction is afraid that, although the MinisterMinister means well—that we're taking steps backward where technical specs are concerned instead of taking steps forward. The faction has information as it regards the most recent works on Union Road and Bush Road. Bush Road, for example, had areas and lengths of road where 10 to 12 cm of asphalt was applied.

The faction believes that before agreeing or coming to terms with the thickness of the roads, the Minister needs to look at the category of the roads. On Sint Maarten, up to now, we only look at side roads and main roads as the two categories, but also the usage of the road. Point Blanche is a particular road that is used differently than other roads because of the enormous intensity of the freight trucks. Because of this, a lot of times, we tend to look at the top layer, which the Minister is now upgrading, but where freight trucks are concerned, the most important thing is the underlayer, not the top layer.

The faction is of the opinion that we are not really addressing the problem of the road. It's more, in that situation, of beautification because the main problem with Point Blanche was the fraying of the asphalt.

The faction knows that the project does not include any asphalt reinforcement. The faction observed that no asphalt reinforcement was being used. That is something that keeps the top layer and the bottom layer from shifting. The faction is concerned about removing the top layer and not addressing the underlayer because the underlayer is used for weight distribution and maintaining the structural integrity of the foundation. So, if we effectively remove the top layer and not address the underlayer, you're not fixing the problem. And because there were no height surveys done, there were also no drill cores taken, so effectively no one knows what the thickness is of the underlayer. And because you're going thicker allegedly with the asphalt, you can end up in a scenario where you have a thicker top layer than underlayer, and that structurally is more disruptive than productive.

The faction noted that the MinisterMinister mentioned the sloping of the road vertically. The faction is of the opinion that if the road is to be assessed prior to addressing the road, a major problem would be after 15 to 20 minutes of rain it would basically be a pool of water and that is mainly because of the horizontal problems when it comes to sloping.

The faction would like to inform the MinisterMinister that because there's no height surveys taken, then the horizontal sloping of the road can never be done. And if the horizontal sloping of the road can never be addressed, then the pits actually become superfluous because you can't guide the water to the pit. So, if we slope vertically, we're actually creating another problem if the horizontal is not also tackled.

The faction reminds the MinisterMinister that if 6 cm is used on the high side of the road, if you're sloping horizontally, which means on the lower end, you're using the same 4 cm that ministry would refrain from using. Can the MinisterMinister clear that part up? Because if one side is

higher than the next, it also has implications where height is concerned.

The faction believes the Minister when he said that he wants to take the next step in improving our road infrastructure, and that is something that, although expensive, saves money in the long run. The faction would like to remind the Minister that by addressing the horizontal and vertical slope issues, you also tackle the drainage issues as well.

The faction mentions the road fund. The Minister's answer was basically it's handled via national ordinance, end of sentence. The faction would like to remind the Minister, in all respect, that he is a co-legislator. So, if something is a national ordinance, that ordinance can be amended or repealed at our discretion. The question was more pertaining to the personal opinion of the Minister on what the Minister thinks should be the right way to implement the reallocation of the road tax to the road fund. The faction expresses concern about doing it too quickly, where you're alleviating one problem on one end and creating a problem on the next end.

The faction would like for the Minister VROMI to provide an overview of the number of vacation rental properties on Dutch Sint Maarten based on issued building permits and address information. What steps can be taken to assess these property owners for income, profit, and/or TOT taxes? The faction knows right now there's nothing in place for that, but the question is, what is the vision where that is concerned?

Although the faction knows it's more of a taxation question, the faction would like to know what the Minister's opinion or stance is on property tax for non-residents, basically investors that come to Sint Maarten, invest, and leave. What are the Minister's opinions where that is concerned? We often talk about generating new revenues, and the faction believes something like this would be very advantageous for the coffers.

The faction would like to know what the Minister's Minister's long-term vision is when it comes to the drainage issue in Cole Bay. The faction would like to know where the Minister Minister plans on starting and if he has started to think on those solutions as yet.

The faction is asking for clarification, maybe it was missed, but the faction did not fully hear the answer to the question pertaining to the forensic lab. What plans does the ministry have for the forensic lab of the police station? Will that be taken up in this budget, the 2025 budget, or any budget?

As it pertains to the Martin Luther King School the faction would like to know what the plans are between November and the new school year for the school and the building.

The faction would like to know about the one-cent-per-liter provision, which has been cut, like several other things. The faction knows the legislation reached as far as the money being able to be allocated to the ministry, but the entity to use it was never addressed. What is the state of affairs with that?

The faction notes that most budget cuts are based on expenditures, whereas the one-cent-per-liter is basically an income, yet it was cut. Was it cut because it went to another post? What was it cut for?

The faction mentions the VWO and the technical vocational Education. What are the long-term visions of the Minister and the ministry of Education to ensure continued access to VWO and technical vocational Education, considering the concerns from school boards that the lump-sum compensation system, which is based on the number of students insufficiently cover the costs of these special forms Education with extraordinary high cost.

The faction inquires if the lump-sum compensation system was evaluated by a consultant. If yes, what were the findings and recommendations of the consultant? Were these

recommendations implemented? If not, why? If yes, please indicate how ?

The faction states that there is an increase in subsidy for subsidized school boards while according to the data there have been a decrease in the number of students in primary and secondary schools since 2017. Can the MinisterMinister provide the reasons for the increase and moreover the legal justification for the increase in the absence of an increase in the number of students based on the lump sum compensation system.

The faction continues and mentions that one of the main complaints from businesses is that the education system is not properly aligned with the labor market needs of Sint Maarten. What initiatives and or educational innovations is the ministry pursuing to better resolve these issues.

What are the plans, seeing all the cuts in the budget, for special Education? The faction has not seen this reflected in the budget.

In accordance with the legislation the Minister of Education is required to present a state of education report to Parliament. Can the MinisterMinister please provide an update on the state of education report and indicate when it will be presented in Parliament?

Lottery booth license holder with ten booths and the other has 100 booths we are paying the same in taxes. What are the plans when it comes to legislation to tackle that? The more branches one has, the more taxes one pays, leading to increased revenue generation for the Government. This has also to do with the difference between lottery booths and ticket vendors in various stores and gas stations.

The faction had a question about online gambling. A major pet peeve these days is all the regulations at the bank, and it has a lot to do with the regulations from the FIU and Sint Maarten being on the grey list. Many individuals face challenges when trying to open a bank account or submit amounts of \$2,000 or \$3,000. This situation is partly due to

lack of legislation that regards the online gambling sector. The faction would like to know what the plans are when it comes to legislation of that category.

The airport. The faction would like to know if the airport commenced the repayment of the loan granted by the Government in 2018 and 2019. If not, why not? If yes, can the MinisterMinister indicate how much has been recouped to date?

The faction mentions the throughput fee. The faction believes that this has never been explained. What is it comprised of? How is that calculated? What is the pie chart of the throughput fees? What percentage goes to Government and what percentage goes to other entities? Who are these entities?

To the Minister of TEATT and the Minister of ECYS The faction would like to know the status of the cooling system/airco at the LB Scott Auditorium. What is the status of that promise. There is a lot of activities being done right now at the LB Scott Sport Auditorium and it's very hot so that promise will be very advantageous for those who attend these events.

The faction noted that a couple of years ago, there were various studies done by VSA on the state of affairs of gambling addiction on the island, and it was made clear numerous times that Sint Maarten suffers from a gambling addiction problem. What are the Minister's sentiments moving forward as it pertains to the law that states that entities of 200 or more rooms automatically fall under the category of being able to have a casino license?

The faction notes that we sit back on both sides of the room and say something is not possible or, why is something not possible or, why it isn't possible or, why we are not doing something, or we can't do something because of X, Y, and Z. The faction believes that both sides of the room are guilty of that. A lot of times, the step is being skipped; what are we doing to get ready for that position in order to do that down the road? The faction states the WINAIR idea was pulled off

the table, the reason being at the time was, a lack of legislation. What is being done with that legislation moving forward in the sense of are we getting ourselves prepared in the event of us ever wanting to sell the shares of WINAIR or any other entity of that magnitude? What is the state of affairs when it comes to the legislation? Is the legislation even being made, or are there plans to make it?

Tax holidays are also granted based on economic growth or people hired to whomever the tax holiday is granted. To the Minister of Finance, what is the number of expected employees to be hired by this person or persons?

The faction would like to know from the Minister of Finance what the plan of the Government is concerning the reflows of the airport moving forward once they recommence. When are the reflows slated to start?

The faction mentions the loan for GEBE. The faction suggested a closed-door meeting where the Prime Minister would be able to share more information as it pertains to the loan and the possible conditions and reasonings, and details behind it. The faction doesn't want to end up in a situation where it is asked to vote for something without all the information again. So, the faction would like to know in advance, before that time comes, what the stance of the Prime Minister is as it pertains to a closed door. Furthermore, the faction understands via some investigative work that GEBE could not apply for a loan of that magnitude because, of course, of the hack of the last couple of years and their financial books. What was the last year GEBE had a finalization of their financial statements? What was the last year that the financial statements were green?

The faction sees a lot of cuts done over the various Ministries as it pertains to personnel costs; It's a significant difference in the budget cuts for personnel in comparison to the traveling budget. Is there a reason for that? If so, what are the reasons, and what is the motivation behind keeping the traveling budget as much intact as possible and cutting the budget for critical vacancies?

Pertaining to the SOL agreement, the faction would like to know when the contract is going to be finished. What are the plans of the Prime Minister or the Government as it pertains to either renegotiating or seeing their stance in the market when it comes to other companies? What is the stance and vision when it comes to that?

The faction mentions the new generators. What assurance can the Prime Minister give us, that the fuel to be used in these generators is not diesel versus the other two types? Because the use of diesel actually increases the fuel cost, and that is one of the reasons why the prices are where they are today. So, what assurance can GEBE and the Prime Minister give to Parliament, that the fuel to be used in the new generators will not be diesel?

The faction would like to know where the legal helpdesk stands on the priority list of the Minister of VSA.

The faction mentions monuments and the monument Council. Moving forward, the faction's question is: what are the plans of the ministry when it comes to the protection of monuments and the penalties for those responsible for their destruction? What is the status of the investigation as it pertains to the offenders that ruined this one?

The Minister explained that VROMI moves car wrecks and not abandoned cars and that because it's private property (St. James Estate), it requires permission from the landowner. But the Minister also said that it's the responsibility of the landowner to organize it themselves. The faction does not understand: can landowners request this from VROMI but not depend on them to do it all the time? Is this something that can be worked out between VROMI and the landowners? In certain areas, like St. James Estate, abandoned or wrecked cars often end up on vacant lots owned by landowners who are not present, creating an issue. Can VROMI assist in barricading these properties or helping the landowners? The faction would like to know what the options are.

Specifically, when hills are excavated, what plans are there for the dirt that results from excavation? Much of the landfill is actually dirt, not garbage. The faction understands that plans involve separating dirt from garbage, but the question is: what happens to the dirt? With more excavation planned, particularly with hills as flat land becomes scarce, there is a need for a plan for dirt storage or usage.

Regarding property tax for non-residents, did the faction understand correctly that the MinisterMinister is open to this? The faction is aware that property tax exists but hasn't been implemented. The question is specifically about taxing non-residents or foreign investors who benefit from their properties in Sint Maarten without living here.

The faction would like to know if the MinisterMinister would be open to implementing three things: drill cores prior, drill cores post, and height surveys before any asphalt is laid.

The Monuments. The MinisterMinister alluded to the fact that the prior administration didn't have the necessary follow-up that was needed at the time. But the faction would like to know what the MinisterMinister is planning to do with this case moving forward and with future cases, or to mitigate future cases moving forward?

The faction understands that the MinisterMinister contacted GEBE, and upon response from GEBE the Minister will be able to elaborate more. Is St. James Estate on the list?

The faction understands that exact dates cannot be given as there are too many factors involved, but can you provide tentative or rough estimates for when you would like to get it done? Things can change, people understand that, but the residents of those roads that are on the list would appreciate something to look forward to, whether it's in the near or far future. The faction thinks that would be enough for them—not an exact date like the 12th of the month or the 11th, but a general idea.

As it pertains to the lab, the Minister of Justice alluded to the fact that something of that magnitude would not be

sustainable. The faction never specified what size—whether big, small or in between—so when you said "magnitude," was the MinisterMinister referring to an extensive state-of-the-art lab or something more than what we have today? Can the Minister elaborate on that?

When the Minister said it's not sustainable, were you referring to the money required for the investment or the upkeep? And when you said "magnitude," can you specify what magnitude you were referring to in this context?

Additionally, has a study been done that concluded that it would not be sustainable for the island? The faction is not sure if the opinion of the MinisterMinister is based on any prior studies. What is the vision of the ministry as it pertains to the lab?

The faction noted that the Minister alluded to the fact that the 1 cent per liter post of 110,000 guilders was not from the 1 cent per liter provision, but it was there, and now it's not there anymore. The faction's question is, what's the story around that? Where did the money come from, and where has the money gone?

The next question as it pertains to the lottery, booths, sales points, casinos, the faction would like the Minister'sMinister's stance, especially seeing that she's going to do her research. What is the Minister'sMinister's stance, on a moratorium on all of the above? It's a simple yes or no.

The faction was more looking for what the costs of the last 10 years are by way of the cost Causeway, with the fees incurred by way of the Throughput fee. So, what are the total costs that the Causeway has cost to date by way of the throughput fee?

The United People's Party-faction has taken note of the draft with interest. The faction indicates that looking through the budget, there are a lot of questions. The faction mentions the Ministry of TEATT and states that the tourism

marketing initiatives went from 2.5 million to 2.4 million. What was taken away? The faction would like to understand what was actually taken away. The faction mentions that when it thinks about business, and it thinks government is a business, if you don't take care of your people, you will get no work done. The jobs and the positions that were budgeted for in the beginning were positions that are needed. The faction understands that if it was budgeted for the year, and we are now in September/ October, so the previous amount was taken. However, the faction would like to know if the jobs are still available. How have we been recruiting? What jobs are missing? Where have we been looking?

The faction mentions that it has heard Members of Parliament ask what are the ideas that every Ministry has to increase the coffers of government. The faction would like to suggest that one day, the Council of Ministers sits a closed-door meeting with the Members of Parliament and let's brainstorm and dialogue as the representatives of Sint Maarten and come up with ideas. Where does CoM need the Members of Parliament, and how could the Members of Parliament assist CoM? The faction is of the opinion that the only way we are going to reach anywhere is by doing it together. The faction would like to understand how and why these cuts were made.

The faction states that we are asking civil servants to do more work. However, it has not been seen anywhere in the budget where and how they are going to be compensated for this. The faction suggests that if we are cutting down because we didn't hire people, let's give them something extra because they have been doing the work.

The faction mentions that sometime back the previous government made a plan on how to collect the taxes owed by the casinos and the lottery companies. How far are we with those? Have they moved on the offer to get the discount and pay up some money? Has the Minister looked into those that did not take up the offer?

The faction mentions that it did not see anywhere anything concerning carnival. The year before, they didn't ask

for the money, and then they did because some of those supporters/ sponsors pulled back, and then the Government made some type of payment. The faction states that it hasn't seen this in the budget reflected anywhere.

75,600,000 guilders that is being requested in the budget will not get the support of the faction. Once information is forthcoming, you will not get this type of reaction.

With the total budget cut of approximately 4.6 million, how does the ministry plan to prioritize the various department's activities and manage resources efficiently? What long-term strategies are being developed to mediate the effects of this budget reduction on public service delivery and departmental effectiveness? How will the Ministry maintain staff morale and retention with cuts in salary allowances and training across multiple departments? How will reductions in training and development funds affect employee growth and succession planning? What measures are in place to address potential gaps in staff skills and capabilities due to the decreased training opportunities?

What impact will the reduction of the advertising budget have on the department's ability to communicate effectively with the public? Are there plans to seek alternative funding or methods for public outreach?

What strategies are in place to manage the secretariat's operational expenses with the reduction in personnel costs? How will the secretariat prioritize activities and expert consultations, given the budget constraints? How will reductions in personnel and third-party services affect the service center's ability to deliver services to the public?

Are there any plans to streamline operations to accommodate these budget constraints?

Will the reduction in personnel expenses affect the Ministry's capacity to engage in diplomatic initiatives? What measures are in place to ensure that foreign relations priorities are not compromised due to these reductions? How

will the reductions impact the department's ability to attract and retain legal professionals? What alternative training opportunities are being explored, given the decrease in training funds?

What impact will the reductions in funds for training and equipment have on the fire department's operational readiness? How does the department plan to address the potential shortage in essential goods and services for disaster response? How will these cuts affect the staff bureau's ability to retain qualified staff and maintain morale? What plans are in place to ensure continued staff development? What will the impact of the decreased funding for government agencies be on the Plenipotentiary Ministries' activities? How does the Ministry intend to maintain effective relations with other entities given these cuts? How will the reduction in the budget for other goods and services impact the Minister's ability to manage unforeseen operational expenses?

Are there plans to relocate funds from other areas to cover potential shortfalls in essential services?

How many requests from doctors are pending? Do we have a list of how many doctors are waiting to be able to come to Sint Maarten to treat our patients? How much has it saved SZV bringing the doctors here instead of sending our patients away?

The faction mentions the homeless shelter that was temporarily in Sucker Garden. The Dr. J facility. How far are we with relocating or helping those senior citizens? How does the Ministry plan to manage the reduced legal and expert advice budget, especially for departments that are heavily reliant on these services? Will the reduced subsidies impact social programs or community support initiatives, given the reductions in the social benefits and emergency provisions? What measures are in place to ensure vulnerable populations continue to receive adequate support? Are there alternative funding sources or partnerships being considered to address these cuts, particularly in departments like public health and social development?

Does the Minister have any plans for parking in Phillipsburg? The faction also mentions the clean-up and maintenance of Phillipsburg. Are these businesses being fined for putting garbage outside before or even after the drums have passed?

Are there any plans to reduce the continuously rising prices of homes in Sint Maarten?

Do we have any plans for the bricks on Front Street? The faction believes we should start moving in the direction of a whole different plan and save us that money.

The faction would like to know if we have any homes available in Belvedere or any other locations.

The faction mentions that it saw a letter from a gentleman that he received a bill for a building permit that he requested seven years ago. For a building permit that he no longer needs and wants. Can the Minister help to deal with that as there are a lot more out there, and those will now be as income in the budget, which will never be reached because those persons have no need for those building permits anymore?

The factions implores that the Minister ask secretariat for the advice from De Jong that sits concerning the issuance of water rights. That is a project waiting to be finalized, which the faction believes will bring a lot of money to the country.

If someone has a piece of land that is being paid for every year, and the person gets a building permit, and then the neighbor doesn't like what is being built and complains, then it is taken away. But the question is, what happens with all the years that the person paid for that land?

How does the Minister see us hiring our own? We are talking about brain drain, but if we don't hire our own, we definitely will need to look into this, especially if we send them away to study because it is alarming when you hear someone say hey, I'm thinking about leaving after we've paid their scholarship for all those years.

The faction requested the Minister to give an explanation of what the Minister thinks is the difficulty the cost cuts brought to the Ministry itself. What effects will this have on the Ministry? Was this a choice of the Minister, or was it Finance that made these cuts?

The faction comments and states that we have doctors coming in but not thoroughly doing what they should do. This can cost money, and the faction would like the Minister of VSA to look into this.

The faction believes that we are losing monies by the collection on drawings lottery games that are being drawn on Sint Maarten. The faction states that one of the stipulations in the lottery ordinance is that the drawings should be held here on Sint Maarten. We have a couple of lottery companies for which the drawings are abroad. There is only one lottery company that has a license to be able to sell numbers here abroad. The faction believes that with the oversight committee, the government is losing money and the drawings because it's 50,000 per game that is played on the island. We are losing money there also, and it brings somewhat of a disadvantage to the lottery companies that are actually doing the right thing by doing all their drawings here. The faction estimates that we are losing at least literally 500,000 to 600,000 a month with that alone. The faction would like the Minister to look into this.

The faction has questions related to VSA. Looking at post 43476, a cut was made of 300,000 guilders for legal and other expertise. Originally, this establishment was for the ambulance legislation to further regulate the department and night hours. The department has requested and urged for such to be looked into for many years, so it's a bit of a shame to see it cut. The faction would like to know from the relevant Minister why this was cut. Is it no longer seen as a priority?

The faction noticed there are significant cuts in Community Development, Family and Humanitarian Affairs, budget—post 43489. We had 300,000 in projects and 84,000 for third parties. Now, bear in mind, while we may say there

are three more months in 2024, the 2025 budget still has to come. The 2024 budget came in March and still needs to go through the process. So, let's not just make cuts, viewing the fact that there are three more months left. The faction believes that Community Development is important to the progress of Community Family Development. This was a key reason for success in VSA, and the faction hopes this department will not be neglected.

Referring back to the ambulance, in the *toelichting* on page 89, the original amount still states 150,000, so that means someone didn't correctly review. The faction noticed that there are a lot of discrepancies with the *toelichting* and the budget.

The faction continues and mentions that it was informed that the job fair was not budgeted further and that this would probably be the last one. This is important because it showed two different things: that the government is taking an initiative and also outpouring for employment. The faction is of the opinion that it would be a shame to see something deemed a success will not be continued.

Can the Minister clarify specifically what was taken out of the capital expenditures for VROMI? On the listing for capital expenditures, the faction does not see specifically the 75 million. The faction notes 31 million added to VROMI. When the faction reviews the details, it does note the 75 million. In order for that to work, something had to come out. One of the things that the faction does notice is out and placed on a wish list is phase one of the Cay Bay project. This is a problem that has been going on for many years. Cay Bay and Dutch Quarter are places that often feel neglected.

There are other substantial cuts that the faction will go through per Ministry, but the faction wanted to touch directly on that Cay Bay project for it to be taken out and put on a wish list. The faction doesn't want it to be proposed or sold as if the 2025 capital expenditures is guaranteed, because it is not.

The faction mentions the tourist tax. Is it the intention of the government to continue the process? Indeed, there was no SER. The faction understands the Minister's reasoning for removing it; we still have to go through the process, so more than likely, it won't be for the 2024 budget.

The faction notes that for the vending villages, there is a reduction of 200,000. When the Minister was here, she said there were no increases or decreases, but she also withdrew that statement and asked for a period of a week or two to give answers. Now we see in the budget that there is a significant reduction in the budget.

The faction continues and indicates that it is also concerned about the reduction in online marketing, online agencies, the beautification process, and product development. We have the FCCA coming in a couple of weeks, and we are speaking of product development, but that was one of the main key points brought forward during an attendance of the FCCA. When asked about the survey as to why tourists don't return to Sint Maarten, the number one reason was one, traffic; two, there was no new attraction; and three, of course, they found the place was not clean compared to other countries.

The faction believes we have to start putting these little things in progress. What may seem small can affect our tourist product. The faction hears the Minister of Finance speak of revenue generation, but the faction does not see any revenue-generating projects in this budget. The faction believes that you generate revenue through taxation. If there is another way, the faction would like the Minister of Finance to explain how the Minister plans to generate revenue other than taxation. The faction knows that TEATT is very much responsible for revenue generation.

The faction would like to know, specifically, what the cost of the Causeway Bridge loan was. What is the balance on this loan? How many years remain for this loan?

The faction would like to have from the Ministry of Finance an overall on the tax received from 2019 to the present, be it profit tax, tot, income tax, or wage tax. The faction would like to know the amount of registered businesses, particularly sole proprietors. Does the government have a tax reform plan or vision? If so, the faction would like this shared with the Members of Parliament? The faction would like to know if the Minister of Finance is in agreement with a reduction of profit tax, and if so, what is the desired amount? The faction would also like to know this for the transaction tax. The faction takes note of the error on page 46, in the English version, and could be in the translation. The factions note the mention of a fund for a tax reform bill. Is the bill already drafted? If so, can this detailed amendment be provided?

The faction mentions GEBE and takes note of the 75.6 million that is being requested for three generators. Was there a bid carried out? The government is being asked to approve 75 million, so based on corporate governance, a bid needs to be carried out. The faction recalls that when questions are asked about the generator, it is constantly stated confidential. It was stated before that this could have changed, as there was no bid. It was often said that GEBE would acquire the cost, but this is definitely not the case. What is the financial position of GEBE at this moment for the Government of Sint Maarten to have to invest 75.6 million guilders for GEBE? What is GEBE's burn rate? In the beginning, the faction was a proponent of finding ways within the CAPEX to support GEBE until we had various meetings where it was repeated that GEBE would absorb the cost. GEBE could afford the generators; there would be no cost relayed to the people of Sint Maarten. The faction believes that once we speak about the budget of Sint Maarten, we speak of the Taxpayer's money.

The faction would like to know if the Prime Minister supports the SAAHA as is. Does the government have any plans for new revenue-generating measures? Does this amendment include the securing of financing to start anything

new as it relates to drafting new legislation for revenue-generating measures? With severe cuts in personnel costs, how will the government increase productivity? The faction refers to page 79 of the *toelichting* and quotes the following, "The delays in hiring new staff and lack of senior policy officers are negatively impacting the department's productivity levels." The faction believes this was a cry; it did not start now, but it is a cry. The decrease in personnel staff negatively affects the government apparatus.

The faction mentions hearing the Minister of Finance also speak about revenue-generating projects through VROMI, something with lease land or hotels. The faction stands to be corrected. It shows, in the opinion of the faction, the importance of getting permits out and building permits out and moving. But taken from page 120 from the Staff of VROMI, "the years of staff shortages have led to an overload of the existing staff." The faction states that we hear the cry of the civil servants saying we do not have enough personnel. Now, today, we see a cut in the personnel.

The faction observes in the capex a cut for the police force country Sint Maarten of .4 million. The prison remains the same. For Immigration Services, there is a cut of 326713. For National detectives, there is a cut of 175,000. National Detectives, again, there is an item line 01120, and 1.3 million is deducted. We are seeing now the police, national detectives, immigration, all of these services that basically lagged behind for many years, no fault of the persons but due to budgetary constraints, and now we are finally receiving CAPEX where we can invest into the members of Justice, we are seeing cuts. The faction would like to know what the reason for these cuts is and how will we supplement these cuts to the relevant Minister.

Also, the faction would like to know what is the amount needed to pay the Justice workers with these LBs being signed. The faction is extremely happy to see LBs being signed, but they come with a cost. What is the total amount?

And with LBs being signed, it means that personnel go into new positions, higher positions. So, what is the monthly increase and the yearly increase? And how do we plan on maintaining this increase.

While we're making personnel cuts for the Ministry of Justice, for years, there has been a cry, and according to international standards, we are in a deficit of police officers. This means that we are in need of hiring. What is the plan to encourage police officers? The faction is aware that this will be an increase in personnel.

Also, to the Council of Ministers, the faction would like to know if there is a plan for the monthly payment of OZR. It was realized that there was an issue with SZV, and there was an increase by 1. something million. The faction did not see any increase in the amendment, and the faction didn't really get any plans for SZV, which means if SZV collapsed, our healthcare system collapse. The faction foresees that the same problem of ENNIA is right around the corner for SZV, but yet, in the budget amendment, the faction does not see anything to supplement this. There is over 30 to 40,000 pensioners and we see nothing to supplement this, when we, the government of Sint Maarten, owe SZV over 200 million. The faction believes it's time for we to really start to look into how we're going to save we.

The faction notes a decrease of 13.1 million in education. Our most important investment is education. The faction looks forward to an explanation on this.

The faction observes in the budget that we have 75.6 million for GEBE, but in the *toelichting*, it is asking for Parliament to approve and give the Prime Minister authority to enter into a contract with GEBE, where the details have not even been drafted out. The faction has learned from the ENNIA saga, as clearly stated on the floor of Parliament, that while the loan agreement came to Parliament, the details of the loan agreement did not. Hence, even though Parliament approved this loan agreement, today, we ended up in a bind

where there was something that linked us negatively to an increase in rates in the detailing.

Hence the reason during the meeting, this faction supported the request for every bit of detail concerning the 75 million because what the faction cannot support is for us to depend on GEBE to pay us back, and when GEBE can't, we're in a quagmire because they're going to present, "Hey, government, if we pay you this year or pay you this amount, we will go belly up." Then what?

The faction sees that there's an expectation of a 1.5 million increase in GEBE's dividends. It's extremely positive because, from what the faction has noticed, we have no doubt that we'll go up, but in normal everyday life, you go down before you rise, and GEBE is in a building process. So, to have budgeted and increased dividends, is concerning to this faction. The faction would like to see, before the public meeting, a contract drafted in detail on what the government or how the government plans to negotiate this repayment with GEBE.

There are a lot of other things that the faction believes could be looked at, and, while GEBE is viewed as a crisis. Putting 75 million into GEBE when the generators are up and running—our people of Sint Maarten will still be without light because we can't afford it. We received a petition today from a citizen of Sint Maarten pertaining to the fuel cause.

The faction would like to point out that in VROMI there's a minus 18.2 million taken out of the capex for land purchasing. The faction believes that while we have a GEBE crisis, we also have a housing crisis. The faction would like to know the ministry's position on the cuts made. Specifically, the Minister and the SG of each department on the cuts made, especially in the Justice sector, his feelings on that.

The faction noticed that subsidies are taken out for TEATT, and then again, we speak on revenue generation. No budget is there for certain subsidies that can increase or bring attraction to the country.

The faction would like to receive, for each ministry, the names of all consultants hired by each Minister, including the contractual pricing for each consultant hired by each Minister. The faction would also like to know how many cabinet staff are in each cabinet.

The faction would like to know about the holding cells in Philipsburg. There was also an international court case held that states the holding cells are inhumane. Our entire prison is inhumane, but the holding cells— we speak of UNOPS. Will UNOPS prepare a budget for the holding cells in town? The faction has seen that the Minister of Justice indeed urges renovation, so that's good, but will the money be provided? The faction does not see this mentioned in the budget. So that is also something we need to look at.

The cemetery is very important. This has been a cry to try to find more land space because one thing that is inevitable is death. The faction has taken note of the explanation in the capex for the same land acquiring that was referenced earlier about for 18.2 million that was taken out, the cemetery is also listed in there. These are things the faction believes we have to be very careful about because, right now, there is barely any space. The faction also has a query about a statement made when elections were called by the Prime Minister that he has to go to Washington, DC because there's \$200 million waiting on him. The faction would like to know from the Prime Minister if he has ever seen this \$200 million. Is it in our coffers? Was this \$200 million ever received from this trip to Washington? Because since then, the faction has not received any update of this.

The faction would like to touch on an article from sometime back where MP Roseburg, the Minister of VSA, and everyone were starting the legal help desk, and this was going to be a project to help communities and push forward. The faction believes we have to look at CDFHA—Community Development Family Humanitarian Affairs—this is very important. What is the update with the legal help desk to the

relevant Minister? The faction believes this falls under the Ministry of VSA.

The Minister of TEATT said that there was an increase in the throughput fee due to the building of the bridge. Previously, the Prime Minister clearly stated that the throughput fee was established to pay for the bridge. The faction is seeking a clear answer on which one it is.

In the letter to the CFT, dated June 12, 2024, it stated that an injection of 36 million will go into CAPEX or the budget for the prison. Now we see 75.6. Was this updated by the CFT? The faction would want freedom from the CFT, but it is used when it's convenient. The faction also observed the article indicating the extension of the CFT till 2027, ~~so it's something that we have to deal with and live with.~~ Was there an updated letter sent? The faction would like to view it, also with the response?

The faction has taken note that the ED card system will start during our high season. The faction considers this to be a good thing but cautions the Minister of TEATT to be very careful and refer back to the legislation. The law allows persons to not only do it online but also fill it in when they arrive. The faction has noted that the Minister stated there will be no arrivals if you do not do it before. Again, the faction cautions the Minister to be very careful, as was learned during the COVID time that systems and a lot of people missed their flights and canceled their flights because of the inability to do it online. The faction advises the Minister, until the legislation is changed, to give the opportunity to go back to how it used to be: do it online, and if you missed it while you're on the plane, you can get that. The faction emphasizes the importance of this for our tourism product.

The faction mentions stakeholders having issues with the health levy or tourist levy or tourist tax, and the faction action is of the opinion that at some point, we have to put our foot down and be able to say, at the end of the day, it worked out. The faction advises the Ministers not to hide and cower behind negative reviews, while we lag behind this money-

generating product, Aruba has implemented it. The faction is concerned with the fact that we are always having to see other countries do it for us to feel safe and then say it's okay? The faction emphasizes that this is a general statement and counts for the Member of Parliament as well because the legislation has to come to Parliament, and it will benefit our people. The people will come. The faction is of the opinion that there is something about St. Martin. People are going to come, but we have to believe in ourselves. We have to believe that we are going to better the product for people to come. The faction goes on to state that if we want them to come, so let us invest in our environmental system—remove the dump. Let us invest in our traffic. The faction is looking for the urgency because the phase one of the Ring Road was involved in the capex, so it'll be interesting to see what will come out because we have to enhance our brand. And while we are trying to save one product, we need to ensure that we can generate more revenue to receive monies to replace whatever is taken out or put us in the best position to receive CAPEX 2025.

The factions mentions that the MER Group placed a lien on all receivables of TELEM. The faction is of the opinion that this is concerning. However, TELEM acted quickly, and within a couple of days, we saw in the newspaper that an agreement had been reached. The faction would like to know what amount was paid. The faction is getting indications of an amounts of 3.8 million. What was the amount paid? Who paid this amount? What is the effect on the budget of TELEM having to pay this amount? Was the amount to be paid in one shot or installments? And does this affect future salaries or bonuses? Christmas time is around the corner.

The faction would like to know what the Minister's view on the hotel room tax is. It's been said that we have one of the lowest, if not the lowest, room tax rates in the Caribbean. What is the thought on increasing it—being competitive, but increasing the amount? We did an entire study within the region and the study which showed that Sint Maarten can be can be compatible to between \$15 to \$35 per passenger and be competitive.

The faction makes reference to a newspaper article—Minister of Finance warns merchants to stop imposing purchase limits for cards. The faction finds this to be very important. The faction commends the Minister of Finance for taking a stance, but what is in place to penalize violators? What is in place to ensure that these problems are dealt with? Too often we see everyone relay the cost of everything.

The faction makes use of this opportunity to ask about the HAP. What is the update on that? Are conversations being held? The faction asks this as it's related to our health care, and our health care is related to the budget because SZV will carry this strain, and SZV accounts for 75% of VSA's expense.

The faction points out that the evaluation or audit that they use was actually for the first 6 months only. The faction found this out recently, whereby we don't even recheck if checks and balances were done. The faction is of the opinion that we can point at SZV how much we want, but SZV falls directly under the Minister of VSA. If the Minister wanted this project to continue with stipulations, it would have because the faction believes almost everyone here has benefited from this project.

The faction mentions that sickness doesn't wait, stress and emergency don't wait—so the Minister does not get to determine the timeline because they are leaving and thus leave the decision to an incoming Minister.

The faction takes note of the comments of the Minister of Finance on the two and a half more months remaining, and the faction reminds the Minister to be very careful with those statements when handling the budget, especially this late in the year, considering that the 2024 budget will be used until the 2025 budget is passed. When is it expected for the 2025 budget to reach Parliament? And what is the location at this moment of the 2025 budget?

The faction would like to know what is the Minister's update with the recent article from the Netherlands to cut Caribbean investments, and also, there are talks of cutting the

TWO. We all know that these tax programs and other initiatives for the government were funded through the TWO, which was funded by the Netherlands. It did help a lot with the legislative trajectories of the government, but now there are talks of cuts in investments. If anything has changed since then, has communication been made with the government in the Netherlands to secure these investments and ensure that we can continue?

Also, it was stated that the debt of SZV is 130.7 or 13.7. The faction would like the correct figure outstanding for SZV. What is the monthly amount requested by SZV for OZR? The faction knows that there were numerous discussions. The former Minister of Finance and the CEO of SZV had numerous discussions on what would be a preferred figure. An increase was made by the then government. The faction would like to know if it is the intention for 2025 to meet the required budget of SZV, or is the discussion still ongoing as to how we will supplement what is missing?

The faction is also glad to hear that the Minister of Finance is a proponent of the tourist tax. The faction would also like to know what the plans are for the tourist tax. When the tourist tax was being done previously, it was first initiated as a health levy, whereby, in discussions also with the CFT, it was championed through VSA. Everything legislative was championed through VSA, and the allocation of the money — it would have been an agreement, and the allocation of the money would go towards SZV and the rest towards specific projects. What is the intention of this government for the monies collected once the tourist tax is instated? It was estimated to make us between 15 to 18 million yearly, so the faction would like to know what the current plan is.

The Minister of Finance also mentioned CAPEX not being guaranteed. Not because CAPEX is in the budget means that we are guaranteed to have it. It is a request. It goes back to the faction's point that moving the CAPEX to 2025 does not guarantee that those projects will be executed. It all depends on our budget, our financial income, and expenditures, The

faction wanted to make it clear that when we're in this presentation and hearing certain projects moved for CAPEX to 2025, to the public of Sint Maarten, that is not a guarantee.

The faction also heard the Minister state that she's in agreement with the reduction of the property tax in stages to 15%. The faction is very happy to hear that, as that was one of the things this faction championed. The faction looks forward to us working very closely to ensure that this happens. It was done in Curaçao, and the faction doesn't believe we need to reinvent the wheel all the time. It would increase compliance, and we would get a real look at what our real GDP is because it's no secret that a lot of businesses hide their true profit because of 34,5%.

When it pertains to GEBE, it is said that a bid will be done once the budget or the request is approved. What is the 75.6 million based off? The faction notes that a price per generator was given, but why are we purchasing or using that price if no bid has been done? How do we know the price? Is the 75.6 million a safe projection or not? The faction would like to know where that amount came from. And if it came from a specific company, why are we using that specific company as a benchmark when no bid has been done?

The faction reiterates the note of the letter dated June 12 to the CFT, where it clearly stated that 36 million guilders will be the investment for GEBE. The faction is therefore asking, why are we seeing now 75.6? And was this letter updated to the CFT, letting them know that the amount has changed to 75.6? The faction understands the miscommunication.

The faction continues and mentions that the Minister spoke on her plans for the tax levy, profit tax reduction, and wage tax, and spoke of increasing compliance. The faction is missing how the Minister of Finance plans to increase compliance.

The faction would like to know if the 1.5 million is a realistic contribution for GEBE. And would further like to know

GEBE's views on this and if they can afford and live up to such contributions?

The faction continues and mentions that it was also stated that the intention was to approve the amount for the government to purchase the generators and lease. The government is not allowed to buy and lend. The faction would specifically like to know if we are allowed to then buy and lease. And then, it was also said that it was discussed with the Netherlands; the faction would like to know where this is allocated and what gives us permission. The faction would definitely like to know where in the realms of the law we are allowed to buy and lease because, as stated before, in the *toelichting* that approving this budget gives the Prime Minister the permission to engage in such an agreement with GEBE.

The faction believes it is important to have every aspect of this agreement. Because what we are asking now is for the budget to approve 75.6 million without knowing insurance fees, without knowing certain things, and the faction has taken note of the statement of the Minister about other expenses being taken up in the next budget. Who will be responsible for the structuring of this contract? Because it is a government contract — the 75.6 million — and everything needs to be in place.

The faction is of the opinion that if this government wants this faction's approval as it pertains to the 75.6 million, all the information will need to be provided. The faction does not want to approve this and later down the line hear that GEBE cannot meet the obligations, government is in a financial burden because GEBE doesn't meet the obligations, or we do not know the intricacies of the contract that we are allowing the government to then enter into agreement with GEBE. The faction would like all the information pertaining to such.

The faction referred to a previous speaker and their statements on TELEM and GEBE and expresses its feelings of disrespect. The Prime Minister comes in and runs around the answer. The faction asked about plans for GEBE and Telem, but no clear plan or security plan was given.

The faction also asked the Prime Minister about the MER Group case, that is 3.8 million owed. The faction would like to know how much was paid, the implications of paying this, whether it was paid in installments or a one-time payment, and what implications that had on the cash flow or budget of TELEM. The faction also inquired about the liens being placed on all the receivables of TeLEM, as these are important factors. The faction doesn't just want to hear that everyone knows the situation of GEBE and that we are working on it.

The faction asked questions about the bid for GEBE, and it was stated that once it is approved, they will move forward. However, the faction is of the opinion that people often request a quote before going to the bank, and the bank will determine if they can deal with the amount. The faction questioned how do we know the amount. Where is the 75.6 million coming from, and who provided this information? The faction was told earlier that 4 million is allocated for a generator and asked where this information came from. Which company provided the information, and why are we using the information from this specific company? The faction would prefer to acquire multiple quotations to establish an estimate of where the budget needs to be. Instead, the government is publicly asking for 75.6 million without having all the necessary information and then planning to go into a bid afterward. The faction humbly asks for this information before voting on the budget.

The faction also asked if the Prime Minister supports the SAAHA "as is." The answer provided seemed to avoid a direct response. The faction would like to know if the Prime Minister supports SAHA as it stands, yes or no.

The faction asked about revenue-generating plans, but the responses only referred to the amendment. The faction was asking for the government's broader revenue-generating plans, as this is relevant to the budget debate.

The faction also indicated to the Minister of Finance to be cautious about mentioning "two months, unless the 2025

budget is ready to be signed off by January. Otherwise, the amended budget will be used in 2025 if the new budget isn't ready.

The faction asked the Prime Minister about consultants. The Prime Minister responded that he has no consultants, only cabinet staff and two people on labor contracts. The faction would like to know the names of these cabinet staff and the individuals on labor contracts.

The faction asked about the 200 million from the Trust Fund. The response was that yes, the Trust Fund has 200 million. Then, projects such as mental health and wastewater projects were mentioned. Was Sint Maarten given the green light for the 200 million? These projects were approved before going away for the 200 million. The faction observes now in the budget that we have to inject 14 million to save SZV, as that was a discussion and a certain amount was needed. In order for that amount to be sufficient, we needed SZV to inject more. However, we are being asked to inject more into mental health for the same reason, which the faction could understand, but the funds for the project were already there. The wastewater project when we had to reprioritize, the Trust Fund said not to touch the wastewater project. The faction questioned what new funds, the 200 million, is being used for?

The faction requested an update on the housing project, which falls under. Lastly, the faction reiterates the request for all information pertaining to the 75.6 million for GEBE generators that the government has been provided to the Members of Parliament.

The faction believes it is important that we, one, find out what is going wrong financially, two, how can we remedy the situation, and three, the real persons seeking attention at the HAP. The faction believes that 90% of us in here—has benefited from the HAP at some point.

The HAP was a pilot project, and the report was a six-month project that stated various findings, such as asking not to prescribe medication and not giving certain injections or

medications to ease the pain. But it's kind of redundant when you come to the HAP due to non-urgent care, but it is still a semi-emergency. You have pain, or whatever it may be, and you're expected to just see the person and say, "Okay, go home."

Unfortunately, and these are things that we need to look at while prescriptions are given if we look at Curacao, there have actually been patients that have died because of lack of attention. The faction believes that we need to structurally sit together and see how it can be done. The faction is happy to hear that the Minister is willing to have that conversation and sit with a third party, with SZV and the HAP, to find a solution because it is definitely needed. The faction mentions the night hours and mentions that it is glad that this is still being taken up but questions how much of this is a priority for the ministry.

The faction recalls experiences while speaking with the head of the ambulance and then when speaking to the staff itself, sometimes urgencies can be relayed very late. The faction urges the Minister to pay attention, be on it, and ensure that this is done. The faction would like to have an update on the breakfast program. Is it budgeted for? The faction knows that it was also budgeted in 2024; it was the intention to do three schools and then the rest. Why hasn't it started? Is it budgeted? Is it the intention to continue, and if so, why? If not, why not?

The faction would also like to know about the health information system. What is the update on this? This is very important, and this was also on the priority list. This can help link, especially with the doctors flying out, flying in, and changing doctors; it is very important that we have this information system. The faction would also like an update on the St. Maarten General Hospital. It is very important that this hospital stays on track. As we know, it's a lot of difficulties, but it seems to be moving. The faction asks if there is any additional cost. Can the Minister at least notify the Members

of Parliament of the cost at the start of the project and the cost now?

The faction saw the article whereby about 300 work permits will be granted. Is the Minister satisfied with the number of locals working on the project? Finzo knew that the former Minister was not satisfied with that, and the intention was then to have job fairs per profession, and then the permits would be granted. They would also be granted for national interest expedited once they met local requirements. The faction sees that this is mentioned in the article and would like to know if the Minister is satisfied with the number of locals there and if there is a plan to do another job fair.

Also, yes, the update on the General Hospital is important because we also know SZV is the biggest investor. What are your plans to ensure the recoup of the funds for SZV? The faction would also like to know the thoughts of the Minister of VSA on the SAHA. The faction is aware that the Minister came to Parliament, presented it, and basically said that the Minister is in agreement. The faction would like to know if the Minister agrees with the SAAHA as is.

The faction continues and would like to know what the update is with the Dutch Caribbean Hospital Alliance. The faction asks this because this was put together for us to save with biddings and other various means and also for Sint Maarten to ensure their own specialty. The agreement would be Curaçao, the BES, and Sint Maarten. For example, if Sint Maarten specializes in brain surgeries, then we do medical tourism where persons from these countries will be transferred to Sint Maarten. The faction would like to know the update on that, as in the future, it can definitely help us, and it was an important factor.

The effects of budget cuts on personnel—The faction is happy to hear that Community Development was not affected, but the faction urges, while you save money from the T shelter, do not be afraid or be slow to increase the budget of Community Development—a very important factor.

Also, this is something important as Minister of Labor: the possibility of four-day work weeks. The faction would like the ministry's thoughts on that. What are your thoughts on that? What are the ministry's thoughts on the four-day workweek? The faction is a proponent of it and definitely will be looking into it, but the faction would like to know your thoughts as Minister of Labor.

While we wait on the Sint Maarten General Hospital, many improvements have been made late The Member of this faction mentioned the following: made numerous improvements to SMMC—the operational room, the additional staffing, the training programs. The faction hasn't heard much from SMMC itself. What progress has SMMC made so far while waiting on the General Hospital to better its services to the public of Sint Maarten? Also, is there an update on the CFO position at SMMC?

Faction wants to know specifically, is in this budget from the NESC job fairs allocated? NESC's budget is different from the budget for job fairs.

The faction is happy to hear that the Minister is a proponent of the legal help desk, but the faction noticed that it was stated that they are waiting on the lawyers. Was there a call or something sent out to the lawyer association? Because from the faction's point of view, the holdup is the fact that we are not able to get lawyers on board. And if so, is it a pricing issue? What is the issue that we are not able to get these lawyers on board?

Can we have the latest update on the health survey? The health survey that was done is very important. Now, you may think, what does this have to do with the budget? How healthy is Sint Maarten determines our medical cost.

Is the Minister aware that the CEO position for SZV will soon be vacant? The faction would like to know if the Minister has started to prepare for that.

As Minister of Health, the Minister is in a hard place because the Minister is in government, but the Minister is also

responsible for SZV, and the faction knows SZV is owed millions by the government and also owed for maintenance of the building. Is there talk of an increase in the monthly OZR payment? The faction is aware that there was an agreement made. It may not be in this amended budget, but the faction would like to know if there are talks because it's important to know the solvency and future of SZV.

The faction would also like to know the ministry's top 10 priorities in order of time and realistic approach at this moment. The faction would like to know the vision of the ministry.

What are The Minister's plans to enhance community engagement? Also, the faction noticed that CPS has gone dormant, placed on a back burner, or not been given that much exposure. During COVID, the entire country depended on CPS, and it was an important factor to realize that CPS is more than just COVID. They are the information system to our community for any communicable diseases and health risk factors. The faction understood that in this amendment, the CPS budget was cut for projects and developments, and the faction would echo the sentiment that the faction has stated before to the other ministers before: please do not just view the 2024 budget as two more months, as we would have to use this budget until the 2025 budget is passed.

The faction mentions the draft LBHAM submitted to the Minister in order to facilitate work permits once local resources have been maximized or sorted. Did the Minister receive this LBHAM, and is it the intention of the Minister to follow through with this LBHAM?

The faction would like to know the names of everyone in the cabinet of the Minister of VROMI, the names of any labor contract, and also, if you do not have any third parties, then we can cut that from the budget and put it somewhere else.

The faction is concerned about the move of the Cay Bay phase one project to Capex 2025. The faction hopes that we can get it done in 2025.

The faction understands that the housing project is off the table, and the faction was kind of hoping for a "but" and an "and"—my plan and our plan further—but the faction didn't get that. 18.2 million allocated for land purchasing, and in the details, it says housing, different aspects, cemetery—all of those things were allocated for. It's moved to 2025. The faction knows that we are in a crisis situation and understands that certain moves were made to fit this 75.6 million. The faction doesn't want the government or the people of Sint Maarten to basically be left with false hope.

The faction commends the taxi drivers for the cleaning and the movement that they have started. The faction would like to know the opinion of the Minister of VROMI on this. Is this an indication that cleaning should be enhanced? Is this an indication that maybe different areas or aspects of the cleaning project need to be looked into? Because while the faction commends the taxi drivers, it should not be their job.

The faction will wait to see if the paid parking will come in the 2025 budget. The faction hopes that there are plans for paid parking and renovation of Front Street because when you drive there, you get seasick. We need a real plan for Front Street. The faction advises the Minister to look into private-public partnerships. The faction is pretty sure if the Minister goes to Front Street, you can get about 5 or 10 thousand from each vendor store that'll be willing to contribute to help alleviate the government's budget.

The faction would also like to know the role of the Minister of VROMI within GEBE. Are you involved in any consultations, any contracts, or anything as it pertains to the government?

The faction would like to see what was given to the third parties before these cuts in the budget amendment.

The faction acknowledges that while there are many congratulations for police presence, that also comes with a cost. The faction congratulates the Minister but notices specific cuts in the police, National Detective, as well as cuts in immigration and other areas of protection. The faction states that everything in our protection was cut.

The faction continues and states that we are approaching the Christmas season; the faction cautions the Minister and reminds that there used to be additional police brought in from Curaçao during this time due to a customary rise in crime. The faction cautions regarding the cuts, as security needs to be beefed up during Christmas time.

The faction would like to know how the Minister goes about the release of prisoners who are critical or terminally ill. Who is responsible? Is it the Minister or the prosecutor?

The faction made mention of answers received, one regarding the health levy and listed the negative impacts and then that we will see what the SER says. The Minister of Finance saw the Health Levy as one of the revenue-generating factors for this government. The study was transferred; it's in the entire legislation, which is now by the SER and can go up to \$35, and what was being opted to do was go to 15. Everywhere around us, we are seeing these taxes and these levies being implemented, and the faction thinks that it definitely can help, and during this budget debate, the faction is hearing CFT. Since CFT, they actually had liked the structure that was presented, the faction would urge the Minister of TEATT to look into it and really, even if you have to suit it to fit the vision of the government, just bring it. Aruba instituted it, and the faction thinks Aruba is actually \$20, so we were still vying to be less than Aruba.

The faction would like to know regarding the hotel tax and the health levy; the hotels did not mind an increase in the hotel tax rate, so that's another option. The faction also mentions the \$1 safety fee, for which a letter was sent to the airport via the COM stating that payment would have to start.

The faction would like to know if it did start and if it is allocated in the budget.

The faction continues and states that it has a couple of questions pertaining to the causeway bridge: how much is the exact amount that the Harbor pays towards the causeway bridge? How much does NV GEBE pay towards the throughput fee? Does any other company contribute to the payment of the causeway bridge? How much debt does the Harbor presently have? What is owed for? How much does it pay towards loans in its entirety? And how much is the monthly burn rate? What is the annual maintenance cost of the causeway bridge? Who maintains the Causeway Bridge currently? What outstanding CAPEX projects are still pending for TEATT, but particularly the Harbor? Considering the FCCA and its members are leaning towards LNG, what is the Harbor's position on being able to offer energy-related services to the cruise industry? The faction believes that this cannot only save GEBE but generate revenue for us.

Will a transfer of assets and debt from the Harbor to the government help the port in any sort? Given the recent economic conditions, has there been any re-evaluation on the port's capacity to manage financial risk such as those posed by a natural disaster or pandemic?

The faction states that in discussions with CPS, it was stated that in the preparedness plan, we can estimate every 10 years that a pandemic will be here. It is in trajectory; right now, we're 5 years off 2019, so it's always good with preparedness.

Is it still the interest of the port or part of the port of Sint Maarten to sell or enter discussions with Global Port? Is that still an interest, still a topic, still a discussion?

The vending village. The faction needs clarification: what is the vending village? Where is it at this moment? And where is it intended to be moved to?

The faction would just like to revert back to the projections and telling the public exactly what a budget is, and

this refers back to the faction's point exactly why the faction is very critical of the big change in having the 75.6 million for GEBE just placed, and whereby other projects that are for government to carry out to be moved to 2025. The faction states that this is a wish list. So, while we have an approved CAPEX, which we didn't have for many, many years, it's very important how we carry out projects throughout.

The faction specifically asked a question on the issue with the MER group, with the liens that were placed on TELEM, and the article came out saying that it was handled. The faction would like to know what the amount was. The faction is hearing 3.8 million. What was paid? Is it in installments? Is it a one-time payment that was made? How does this affect TELEM's budget, and what are the plans moving forward to remedy this?

The faction also did not hear the answer on the consultants and the cabinet staff. The only persons who gave a clear-cut, concise answer were the Minister of VSA, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of TEATT. But for some reason, the faction cannot get this answer from the Prime Minister, and the faction asked for a specific reason. Please provide the names of the persons with labor contracts that you have in your cabinet, the amount, and also your cabinet staff. The faction also wants to know because if there are no consultants, then the 96,000 can be placed towards Justice or something.

The faction just has a couple of clear, concise questions. Does the Prime Minister think that Sint Maarten has a housing problem? The faction notes that the Trust Fund is canceling the project—does the Minister think that now, especially with that being canceled, with the light at the end of the tunnel being closed, that we have a housing problem? Does the Prime Minister also think and agree that we have a poverty problem? Does the Prime Minister champion relief for the people of Sint Maarten and relief for all of us who are having issues with GEBE? What are the Prime Minister's

thoughts on some persons receiving a 100 guilder bill from GEBE but the fuel clause is 500 guilders?

GEBE generates revenue by collections. Nonetheless, there was a hack that created an issue with the billing system. Now, bills are coming in, and granted, some consumers did not even pay, but there are a lot of wrong bills. But persons are now being threatened that they are going to cut the bill, and they have three months or a 50% downpayment. The faction knows that some of these people cannot afford this down payment.

What percentage of the fuel clause goes towards the throughput fee? Also, the loan of 75.6 million. Can GEBE afford this loan? The faction would like to know if GEBE can afford this loan and it is that the government is offering the services for a favorable interest rate.

The faction notes a picture of the 20 generators reaching here. The faction would like to know the reason for purchasing 20 one-megawatt generators. The faction is of the opinion that there will be a lot of maintenance and a lot of technical aspects.

The faction would like a timeline because it doesn't want the public to think that this 75.6 million means that GEBE is good tomorrow. The faction would like a timeline on passing the budget, a bid, ordering the generators, the generators being here, installed, and hooked up. What is the estimated time frame from the passing of the budget?

The faction would like to know why the Prime Minister is the spokesperson for GEBE. The faction does not agree with this. What legislation, what policy, what decree causes this? Is this the same for the hospital? Which Minister does the hospital fall under? The faction is seeing a lot of hospital updates but seeing more of the Prime Minister when it comes to the hospital than the Minister of VSA. The faction would like to know if there was a change in the structure of this Council of Ministers.

The faction understands what the government is trying to do. The questions posed by the faction and the detailing are ensuring that if it supports this budget, it can live knowing that it is doing the right thing. The faction would like to know what happens if this loan is approved and GEBE defaults. The faction doesn't see any government daring to put a loan on GEBE that will cause or hamper permanent outages. But what happens if they default?

Last but not least, the faction asked about GEBE being able to afford this loan. What about GEBE acquiring the loan and the government standing guarantor for the loan? The faction believes that standing guarantor allows us to carry out projects. The faction keeps asking, and the faction heard the Minister of Finance say that all projects moved to 2025 Capex are not guaranteed. We have not received Capex since 2019. So, what the faction is saying is, while we have an assurance and an approved Capex for 2023, the faction does not want us to lose the opportunity as the government to carry out housing, social, and all of these other projects that were intended, while GEBE can acquire this loan and the government stands guarantor.

The faction specifically asked the question as it relates to GEBE because, as noticed, there are hopes and plans that this will be rectified as the Minister over GEBE. Many times in press briefing the questions would be directed to the Minister of VROMI, but yet the faction is seeing the Prime Minister. Then, when the faction realized the budget of VROMI is taking the hit, the CAPEX aspect of it. The faction would like to know the Minister's thoughts on that. The faction would also like to know the Minister's thoughts on the process of GEBE being placed in the CAPEX for VROMI. Additionally, the faction would like to know the Minister's plans for VROMI and asked it specifically because the Prime Minister answered a question today regarding the validity of the concession ordinance.

The faction would like to know if the Minister of VROMI is aware of the responsibility and power that he has when it pertains to a national crisis. The Prime Minister speaks

of a national crisis, but the power is implicated for the Minister of VROMI in a national crisis. Also, the Minister of TEATT controls the tariff in pricing. The faction sees the two relevant ministers that can actually bring relief and change to the people, yet only the Prime Minister is seen. The faction would urge the Minister of VROMI not to throw his hands up but definitely use some of those innovative ideas.

The faction mentions the concession ordinance and that an ordinance trumps policies and decrees. Therefore, the faction would like to see the thought pattern on it, and if the Minister is not familiar with the ordinance, once read, the faction would like to know how the Minister of VROMI intends to take control of the situation.

The faction would like to know the following from the Minister of VROMI as it relates to GEBE. Why did GEBE opt to purchase 20 individual one-megawatt generators? Are these engines currently running on heavy fuel? The containerized generators that were brought earlier, who is bearing the cost of that, and who is bearing the cost of the 20 generators that just arrived? The faction sees a lot of excitement from the public, but we are talking about 20 megawatts, so could there be an elaboration on what 20 megawatts can power?

Why didn't the government or has the government approached APS or even Vidanova for a total guarantee on a loan instead of directly taking a loan? Also, wouldn't a guarantee on a loan rather than taking a loan itself help to avoid encumbering the government's finances and allow the government, particularly the Ministry of VROMI, to allocate funds towards housing projects and land?

The faction hears the Minister speak of the Trust Fund ending the housing projects, and while there is a national energy crisis, there is also a national housing crisis.

With the CFT's oversight on borrowing, how can the government ensure that funds directed towards GEBE are managed effectively without risking any further financial constraints?

The faction noted that when a previous speaker asked the Prime Minister today about BZK and their regulations, no agreement has been brought forward yet, but what the faction foresees is something, particularly like the airport, where a CFO or someone will be requested. What is the update with the management team of GEBE, the Big C's? When will they be placed? What is the plan? What are we waiting on? The faction expects conditions, and if there are going to be conditions, the faction would like to know how much of APS funds have been based abroad and directed locally. There's a proportion in APS regulations, that they're supposed to invest a certain amount abroad and invest locally. The faction would like this to be relayed to the relevant Minister to find out the amount that has been invested locally. Maybe there is enough, or they have sufficient funds to invest towards GEBE, whereby GEBE is a monopoly. The faction wants the public to realize that the problem is the mismanagement of funds while we are in this predicament. But GEBE, being a monopoly, will definitely recoup funds.

Can the government ensure that funds used for GEBE needs are balanced with investments and other vital areas like housing and education, considering our current financial constraints? The faction is of the opinion that we are in a bind. We see in the newspaper that SZV is projecting to lose 23 million this year and 19 million next year. The government is in no financial situation itself to play the hero, and the faction wants to ensure that we are not trying to play the hero but take the best possible route.

Why hasn't the government negotiated with banks to structure a loan with GEBE's assets as collateral, which would avoid placing an additional burden on the government and allow projects like the Cay Bay phase one to continue? There was once a statement by the legend Claude Wathey, "Nobody is going to come and take an airport, take GEBE, or take a harbor; they can't take it up and go with it." Let us find means and ways that we can fix the problem, while the Minister of VROMI can carry out the projects that are needed for this country. GEBE, yes, is a government-owned entity, but it is its

own entity. If we can find ways for them to access their funds while we can allocate our funds and carry out our projects, it would be a win-win for this country.

The faction also would like to know if the Minister could clarify the turnover tax and throughput fee structure, especially since the TOT 5% is applied on top of the throughput fee. All of this is related to the fuel clause in the GEBE bill. A lot of us speak on throughput fees, but we neglect the turnover tax, which is coming out to be higher in the GEBE bill.

Speaking about having our companies in order, the faction would like to know the update on the head of BTP. The faction knows that the interim head worked hard to put BTP back in a position where it can start to see the light. The faction would like to know if this position is finalized. Is the person still interim, or will the person become the definite head because the faction believes that they definitely do deserve that with the way they brought BTP back in a reasonable State?

This report is to be considered as Final Report.

Stipulated in the meeting of the Central Committee of October 16, 2024.

The Reporter,



S.A. Wescot-Williams