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Staten van Sint Maarten

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**National Ordinance stipulating the Budget of
Country Sint Maarten for the service year 2025
(National Ordinance Budget 2025)**

**Report
No. 5**

The Parliament, in its meeting of the Central Committee, has exchanged views with the Government on the Draft National Ordinance stipulating the Budget of Country Sint Maarten for the service year 2025.

The Parliament considers the 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 has the following questions and remarks.

Ministry of Finance

The faction posed this question to the Minister of Finance because it noticed via the policies that this is regulated via the Ministry of Finance. The faction noticed that there was space for vacancies in the budget. The question concerns filling critical vacancies within the ministry of Justice, and in particular the Prison. Is there also space for the Ministry of Justice here? The faction mentioned that the lack of staffing for the Prison was one of the main concerns that was communicated during the visit to the Prison as part of the Justice Committee of Parliament. The faction believes that there are critical vacancies which can lead to unsafe situations for the guards and the inmates. Hence, the faction reiterated and would like to know if the Minister of Finance has put anything in place for critical vacancies in 2025.

The faction mentioned that there are about 4000 persons afflicted with mental health registered at SZV. When the Minister of Finance visited the mental health foundation for a tour, it resulted in concrete results, and today, you can see a mental health institute will be built. A program for mental health is being put in place. Hence, the faction would like to invite the Minister of Finance to

visit the Prison with the Justice Committee members to see the current state of the Prison. The faction believes once we see some of what is going on, we will be moved to at least make some small changes and to make money available. The faction mentioned that it understood that there is a 26 million loan unused. The faction believes that we cannot wait for two years when phase 2 of the Prison is finished. Hence, the Minister should tap into the possibilities now. The faction thinks that Sint Maarten is bordering on human rights violations.

The faction indicates that it has been advised not to come up too much for prisoners because there are probably more victims than prisoners. However, the faction is of the opinion that they are human beings as well.

The faction notes that on page 9 of the elucidation of the Budget 2025, the increase in personnel for the Prison is slated for 2027. Can the Minister reconsider the situation at present and do something before 2027 for the personnel, the prisoners, and the Prison?

The faction stated that it is important to have the implementation report for Q3 to peruse it and prepare for the upcoming meeting. Hence, the faction is appreciative of the receipt.

Regarding the Tax Reform legislation, the faction asked: How far is it, and when will it be finalized? The faction referred to the different legislations connected to that based on the country package.

Introduction of the Caribbean guilder. How will the ones who don't have a bank account be able to arrange that transition?

What are the ministry's legislative priorities for the coming year?

The faction inquires from the Minister of Finance how many recruitment agencies are currently being used within the Government.

If we look at the QR codes as regards the license plates, the faction would like to know if it was deemed a success based on the income and the revenue that we receive from the QR codes compared to the physical license plates.

The faction notes that civil servants and public education staff are still owed payments from the cost-cutting measures implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic and would like to know how the Government justifies prioritizing payments to subsidize school boards without first addressing the arrears owed to these groups who faced similar hardships during that time?

Ministry of General Affairs

The faction mentions that on page 6 of the budget, there is a concessions fee of 8.2 million for the 2024 budget, and in 2025, it's 8.4 million. The faction read that indexation takes place at GEBE. The faction noticed that the GEBE concession is constantly increasing. The concession for the Harbor is at 4 million, and the concession for BTP is at 1.5 million. They have a fixed amount. Is there a maximum that GEBE's concession will be pinned to, or will it continue forever like this? The faction does not believe that this is healthy for the company. The faction mentions that in the proportions, it is more than double the highest other company. You also have other Government owned companies who do not pay concessions. Can a cap be placed on how much GEBE pays in concession?

The faction inquires about the ministry's legislative priorities for the coming year. Which laws?

The faction remarked that after looking at the budget for legal advice & services, the faction would like to know how many legals are currently employed by the Government. And how many of those legals are legislative lawyers? The faction understood that there is not enough. Hence, the faction would like to know the ministry of General Affairs' plan to recruit legislative lawyers. Has the ministry looked at, for example, BZK in connection with article 43 of the "Staatsregeling", basically the Kingdom Affairs? Has there been any communication with BZK regarding recruiting legislative lawyers?

The faction mentions that we often look at the budget and having to cut certain things, but is the Prime Minister looking at the waste that is happening within Government, such as, for example, Government workers taking the Government vehicles in the weekends to Super U, for example, in order for us to save on gas. Are we researching those kind of waste that's happening within our Government apparatus?

The faction mentions GEBE and alleviation for the people. Can the Minister elaborate on what the Minister has done concretely, including the meetings to work on solutions?

Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication

The faction mentions that on page 72 of the elucidation of the budget, it notes that there are 10 FTEs for the Department of Statistics but only one vacancy. Can the Minister confirm that this is correct?

On page 3 of the elucidation, it is mentioned that the economic growth is likely caused by rising prices instead of an actual economic production increase. So, the economic growth could be mainly caused by inflation. The faction remarked that it knows that the ministry has recently increased the number of items in the basket of goods. The faction would like to know if the increase in the basket of goods items was reviewed or if this process was evaluated to see if it was successful. The faction would also like to know if the items stated in the basket of goods are still available in the local shops.

The faction recalled that in the Budgets of 2021 and 2022, there was still an amount budgeted for the ASYCUDA system. The ASYCUDA system would have been operated by the ministries of Justice, TEATT, and Finance. This system would have registered the cost price of all goods entering Sint Maarten. Hence, Sint Maarten would have had a cost-price indication. The faction is looking at this because of the rising inflation prices. We know of the phenomena in Sint Maarten of people shopping on the French side because the prices there are much lower than on the Dutch side. However, when shopping for furniture, the price differences of the same items on the Dutch Side were much higher than on the French Side. A price difference of about 700 dollars; online, the prices are closer to the French side prices. Will the Government consider having a system like the ASYCUDA, which was budgeted in 2021 and 2022 in the TEATT budget?

Gambling legislation. The faction mentions that it was informed that in 2025, the legislation would be completed. Hence, the faction would like to know if that is still the case or if there is a delay specifically, as it regards lottery and casinos.

The faction mentions the video that has gone viral about Checkmate workers not getting paid and working for the Harbor. Is the Minister aware of this video? This is for VSA, but because it was about security working by the Harbor, this is why the Minister TEATT is also being asked. The faction would like the Minister to look into this.

The faction would like to reiterate the importance of the training sessions for the taxi drivers. The faction believes that this is highly needed.

What measures are being implemented to increase the diversification of Sint Maarten's tourism product, particularly in the face of fluctuating Global Travel Trends and risks such as natural disasters? Can the Minister provide an update on the progress of the implementation of the tourist tax and how this initiative is expected to impact the 2026 and subsequent budgets?

Can the Minister detail the initiative aimed at improving Sint Maartens' telecommunication infrastructure and how these align with broader economic development goals?

Ministry of Justice

The faction stressed on the hiring of people to work in the Prison, particularly prison guards. The faction mentioned in paragraph 2.3.1 that the ministry's policy priorities are to have enough personnel so that the tasks can be executed at the highest standards of work ethics, integrity, and compliance. Does this also apply to the Prison? During the visit to the Prison, it became clear that because of the lack of staffing the guards who are working are unable to work to these high standards. It is a dangerous situation at the Prison.

The faction continues and mentions that during the Committee of Justice's visit to the Prison, the faction saw and heard about a lot of work that must be done at the Prison. The faction believes that we should not wait for two years until the Prison is finalized while people are still in there now.

The faction knows that families in the Back Bay area have been complaining about water leaking down the hill. When questions were asked of GEBE, GEBE indicated that it is not the GEBE tank and that it is coming from a leak in the Prison. Hence, the faction would like to know how much the water bill of the Prison is. If the leaks could be fixed, there would be money for the necessary programs at the Prison that are not currently being done now, such as rehabilitation and resocialization. Rehabilitation and resocialization programs will help prevent repeat offenders. Prisoners also indicated that toilets were not functioning. The faction would like to invite the Minister of Justice and Minister of Finance to visit the Prison and then check which small tangible solutions can be found.

The faction commends the Minister of Justice for how fast she reacted to what happened in Simpson Bay. The faction mentioned that there are more hotspots on the island. Statistics show the places that are more prevalent to the gun violence. We have the usual Christmas armed robberies, robberies and pickpocketing in the Philipsburg area. The faction would like to know the plans to combat gun violence and robberies.

With the response to Simpson Bay, the faction sees a lot of cooperation between the Coast Guard and security companies from the marinas, etc. The faction notes that a police boat is lacking, and it is not mentioned in the budget. Are there any plans for a police boat? The faction mentioned a police boat because a presentation was given wherein it was indicated that the Police has some jurisdiction in open sea that the Coast Guard does not have. Hence, only a police boat will be able to handle these. The faction believes that we need to move to having a police boat again. The faction mentions that this should be investigated for future budgets.

The faction informed the Minister regarding a request from the prisoners. The prisoners would like the Minister to investigate a leave from the Prison to attend the funeral of a close family member. Recently, the prisoners have not been allowed to do that, although article 31, sub-1, of the Prison ordinance, states that this is the prerogative of the Minister to decide if they give leave or not. What is the Minister's feeling regarding allowing prisoners to attend the funerals of their loved ones?

The faction mentions the document the Inmates Association gave to the Committee of Justice during their visit to the Prison. The Inmates Association was advised to send the letter with the grievances to the Minister of Justice. Was this document received by the Minister?

The Prison lacks personnel. How much of the current personnel is on sick leave?

Stateless and undocumented persons. Can the ministry please clarify the difference between stateless and undocumented and how much percentage are stateless? Does Sint Maarten have stateless people on the island, and how much?

Gun amnesty program. Is there currently a gun amnesty program in the making so that the guns can come off the streets?

Was there a transfer document received regarding the ministry of Justice, and if so, what was mentioned as bottlenecks that the ministry is currently facing? Was the multidisciplinary team also mentioned in that document? The faction is pro having such a multidisciplinary team. If the multidisciplinary team exists, is the ministry looking at that to put it into effect?

The faction would like to know the ministry of Justice's top priorities.

Can the Minister indicate the ministry's legislative priorities for the coming year?

In regard to the motion that was passed regarding the Crime Fund and having a policy plan attached to every budget, is the ministry working on this policy plan, and will it be expected to be finalized before the approval of the budget as obligated by law? Has there also been an executive organization in place for the management of this crime fund?

The faction continues and indicates that we have all been speaking about the building of a new prison, but connected to that it is also important to have the legislation up to date with the same building of that Prison. Is this also a priority of the ministry?

The faction noticed that the budget refers to projects related to general improvement measures of the operational Prison, the method for support and/or rehabilitation and resocialization of prisoners. Does this also include updating the different prison laws, which are currently quite outdated? Are there any funds available, or will the ministry make any funds available, maybe through other funding, such as BZK or UNOPS itself? Can the Minister go into details in regard to this?

The faction inquires if the ministry reviewed the current use of the crime fund and whether it was used for what it was intended.

The Stichting Justitiële Inrichtingen St. Maarten (SJIS) probation department, seeing the increase in demand over the past year for probation services due to the ongoing prison capacity issues and also recognizing the critical role in executing probation and parole supervision orders and other critical core tasks such as providing judicial advisory reports to the judicial authorities, administering alternative punishment such as community service and behavioral intervention training and program for clients during and after incarceration, and managing restorative justice initiatives and electronic monitoring programs. What efforts have been made to strengthen this vital partner within the judicial chain, and how does the budget allocation reflect this priority?

The faction requests the Minister to look into the Ms. Lalie Center to make it what it was meant for. It is a juvenile detention center and not, as it is currently, an extra facility just to add to the capacity of the Point Blanche Prison to house the 18 to 21-year-old inmates mixed with the youngsters between 12 and 18 years. The faction would like the Minister to look into making it a facility for 12 to 18 years.

The faction notes that, as mentioned to the Minister of Finance, there are ways where we can generate funds, and some of the ways are implementing that these scooter drivers get fines for not having helmets, for not having their number plates on their scooters, and the illegal parking in town. The faction believes that those are some simple ways to generate some funding for the government coffers. The faction is aware that staffing might be an issue with the short staff, but generating these kind of funds then opens up some financial opportunities to finance more staffing.

The faction, once again, advises the Minister to visit the Prison. Sewing classes without materials are not sewing classes. There is a band, very nice, with no strings for the guitar. There is a chapel that was destroyed during the hurricane, and now there is a frame of a tent. Activities cannot happen. Can this matter be looked into?

In which quarter of 2025 will the first rehabilitation project come out from the 250,000 dollars from BZK?

Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport

The faction mentions that in September 2024, Teen Times presented the Hair Discrimination Prevention Act to the faction. In this Act, they describe the elimination of hair discrimination in educational institutions across the island, ensuring that the students can express their cultural identities freely without fear of judgment or punishment. This Act aims to protect students who choose to wear their hair naturally in their own textures and cultural styles without being stigmatized or penalized in the schools. The faction believes and agrees that our schools should be a safe space where every young individual can learn and grow without having to compromise who they are. The faction believes that your hair has nothing to do with learning in school.

What is the current status of a draft law to tackle this? When will it be presented to Parliament? What temporary policy will be in place until this law is in effect?

In regards to the draft law, national decree in regards to study financing. The faction would like to know how far it is and when it can be expected in Parliament.

What are the other legislative priorities for the ministry in the coming year?

The faction mentions that crime prevention is mentioned at 6130 in the budget, but no funds for crime prevention are allocated. The faction would like to know if the ministry looked into this. If not, why is there not any shift considering the rise in crime, especially among the youth?

What is being done by the ministry regarding dropouts, and what about the inspection officers to ensure the monitoring of the students going to school between 12 and 18? Hence, what is in place to monitor the students?

The faction has the following questions and comments for the ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. Are there any plans to revamp the way we fund the subsidized schools?

The faction continues and mentions equal rights. Every school year we are faced with the same discussions with the hair policies within the subsidized schools. Is there any way in which the ministry can step in seeing how we are funding these subsidized schools? Can this also be something we can address?

The faction elaborates on the point of uniforms and black shoes and points out that we are missing the purpose of what it was initiated for and that we need to adapt according to the times we are in now. Is there any policy that is being worked on addressing those kind of issues?

What role does the ministry play in helping to ensure the presence of social workers stationed at the schools? The faction believes that this can curb the amount of depression that is happening.

The faction continues and mentions culture and sport. How are funds being distributed among culture, youth programs, and sports development? Are there specific initiatives prioritized for the upcoming year?

Teacher salaries. Has the ministry made provisions for the long-promised salary adjustments for teachers, and how will this impact teacher retention? The faction would like to know what the "Ministerplaats" was it stopped?

Youth programs. The faction would like to know what new or ongoing programs are being funded to address youth unemployment, crime prevention, and mental health support.

Ministry of Public Health, Social Development, and Labor

The faction has taken note of the media that there have been a lot of labor-related issues in the past few weeks, including a hotel branch, Flamingo

Resort, and a video going viral regarding Checkmate security workers not getting paid for a few months. Has the Minister seen this video, and does it have the attention of the ministry, and is there a solution being presented for these workers labor-related?

Mental Health. When will the new mental health law be finalized? Will a temporary solution policy be in place to address the current gap in the law, mainly of the persons admitted not having an attorney assigned to them? The faction gives an example of an on-call duty roster by attorneys.

What are the ministry's legislative priorities for the coming year?

The faction has seen that the legal helpdesk has kicked off, and legal consultations have taken place. The faction would like to know if, in the coming year, more consultations will take place in a more structured way. If so, in what way?

Seeing the recent labor-related matters and the immigration lecture connected to the legal helpdesk, which was well-attended, the faction advises the ministry to look into organizing a lecture in the beginning of 2025 related to labor law so that everyone interested in knowing their rights can learn their rights. The faction mentions that she knows of attorneys willing to do so.

The faction is happy to see that the legal helpdesk is continuing. For consultation sessions, can the ministry look into making sure that there are legal-minded people on rotation in the helpdesk, not only every quarter since accessibility to the law is important and needs to take place in a structural manner?

Regarding the Cannabis legislation, the faction asked if the Minister could clarify it and submit the documents linked to it. Can some documents be submitted as confidential so that the faction can investigate it, the parties involved, and the workgroup? The faction would like to know where are we with it, and where are we going with it. We need to be sure it benefits Sint Maarten and that all stakeholders are consulted.

Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure

The faction applauds the Minister for tackling infrastructure in the way he has indicated that he wants to do, and the Minister has also indicated that he wants to tackle garbage. The faction inquires about sewage. Sometimes, it is

unfortunate to see newly paved roads with fresh running sewage. Sewage is an infrastructure issue as well. Hence, the faction would like to know what are the ministry's plans for tackling sewage. If yes, what are those plans? When will this happen? In which Budget post will we see this? The faction mentions this issue because the faction has been complaining about this on behalf of two seniors in the Middle Region area. These people have a lot of problems with raw sewage in their yards. These people can't enjoy their yards, which is unsuitable for their quality of life. The faction would like to know who these people can call for assistance. The seniors have been calling to no avail. The ministry of VROMI very often mentioned that it is the task of the ministry of VSA. Do the inspectors have the capacity to test and determine if what they are seeing is sewage? This is needed then to give out fines.

The faction continues and mentions the water wells on Sint Maarten. The wells are not used as much as in the past when they were needed for agriculture. The faction mentions a complaint that was made a few times in the past. The faction is requesting that the ministry look into Zagersgut well. The Zagergut well has been annexed and walled in. Hence, the people from that area cannot use this like they did during the last hurricane. What can be done to give back this well to the people of Zagersgut?

The faction mentions that there was an article regarding the Dutch Quarter and the sewage infrastructure that has been regulated successfully. The faction requested a schedule for the planning of sewage infrastructure for the other neighborhoods and areas on the island.

What are the legislative priorities for the ministry of VROMI?

The faction would like to know the Minister's vision as it pertains to the traffic congestion. What are the plans? Has there been an opportunity to restart negotiations when it comes to the link between Dutch Quarter and the South Reward area?

The Democratic Party-faction has taken note of the draft and has the following questions and observations with regards to the draft national ordinance.

Ministry of Finance

The faction continues and mentions that our GDP is 3.4 billion guilders and would like to know what percentage of this is dependent on Government spending and what percentage is dependent on Goods and Services.

Our Corporate Income tax is 44 million guilders. Is this to be translated as corporate profit declared being about 145 million guilders approximately for 2023? During the same period, we collected TOT of 156 million guilders, which would translate to the business reported to be about 3.1 billion guilders.

The faction states that on a business revenue of 3.1 billion, we saw a profit of 145 million.

Our largest contributors to taxes are the captive taxes via Payroll taxes and Business Turnover tax accounting to over 316 million guilders which is almost 70% of our tax revenue. Based on the forementioned the faction believes that perhaps a deeper look into our tax reform is needed. This process will gain traction when our economists and financial guides will look at broadening this base. With the anticipated increase in permits - work and residence- for skilled workers in the construction sector, which is expected to bring revenue due to the aforementioned construction projects, the faction hopes that GEBE is sufficiently prepared to supply the increased load capacity.

With respect to the Policy Plan 2024 and the cabinet's ambition of realizing the vision, the faction would like to know what the plans are for diversification of the economy and also regarding stimulating tourism diversification.

The faction would like to know from the Minister of Finance how much of the 2025 budget will be used for payments in 2024 and how much of the 2024 budget is exhausted.

The faction states that the following questions, while related to the draft budget 2025, are more part of the long-term vision of the Government, and so the faction would like to have a response on the different topics as the Government moves forward in its vision of the different topics.

The faction mentions taxes, tax systems, tax projects, etc. What basis is currently being used for any reform measures considering an approved framework for tax reform that the Council of Ministers approved in 2022? The faction references a letter of November 2024 and requests a response to that letter regarding the tax system and some proposals for measures to be taken.

The faction mentions that a lot has been said about transactions or transactionable tax. Can the Minister give us her view, even if these are intentions and an overview regarding the same?

The faction mentions the matter pertaining to GEBE and would like to know more regarding the loan for GEBE. When asked about this loan a couple of months ago, possible conditions were not yet known. Is there any further update regarding possible conditions such as potentially the management of the company? Has anything been addressed in the context of discussing the loan for GEBE as it relates to the management? And also, as it relates to alternative energy solutions? Is this a part of the conditions with respect to giving the Government a loan that can then assist GEBE?

The faction continues and mentions SZV and its relationship with Government. The faction states that the SZV funds have been an issue of concern for Government for a while now. In 2022 an advice was brought out called "Social Security in St. Maarten". Based on that report, have any steps been taken with respect to the recommendations in that report?

The faction also mentions that in the coalition agreement, it is stated that less effort is going to be put into the so-called uncollectables. Can the ministry respond to that? Can the Minister give us a status and her view with respect to the outdated collection law and the applicable policies at this time?

The faction would like an update with respect to the negotiations with the CBCS regarding ENNIA, also in terms of the profit-making going forward of the CBCS, as well as the matter to which a response was not received, which had to do with the excise taxes.

The faction hears the intentions regarding tax reform and the tax system. Can the Minister provide Parliament with a timeline of projections for the steps to be taken? We hear the intentions to hear and what is happening in the context of the country package. Can the Minister prepare a timeline?

Has the Minister requested and or received any help from the Central Bank of Curacao and Sint Maarten with respect to drafting legislation? The faction recalls that the Central Bank of Curacao and Sint Maarten has made that offer on so many occasions. From what the faction has seen, it is one thing that they make the offer, it's another thing actually getting them to do it based on the request by the Minister or by the Government.

The faction mentions the amount of persons in acting positions throughout Government. The faction is asking this, so that based on the sentiments of the Minister of Finance regarding persons in acting positions, we can get a policy developed for persons who are in acting positions for X amount of time. This can apply across the board where we have persons for X amount of time in an acting position.

The faction would also like to address the matter of the stipulations in the two laws that regard when one does not have to file an income tax return and your wage tax is considered a so-called "eindheffing" vis a vis the policy that is being applied in this case.

While the faction understands precisely what the Minister has explained in getting this matter addressed, the fact remains that you cannot have a policy that is in contradiction with the law. Resources might be few, but the faction believes that this requires to be addressed as soon as possible.

What opening, if any, is being used for a policy to have been established and be followed that basically throws the law out of the door? The faction would like to see the specific statements in the law and also the policy.

The faction believes that this has to stop now. We cannot acknowledge a policy that is in contradiction with the law when policy should be based on the law and allow it to continue for any amount of time.

Ministry of General Affairs

The faction would like to know what the update or progress on the reconstruction of the Sint Maarten library is. The faction believes that it was slated to begin reconstruction in 2025.

The faction notes that there is much confusion being put up about the motion that was passed with the GEBE relief, and it was just stated that our Chairlady, as well as the Democratic party, did not support the relief for the people, which is very misleading. The faction doesn't think that there will be a political party or anyone that is not in favor of relief for the people, but it is the manner in which we go about it. We cannot instruct GEBE on what to do. We cannot instruct GEBE that you must give relief; you must take 5,000 dollars or 2,000 dollars. That's not the way it works. The faction believes that a more

efficient way to handle going about asking GEBE for relief, which would also be time efficient, is to have them come up with two options. Management can be asked what they can do based on their current financial situation in 2025. This way, when those options come back to the Government, we're not looking for a way, but we already have the way via the company. The faction recommends that the Government look into having GEBE, as a company, come back and say what is possible based on their financial situation, and this way, we will have a direct option to move forward.

The faction mentions this Government's policy and vision being worked out in a budget amendment. The faction indicates that it sent two letters to the Prime Minister regarding the matter of regional collaboration. One of them is asking the Prime Minister's approval and consent to work on a project for regional collaboration and agreements. The faction would like the Prime Minister to respond to the letter but also give his possible views on some of the suggestions mentioned. The faction continues and mentions that in the same context of regional and international relations a letter was sent regarding a conference to be held in Nigeria, to which the Government of Sint Maarten has been invited through the President of Parliament. This conference in Nigeria is taking place sometime now, and while we might not be able to make it to this particular conference, the faction thinks that it is extremely important that an answer be sent so that the door can be kept ajar and that Sint Maarten can somehow be a participant in future conferences such as these.

The faction mentioned that it asked, with respect to GEBE and the negotiations regarding the loan for GEBE and whether there are any conditions in the make that the Prime Minister may be aware of such as with respect to the management of GEBE. The interest also goes out to the matter of alternative energy plans and whether there are any conditions or agreements with respect to this in the context of the loan to be provided to Government for GEBE.

The faction continues and mentions that a letter was also sent regarding the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary in The Hague. The letter had to do with the possibility of creating, if not yet in place, a position in the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary specifically to deal with our nationals who are in the Netherlands for whatever reason and are facing difficulties beyond their control. The letter also addressed two very specific and tragic events in terms of nationals from here, whether they go on their own to the Netherlands and find themselves facing situations. The faction believes that a dedicated point or position at the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary would be helpful. Also, where our

students are concerned, who might face issues outside of the scope of the mentoring facilities that are available to our students? The letter addresses those two matters and the faction would like the views and vision of the Prime Minister and a plan going forward.

In the context of where we want to go as a government, the faction references a letter that was sent to the Prime Minister with respect to the Integrity Chamber asking the questions about the evaluation that has that had to take place after four years. Has it taken place? What did it yield? If it has not, will it take place? The faction also wanted to know what the Prime Minister thinks with respect to the statement of the State Secretary about involving Transparency International and, to quote the State Secretary "at this time he does not consider informing dialoguing with the countries on that matter ". The faction thinks that this is overstepping his responsibilities towards the country. The faction believes we must protect our authority at all costs. Has the State Secretary, in the meantime, made any contact regarding his plans to involve Transparency International?

Why in the same context with the Integrity Chamber? Because the Integrity Chamber is an institution that came about after a lot of drama surrounding who should legislate it and it turned out to be a national ordinance by which we were able to legislate the Integrity Chamber. The faction believes that it shouldn't be so that we allow anyone to pull the rug from under the feet of the national institution for which we pay.

Can the Prime Minister provide Parliament with the results of the employee satisfaction survey?

Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication

Can the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the 9.5 million guilders budgeted for capital expenses for the Met and Civil Aviation building? To include another 1.45 million guilders budgeted for furnishing and equipment. What exactly will this cover? Is there any special equipment that will be purchased, or is it just for furniture? What specific features or improvements are planned for the Met and Civil Aviation building that justifies this budget? How does the budget for this project compare to other projects? What is the total square footage of the new building in terms of usable space? Can the Minister explain the additional funds allocated for furnishing the Met Office and how they were determined?

Are we intending to beautify Phillipsburg after this upcoming season which includes the parking and other infrastructural developments needed there? The faction would like to commend the Minister of TEATT for coming up with the stop-and-shop pilot program that should begin in the new year. The faction is sure that the merchants are happy with her, and we shall see where this takes us in the new year.

A statement to say that beautification in Phillipsburg is not important and not something to be focused on at first; the faction does understand that parking is necessary, but the TOT tax dollars that come from that area, if you do compute that within our budget and see the amount, that should tell you enough why beautification is as important as is the parking.

The faction indicates that it did not see anywhere in the budget that allocates any funds towards Carnival 2025. Is it the intention of the Government to support the Carnival 2025? And if so, notes that there is nowhere in the budget that allocates any funds towards Carnival 2025, is an intention that this Government is going to support Carnival 2025? If so, how are they planning to do so?

Are there plans to create a policy that requires Sint Maarten taxi drivers, bus drivers, and tour operators to take hospitality and cultural training courses? As we have seen recently, there has been a huge influx of new taxi drivers and bus drivers, and we want to make sure that not only do they know the culture of Sint Maarten, given that we are a mixed culture, we are a mixed people. We definitely want to make sure that our visitors get the best experience possible, and it's also good for the license holders themselves to understand Sint Maarten's history, landmarks, etc.

The faction mentions the issue of gambling and would like to know where we stand with the decision, whether it be the LBham or LB, regarding the lotteries and the payment for the different establishments. The faction also refers in this context to the SER report on gambling and gambling addiction in particular. The faction also mentions the General Audit Chamber report on the same item.

The faction is aware that the country package is dealing with the matter now of gambling control and the gaming authority. The faction knows that it is

the intention of the Minister to have that established somewhere in the year 2025. Can the Minister provide an update on that?

One of the latest IMF reports refer to the fact that the revenue for this sector is below par. Does the Minister have any indication why this is the case?

The faction continues and mentions the concern with respect to the social registry project of the NRPB being stalled because of either manpower or money. This is important in this context because this social registry is, as the name implies, for us to have a clear indication as to some of the issues that our different districts are facing. The faction thinks that it is something that deserves the attention of Government.

Can the Minister of TEATT give us any update regarding the ban on the use of single plastic bags? The Minister would recall from her time in Parliament that this was a long ongoing project and has been approved by the Parliament; however, there was some discussion before regarding the justice part of it, but then that the inspection was to take place by the ministry of TEATT. The faction believes that firm action in this regard is a plus for the tourism product of Sint Maarten.

As the Minister knows, this particular law includes not only single-use plastic bags but also Styrofoam and plastic straws. The faction would like the Minister, from the perspective of her ministry, to provide us with an update on that.

The Minister has indicated as a priority, an update on the carrying capacity of this country. The faction supports this and mentions that there are many studies on the shelves. The faction thinks that a fair maybe to address these studies head on would be the lack of the resources necessary, however it does believe that an implementation plan for some of these studies, and several of them are under the ministry of TEATT, is a good tool to move forward.

Following the COVID pandemic, we had a specific study done by the World Bank on Sint Maarten's tourism recovery. There was a priority action plan in that recovery plan. Is this still relevant in terms of some of the actions that were proposed in that study?

The faction states that the spatial development strategy 2030 mentions about the carrying capacity of the country in general. The faction also refers the Minister to a dissertation that was done by Mr. Alberts called Small Island Tourism Economies and Tourism Area Life Cycle. That study was with specific reference to Sint Maarten and Aruba. In fact the subtitle of that study is why

Aruba and Sint Maarten have exceeded their carrying capacity. The faction believes that some of these conclusions in that study would be worthwhile to take note of.

The faction continues and also refers to the study of 2022 regarding the investment policy and diversification strategy for Sint Maarten. This is information that is there and can be used as now specific items are being looked at in terms of our tourism product.

The faction mentions the matter of the lottery LB to establish the implementation date of the LBham on the lottery. The faction would like clarity on the mention that it will still be at the Governor for decision making. Why? Why would it still be with him?

Ministry of Justice

The faction mentions with the increase in the reckless drivers from mostly scooter riders, we see most of them are underage. The faction thinks that it is about time that we start holding parents accountable. In a lot of other countries, when youth commit crimes, parents are called in, and some type of measures are taken. If parents are told that in the event that your child commits a traffic violation then you could potentially be liable. The faction believes that that may make a difference.

The faction mentions the delegation of the Committee of Justice that went to the Point Blanche Prison. Rehabilitation is a big topic and it is spoken on a lot. The faction doesn't think we need to wait until a new prison is built to give courses on rehabilitation. The faction thinks that rehabilitation is much more than just building a gym or having classes. You can provide all these lovely things, but if the mindset of the inmates at the time is not where it needs to be, you will either continue down this road or this is where you will end up. The faction believes that a lot of rehabilitation doesn't necessarily need money. There are persons in the community that are willing to go up and speak with the inmates and have real conversations. A lot of them lack mentorship, and that could also be done. Mentorship programs can be something that could be easily implemented now instead of waiting until there is a new prison.

The faction indicates that the following questions and comments are about going forward. The faction asked the Minister of TEATT regarding the role of the ministry of Justice's role in the execution of the law on the ban of single-use plastic bags. Actually, this law is not yet in effect because the Government is

holding it back for reasons such as manpower in terms of the control of whether a person should be trained and whether there was money in the justice budget for those persons to be trained to do the control.

The faction would like to know if the Minister has had the chance to look at this matter and, if not if the Minister can look into it and respond.

The faction would like to know if the Minister has had the chance to wrap the ministry's head around where the prison project stands today. Have you had the time to apprise yourself of the current issues at and with the prison? That includes all of them. Has the Minister been able to receive that type of overview, and if you have, if you can share this with the Parliament?

Court of Guardianship. The faction has understood from some foster parents as well as prospective foster parents that the amount allocated for taking care of the children could hardly get them by for a week, let alone a month, given all of the costs involved. The faction would like clarity on this.

The faction noticed that the Minister of Justice mentioned the abandoned scooters or bikes in the police station and that the plan was to destroy them. Has it been thought of to auction them or sell them to the public? Even if they are not auctioned to local St. Maarteners, maybe other islands will take them as a means to generate revenue.

The faction also heard that there are approximately 1300 residency permits pending. When the faction thinks about that, it also thinks about 1300 more cars on the road. What are the thoughts of the Minister on immigration? The faction believes that Sint Maarten is overpopulated. Does the Minister believe that Sint Maarten is overpopulated, and if so, will that have any impact on the way the Minister handles immigration and the granting of residency permits?

Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport

The faction mentions revenues to the ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. We all know that ECYS is a very large ministry and that the ministry is always in need of funds. The levy of one cent on gasoline and diesel was posed many times before by other Ministers and Members of Parliament with the last Government. The faction believes that a policy needs to be put in

place. The faction would like to know what the priority of this being put in place is because it will bring the ministry much-needed funds.

The faction would like to know which universities abroad we have a running agreement with. How many students at these schools with which we have an agreement? What exactly does the agreement entail? The faction believes that in 2023, a budget amendment was proposed, passed, and accepted, which had to do with subsidies to the dance schools in Sint Maarten. The next year, which would have been this year, the faction was informed in the first budget for 2024 that that program was ongoing. The faction would like to know what the status is of the money allocated to assist dance schools on Sint Maarten. How far did we get with that?

Can we continue to pay attention to some of our national traditions and the national dress of wears being one of those. Are we getting anywhere with that? The faction is sure that the Minister is quite aware of the interest that the so-called national cultural parade has gotten. How can the Government continue to assist that movement in terms of the national parade with the national dress or dresses?

The faction has spoken to some students who are studying in the United States. The difference between studying in the States and Holland is a financial cost. Some students in the States are struggling to continue their education, even though they are receiving a scholarship from the state. As a suggestion, can we assess the student and the family situation to continue paying for the education for the whole four years of their tenure?

When it comes to the hair legislation, the faction is glad that the ministry is going to tackle that.

The faction is also glad to hear about the prioritizing of the gasoline levy. When it comes to supporting our local athletes, Sint Maarten is a very unique place when it comes to our sports scene. We have a lot of different sports because we're diverse.

The faction suggests creating a sports achievement fund. It doesn't necessarily have to be named that, but a fund where these revenues will go directly there and we can assist with things like gym membership, training summer camps, and basic support.

The faction mentions the CBA/ the public high school. The Minister mentioned that the budget for the high school is going to go over to 2025 or was it 2026, but also mentioned that the faction guess, the CBA project did not have the drawings and whatever else have you and that that will be put off until all necessary requirements, pre-requirements are met. Is the proposal that was presented to Parliament for the CBA still on the books, but certain requirements need to be made? Or is the CBA project going to be taken up in the plans for the public secondary school?

The faction would like to know of the CBA plans, specifically with this issue of a national theater.

Can the Minister give Parliament her view on the matter of a national theater? The faction is aware of how the CapEx of Government is and the scarcity of funds. But maybe the idea of a national theater could be a public-private partnership with someone who might have such a facility that the Government can then get and use.

Ministry of Public Health, Social Development, and Labor

The faction would like to know what plans the ministry has to promote preventative health initiatives. As we know, health is wealth, and we know that the population suffers from a lot of health-related issues and that it is also a huge cost for the Government to send individuals away. We see that sports is picking up and physical activity has been increasing since COVID-19, but that alone is not enough.

The faction believes that initiatives starting in the school will definitely show great results as our children get older and they're able to live healthier lifestyles but understanding through some initiatives. What is the Minister's plan regarding this?

The faction mentions the different queries that it has had regarding the issue of vaping and the responses that have been received in the past from the ministry of VSA and the ministry of ECYS. There is supposed to be a working group of the two ministries, ECYS and VSA, and maybe even Justice, that is looking into the matter and is supposed to advise on the matter of curbing the possibility for young people to be able to purchase these devices. The faction would like to know where matters are at with that issue.

Where are we with the issue of the HAP? We know, of course, there was the only one that was started in Simpson Bay with a lot of hope and a lot of good

intentions, and then something went amiss. Where is the ministry with that matter? Do we have any data with respect to what such an institution could mean for the alleviation of emergency room at the SMMC?

The faction mentions the so-called reparation legislation for the SZV that was at the Council of Advice for a while, that would include the coverage of persons who now fall between the cracks in terms of medical coverage, such as the sole proprietors, the vendors, the taxi and bus drivers. The faction would like an update on this.

The faction also took note of the increase in the minimum wage based on the indexation on the basis of the cost-of-living inflation. This will go into effect as of the 1st of January 2025, for which the faction is sure many persons will be very happy. The faction continues and states that the welfare is based on the minimum wage. It could very well be possible that with the increase in the minimum wage, some persons' welfare, financial assistance/"onderstand" will have to be adjusted.

When this was asked the last time, the minimum wage was increased, the faction was told that this was to take place. Has the review of the financial assistance based on the increase of the minimum wage taken place? What has it yielded? Were the financial assistance amounts of some persons adjusted based on the increase of the minimum wage? Can the Minister give some numbers as it relates to this?

Are the STEPS results in? What are these?

Is the ministry pursuing, and if so, how far are they, with respect to the changes to the civil code as far as labor contracts are concerned?

The faction continues and references a letter regarding the feeding program for the elderly. The faction looks forward to the response of the Minister on that letter.

The faction also mentions a recent visit to the White and Yellow Cross during which the need for a facility or expansion of facility for the services executed by the White and Yellow Cross, amongst other things to look after persons with dementia, became clear. The faction also indicates that the waiting list for persons seeking admittance in that program is large. The faction understands that it is a matter of getting approval from the SZV. The White and Yellow Cross is able to make an investment. Has any progress been made in this

regard? Are we really looking at that list of persons in order to assist families? Can the Minister clarify this? Can we get an overview of where things are at right now? What are the plans for the foreseeable future?

It is good to hear that the ministry is prioritizing preventive initiatives when it pertains to health, and the faction is aware that the Minister said that resources are limited, as with most ministries. The faction suggests that when it comes to the school system if you share the idea with the community, there are a lot of individuals who will volunteer their time to share this type of information, especially when it comes to our youth.

The faction thanks the Minister for his willingness to pick up this issue on vaping amongst our youth, which has only gotten worse since the faction started to champion the issue some years ago to the Government at the time. Can the Minister explain who is doing the evaluation or assessment with respect to the "Huisartsenpraktijk" (HAP)?

The Minister indicated that based on the increase of the minimum wage that, no "onderstand" recipient amounts need to be adjusted. They could have been falling just above the minimum wage threshold, but with the minimum wage going up you could have some cases who would need to be reassessed because of the increase in the minimum wage. Can the Minister confirm that this has been done and that there are no such cases to be amended because of the minimum wage increase?

As soon as the information of the STEPS survey is cleaned up and can be shared with Parliament, can that be done please?

The faction would like some further explanation as to the issue and the concern regarding the cannabis legislation.

Can Parliament receive some labor stats in terms of unemployment as well as whether there have been any queries and complaints from employees regarding their rights as the last changes to the labor contract law that were passed here by Parliament, such as the increase in maternity leave, paternity leave, and the changes of company?

Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure

The faction mentions the entire matter of the road hard surfacing project and the overall issue of drainage. In reviewing questions and concerns as expressed on this topic by the faction, the faction found back a letter to the predecessors of the Minister of VROMI which goes back to 2015 regarding the issue of the drainage master plan for Sint Maarten, as well as amendments to the zoning ordinance to regulate the issuance of permits for infrastructural works. The faction also references a letter of 2016 on the same topic asking questions. Since then, the matter of the ACROBATX report has been one that the Parliament of Sint Maarten has sent to the Government and the Minister of VROMI, in particular, asking the Ministers' and the ministries' take on that report.

In the latest letter from a Member of the Faction to the ministry it was the CAPEX highlights were highlighted in which it speaks of the secondary dirt roads island wide. The faction would like to receive the answers to the questions in the letter referring to the matters mentioned in the capital investment 2024 as far as the road surfacing is concerned.

In the letter, the Well Road is specifically referred to. The faction learned from newspapers that some repairs are being done. Are these repairs to the Well Road on the basis of the hard surfacing project or is it because of the recent additional potholes that have been caused by the rain that we had a couple of weeks ago?

The faction continues and mentions that in the budget, in section 1 CapEx highlights of the project design and build concrete hard surfacing program 2023-2024 secondary roads, it states that preparation works are being done for Ackee Tree Drive. The other roads in section 1 are pending the preparation works for drainage in the area (which are ongoing). The faction would like to know which other roads in Cole Bay are pending the preparation works for drainage in the area. Which drainage projects are ongoing in the area of Cole Bay leading to Union Road? Can the Minister give an in-depth overview of section 1 of the CapEx highlights?

The ministry of VROMI in 2022 announced receipt of a plan for a comprehensive approach to Storm and Wastewater. In that plan that was presented to the ministry, it mentions that, under stormwater, in 2005, two lives were sadly lost because of flash flooding that happened in the Cul-de-Sac area. Hard surfacing of (newly to be develop areas) will cause storm water to be discharged very fast and thus forming a great threat for low-lying areas. The goal

is to avoid huge amounts of stormwater from flowing down very quickly and dragging everything along with it. Besides that, a quick rise of water levels may cause a lot of damage to buildings. The faction continues quoting from the report from the ministry of VROMI, which states that the policy document for stormwater includes a set of. What has been done differently with respect to the road program now on the way?

Was any note taken of the serious concerns raised in a plan commissioned by the Government of Sint Maarten? What has been done differently? What differently has been included in the project to hard surface roads.

Can the Minister inform what the status and plans are for Orange Grove Rd? The faction continues and mentions the attempts to have a drainage at the foot of Orange Grove Rd. What are the other plans, if any, for that road?

What we saw on the Orange Grove Rd. was frightening and it showed exactly what the report was talking about and for what care needed to be paid.

The faction learned some months ago that it was the intention of the ministry of TEATT and the ministry of VROMI to basically combine their efforts and their existing policies to come to a beach policy. Have those efforts yielded any results thus far?

The faction has heard from the ministry of VROMI, over the years and months, that the project for the zoning of the different districts, will not be pursued but rather the plan for an island-wide zoning is what is now under consideration or under works. Can the Minister give an update with respect to that zoning.

Are there any intentions by the Government to have some type of a development plan for the Maho, Mullet Bay, and Cupe Coy areas? The faction thinks that this is now more urgent than ever given the situation surrounding Mullet Bay and the already announced plans to sell that property. Can the Minister give his views on the development plans for that area in particular?

The faction mentions a statement made by the Prime Minister that the PJIA loan will come back and benefit infrastructural projects. The faction would like to know what and how, and if there is already a plan of infrastructural projects to which this money will be applied. Can the Minister of VROMI give that

overview with respect to that loan becoming applicable to infrastructural projects.

The faction also mentions someone making mention of the ministry of TEATT making available garbage bins. Is this a project only for Philipsburg? Is it a project for the entire area? What is the understanding with respect to garbage bins and the garbage haulers? Who is responsible for what part of supplying garbage bins?

The Minister responded to some of the questions in a letter from a Member of the faction, and the faction would like the Minister to respond to the entire letter going into the Public meeting. Can the Minister explain when a road is considered a private road? Can the faction receive a map of the roads mentioned in response to the question of the faction that are on the list to be fixed.?

What is the ministry's plan for the drainage situation in St. Peter's, specifically on the main road and Retreat Estate?

The Party for Progress-faction has taken note of the draft with interest and has the following questions and remarks.

Ministry of Finance

The faction states that it heard the Minister in her presentation mention the subsidized schools, which the faction would like to commend the Minister for making sure they were included in this budget. In order for the payment to be processed for the subsidized schoolteachers, is there anything else needed for that? Is there anything pending for that? Is it something in the foreseeable future that we will never have the delay again in their payments? The faction would like to know if this is a permanent fixture in the budgets going forward or if there's still work pending from the ministry side in order to make that a permanent fixture in the budget?

The faction also took note that in the presentation the Minister mentioned that there is a 15 million arrears of the harbor. The faction states that the harbor was actually going to be one of the government-related entities that the faction was going to focus on. If we're talking honestly about our government-related entities, they are all really in a dire state, and so the last one that kind of went under the radar was the harbor because nobody was really

paying attention to it. When you listen to the Minister of Finance, and she says that there are 50 million in arrears in the concession agreement, red flags are going to start going off in the sense of: are we going to be worrying about another one? The faction believes that with everything we are doing from the side of Parliament as well as from the side of Government, is making sure that we will not have any issues with these government-owned companies going forward. The faction wants to make sure that the harbor can continue as a going concern. We really need to make sure that we are focused on the viability of it.

Is the harbor in arrears because a ratio wasn't met or is it just in arrears because they weren't in a position to pay the concession agreement?

The faction mentions page 78 in the budget, where it is talking about the overview of the rental and government buildings. The faction would like to know if it is the ministry of Finance that is compiling the information as it relates to completeness. The faction mentions that it doesn't see the tourist office on this list.

The faction would like to know why the tourist office isn't on this list. If it is in here, the faction would like to know under what category it is included.

As regards the list of rental properties that the Government has enlisted in the budget, the faction also would like to know if, indeed, the question was transferred to the Prime Minister as the question wasn't directly asked to the Prime Minister.

Ministry of General Affairs

The faction comments that there are three departments within the budget that have increased on the personal costs. The faction would like an explanation as to what the anticipation in the department for 2025 is that will justify the increase. These are the Fire Department, Legal Affairs and Legislation, Facilities, and also ICT.

As it pertains to the real estate and rental properties, the Minister indicated that the rent for the tourist office, which is now on Front Street across the arcade, is under tourism economics, and it's at a rent of about 26,000. Is this ANG or USD? The faction doesn't agree that this is in this overview. Because the 2024 budget that was presented in April had 18,000,000 total that we have as responsibility to pay in rent. The amended budget that came recently went down to 14.8 million. Now, this 2025 budget goes right back up to 18.2 million, which is

the same amount that was presented in the April 2024 budget. The faction believes that the information is lacking here.

The faction points out that the list in the substantiation in the budget, it shows who the owners are. The owner does not pop up for what the faction believes is the tourist office. The faction is concerned about this because this is an incomplete list.

The faction knows that we've not been there long, but expected that for the next year, which would have been 2025, which would have been a full year, it would have had the full year of rents in this list and properly updated. In the corrected version, the faction would like to see that the list is complete and includes everyone.

This budget is cleaner and has less information. But the fact that it is less information doesn't mean that we have to stop improving the quality of the data or the information that's found in the budget. The faction is constantly seeing inconsistencies in the budgets.

Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication

The faction is of the opinion that if you read what the Minister VROMI announced, it was to raffle the processing fee, which is the amount of 200 guilders, which is the amount that everybody has to pay to get your building permit processed—not the building permit fee but that 200 guilders.

If indeed there was a license needed for the said raffle that is going to take place, then the faction also wants to inquire if there was a license given when the NA-faction was raffling cars throughout elections a couple of years back. Because if we're talking about raffles, then like you said, it's a principle of equality, so let's do it across the board.

The faction continues and indicates that the Minister mentioned the Tourist Authority Foundation and that they were going to be doing a study. Is it already established, and if it is, where is it in the budget? If it is something that's in the works, do we need to budget for it in 2025?

The faction is now clear on where to go to get the account related to the Tourist Foundation. The faction sees exactly where in 2023, you had 2.5 million, in 2024, 2.5 million, and then in 2025, 1.9 million. Is it still included in there, or is

that the portion that's taken out, or there's something else that's related to the reduction in 2025?

Ministry of Justice

The faction wanted to touch a bit on the topic of the youth in regard to the Justice ministry because we know we have the Miss Lalie Center, which is to be seen as a youth detention center. However, there are several issues at the MLC. One of them, in the faction's opinion, is the age discrepancy. At the moment, people from ages 12 to 21 are accepted at the center, but then the question arises: when you turn 18 and become an adult, do you then get moved over to the "huis van bewaring"? The faction would like to know how that is really regulated.

The faction notes there is no provision for girls to be admitted into the MLC, but underage girls most definitely come in contact with Justice. The faction believes we had a situation not too long ago where a girl was severely beaten up in Dutch Quarter, and that court case also came up not too long ago. If the faction is not mistaken, the girls who actually committed this act only received community service, partially because there is nowhere to place them since they are underage. This is a phenomenon that needs awareness because of the fact that some of these underage girls are actually cognizant and aware that community service is the only possible penalty that they can get, which then lives on a life of its own.

What are the plans regarding the MLC and some of these issues? The faction would recommend the Minister, to have a personal walk-through at the youth detention center to see what the conditions are currently.

The faction believes that the rehabilitation of the youth should be the number one priority. How does it work when it comes to underage children who are taken up there but, for example, need to go to school? Is there a system of electronic monitoring in place where the kids taken up at the MLC can attend school, which is by law, but can also be escorted back? What's the overall focus of rehabilitation, if any, at the MLC, and how are we focusing on getting these youths back into society?

The faction wanted to inquire about the so-called HALT initiative. The HALT is known in Holland and focuses on minors who commit light crimes. The whole idea is that they receive a light penalty or other measures, but in the long run, it prevents them from getting a criminal record. The faction would like to

know if this is in the Minister's plans to implement HALT within some of the organizations. If so, what is the plan to get that done?

What is the current trajectory for underage children who are removed from their parents for protective measures? The faction believes that currently a foster home is being used to house them, but what's the Minister's personal take on this? This doesn't seem feasible in the long run.

With all of these things mentioned about the youth, it would be remised of the faction, not to mention the Court of Guardianship, who in turn is legally responsible for regulating most of these matters. The faction states that the current situation there, with the workers, is the same as justice workers, if not worse. When it comes to their "rechtspositie," the faction believes they also have some stuff that needs to be regulated. They face the same issues because they don't have an LB. The faction believes that most of the staff working at the Court of Guardianship, even though they are permanent employees, is based on an "arbeidsovereenkomst van onbepaalde tijd."

The faction feels that it is troubling to find out that, for example, because of this formality, having a permanent contract with the Government who is actually the "rechtspersoon" mentioned in the contract, but not receiving an LB that now, for example, these staff members do not enjoy the protection of the LMA because they do not fall under "wat is een ambtenaar." Not only this, but these same staff members are the ones who assess situations when it comes to the youth. If they find a dangerous situation, they are expected to take these kids from their parents, as per protective measures, and then bring them back. What would be the legal basis behind this if they are not even employed by Landsbesluit? What would be the legal ramifications of that?

What is the current situation concerning the "rechtspositie" of all the staff members working at the Court of Guardianship, and what would be the plans to remedy this?

The faction would like an explanation of the 727 increase for the 2025 budget versus the prior year for the Police Force. The faction would also like an explanation for the increase of 326 thousand for the Prison and also for "Landsrecherche," whose budget went down by almost 400,000. The faction doesn't understand that "Landsrecherche" would be decreased by 390 thousand.

The faction is aware that for a long time, we've always talked about the shortages that we had across the ministry of Justice, so seeing a decrease is very surprising for the faction. Unless it's just a matter of us trying to really cut the cost from an unrealistic previous budget. The faction would like a substantiation for why those 3 decreases across those 3 departments.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport

The faction has the following question for the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport. Truancy and the kids who skip school. What is the current situation when it comes to that, and what is the intention of the Minister in regards to addressing this? The faction believes that, at the moment, fines cannot even be issued to the parents when their kids skip school, yet education is compulsory. The faction would like to know the Minister's opinion on that.

The faction would like to know what the Minister's sentiment is in regards to reporting crimes at schools. The faction is not only talking about crimes involving adults towards kids but also kids among kids. The faction believes that, at the moment, schools tend to avoid reporting crimes that happen on school grounds to save face for the schools. The faction feels that this is very tricky and would like to know what the Minister's sentiment is on this. For example, the faction mentions that some students are unaware that sending nude pictures of other students is a crime and other situations like that. The faction is concerned about the education of kids on these matters. The faction would appreciate hearing the Minister's opinion on that.

The faction continues and mentions in terms of cuts. If you look at the expenses on the education side, it's literally an exact figure moving from projects and activities within the innovation going over to the innovation moving from the study financing. So you see exactly where the in and out is in the budget. Is the transfer or the allocation of funds from one department to another still related to education projects around innovation? Can the Minister expand on that? The faction did notice that, for the most part, in ECYS, things are pretty stagnant. You see bigger changes within the other ministries and especially across personnel most of the time.

The biggest change you saw within the ministry is the increase of 2.3 million across the subsidies. The faction would like some clarity on this. Earlier on the Minister of Finance talked about the fact that the subsidized schools increase was done. The faction would like to know if this 2.3 million is related to that.

“Dienst Openbaar Onderwijs”. The faction mentions the 653 thousand increase in the personnel cost. The faction would like to understand what the increase is for.

Ministry of Public Health, Social Development, and Labor

The faction understands the restrictions that we have a little bit creating this 2025 budget. The faction looks at increases, decreases, and certain things that stay the same, which warrant a lot of attention because it's staying the same, but then when you're comparing years, it's a drastic increase. One of those is the PP cards. The PP cards in 2023 were 17 million, in 2024, they were 22 million, and in 2025, it is at 22 million. The faction mentions that one of the things that it is concerned about the most is the number of persons that are in between the ages of 45 and 65 who are asking questions about how to get PP cards. They need insurance, but they're not working. We're having an issue if we are seeing that our older working population is having an issue being able to have insurance through work or privately through work or through work where they get a SZV card. The faction would like to know if the PP cards are realistic. Is there any wiggle room? Is the 2025 realistic? And if between 2023 and 2024, the increase was 5 million, who is to say that that is not the same trend that we should be seeing in 2025?

Where can we make adjustments to support the realities of our ageing population that needs assistance with being able to get healthcare?

The faction mentions the PP cards once more and the answer as to what was included. The faction indicates that over the years, we have heard about us having additional doctors from other parts of the Dutch Kingdom practicing here. What is the status with that? Is it already open up to others? Is that why we are seeing or are going to see a decrease in medical care abroad and more of an increase here locally? One of the things the faction has been hearing a lot lately is persons that have complained to the length of time that they have to wait before they get to see a doctor. And this is a specialist. This is to see an eye specialist, a neurologist, to see an oncologist, etc.

The faction indicates that stress is a big factor in our care and in how any illness that we're dealing with is exasperated to a certain extent. Persons are getting stressed, and the faction believes that stress is the worst thing that you could have added on to being sick, and waiting so long for a doctor.

What is the status of the BIG register? Does it mean that we will get more doctors coming to the island from outside of the Dutch Kingdom?

Can the Minister explain what that impact will have on the timing of how long we have to wait to have appointments? The faction is aware that this is not directly under the Minister and that it is something that we are doing at the hospital. However, the faction believes that the Minister's influence on policies or legislative changes will have an impact on that.

Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure

The faction indicates that on page 34 of the budget, the faction believes they mention the "Huur Commissie", the rent tribunal. When the faction looks at the subsidized companies, the faction sees that only the Housing Foundation is subsidized, and their budget actually doubled this year. Meanwhile, the allocated subsidy for the "Huur Commissie" is still zero. The faction would just like to know from the Minister if an amendment would be feasible in order to discuss some funds going to the "Huur Commissie" or if there is a different plan of approach for the rent tribunal.

The faction recalls when it was an opposition member asking on this floor of Parliament why there is not an LBham as per article 47 of the "Comptabiliteitsverordening" that basically regulates all tendering for Government, which is the law. The faction believes the former Minister's answer then was that he doesn't think we needed more financial regulation, which was not his choice, but it's in the law. Where are we with this trajectory?

The faction believes the ministry of Finance also took it upon themselves to create this LBham, which is very important when speaking about tendering. Because yesterday, MPs stated within their expertise, they think that stuff should have been re-tendered but if we don't have an LBham to regulate this, then all is just a matter of opinion.

The faction would also like to inquire about Landspakket E7. The faction believes that an amount of approximately a million euros was reserved for the Department of Domain Affairs with the Landspakket, and the faction would like to know if the Minister has received any indication as to when this trajectory can start. We can start looking at important things like the Didam Policy that needs to be established for long lease and to revamp the Domain Affairs Department,

which is the department that creates the most revenue aside from the Infrastructure Management Department.

The faction wants to make sure that when we are doing this that, there is a four-eye policy. In the expenses part of VROMI the last column is 2024 and not 2025. The faction would like to make note that this is going to be a permanent change in the budget. Every other ministry is correct. The faction believes that this correction needs to take place in order for us to approve this one.

The Soualiga Action Movement-faction has taken note of the draft and has the following questions.

Ministry of Finance

The faction states that the Minister mentioned that there is 12.1 million allocated for a new high school. The faction would like to know where this will be built.

In the last 4 years, when were the budgets presented to Parliament? Were they on time? What sort of delay was there? If the Minister is being criticized for bringing it too fast, the faction would like to know what the reason was why it didn't come as fast as well. Were they presented in a timely a timely fashion?

The faction believes that if 97% of this budget is of the previous government, then this debate should be over. We should actually be going to the final report now and then into the public meeting where we can vote unanimously, and then we will be able to actually break a record in passing a budget very quickly.

Ministry of General Affairs

The faction would like an overview regarding this whole issue with the Chinese contractors and the NRPB. Can you give the Parliament a full explanation of the procurement of those funds? Those funds were given by the Dutch government to the World Bank and then projects were facilitated through the NRPB. The faction also believes that the advantages that the Chinese companies have is an unfair advantage to the local companies, but at the end of the day, those funds are on international bid by the World Bank.

Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication

The faction would like to know what the marketing budget for the Caribbean region is. The faction thinks that it is important that we market within the region as well. Although we know we do not have the numbers like the US and Europe, but in the Caribbean region there's 44 million people.

The small hotel operators in Sint Maarten. There are quite a few small hotel operators. The faction would like to know the plans of the Minister to incentivize them moving forward.

The faction believes that the Minister needs to make something abundantly clear to the people of Sint Maarten because there is a total misconception as to government-owned companies and the government being the shareholder of those companies.

Is the management and board of the airport responsible to the company, or are they responsible to the shareholder?

In the role of Minister of TEATT, which, of course, is the shareholder representative for the airport, can the Minister expound on what the role of the shareholder representative of government-owned companies is and what role the Minister plays?

The faction indicates that there is a general misconception, and maybe that comes from the name of a government-owned company, that they are actually the ministry and the Ministers are actually the ones that do the appointments, the hiring and the firing, and such. Can the Minister explain this?

The faction would like the Minister to give a presentation in the future as to the angle and the approach the Minister would like to take as far as the small hotel development and the Caribbean region goes.

As it regards the benefit of the CTO, can the Minister give a ballpark as to what that amount is that they are claiming?

Ministry of Justice

The faction states that based on the questions being asked, Justice was one of the ministries that has been neglected. It was the only ministry, when we received our separate status, that had to be built from scratch. There was no

Commissioner of Justice, there was always just a Minister of Justice of the Netherlands Antilles. As such, the faction believes that 14 years later, we are still trying to get Justice where it is, and that's why it's important that, moving forward, we put people in place who are not only capable but have the best interest of the justice workers at heart.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport

Ministry of Public Health, Social Development, and Labor

The faction mentions the Patients' Bill of Rights and that it was something that the ministry had started to work on years ago. While our patients, when they are sick, they don't seem to necessarily have legal rights to decide, "Well, I don't feel that I'm getting the necessary where I want with this doctor, or I would do this." There should be something in which it is outlined to let the patients know what their rights are as a patient. The faction believes that this is important.

The faction suggests that the Minister of VSA come up with a comprehensive plan, and when we have the Public meeting, the Minister can present what it is he wants to do with the ministry.

The faction has heard a lot of suggestions in regards the 1 cent on the gasoline and the sin tax. The faction proposes that the CoM, in that decision making, all ministries, instead of it going into the general coffers, make a policy that all revenues that are generated by ministries, per ministry, that be done as a surplus and can be then directed directly into that ministry the following budget year. If the Minister can propose something like this to Parliament, the faction believes we would be on the right track.

Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure

The National Alliance-faction has taken note of the draft and has the following questions and remarks as it pertains to this national ordinance.

Ministry of Finance

The faction would like to know, as it regards Mullet Bay and the status thereof, what the steps were that were taken since leaving Parliament with the approved addendum which we, as Parliament, were made to understand that once the addendum is approved, that Sint Maarten would get first right of refusal to purchase Mullet Bay? The faction noted then that hopefully it can be done based on a fair market value with an independent appraisal report. How far are we in those discussions? Since then the faction has realized that there have been different discussions from the Prime Minister and from the Minister of Finance where those sentiments sort of wavered a bit in terms of not being in line with what was said before. The faction would like an answer to share with its constituents.

The faction thanks the Minister for the presentation and is happy to hear that the other Ministers will be presenting a detailed presentation in January. The faction believes that the population deserves that. If you watch budget debates in any country, the budget debate is one of the biggest meetings we have. It also gives hope for the population of what to expect and addresses a lot of concerns that they have going forward. The faction was hoping that we would actually end the year with the presentations from the different Ministers, so we knew what to expect in 2025, not that we start in 2025.

In the presentation, the Minister mentioned that the budget went to CFT on September 13th, also JZ&W. In a meeting we had here a couple of weeks ago in Parliament, a coalition Member said that a Member of the faction is a fibber because the faction questioned the fact that the budget did not get a proper review from the JZ&W.

The faction has stated before that it doesn't matter how the information comes; what matters is the truth. This is concerning for the faction because all legislation in Government is supposed to go to the legal affairs department first before it leaves the building. That is typical because you get the proper feedback first. If we don't get reviews back on the most important legislation it has in Government, then we can leave the other legislation pass too. So, if we have other laws to come, why does it have to go to the department? The faction would like to know if we got a review from JZW, going and coming. So also, on its

way back out after we got advice from the Council of Advice. The faction requests the advices to be sent to Parliament?

The faction continues and mentions the working environment within the Government. The faction took note of a URSM article that came out. The article was very, very concerning to the faction. The article referred to a process in Government of hiring, and the faction mentioned that during a meeting persons referred to this Government as nepo babies. The word nepo, comes from the word nepotism and refers to a political figure whose rise and success are rooted in nepotistic practices, relying on inherited network from wealth and opportunities available to them from their parties, or a politician whose career is largely attributed to their familial ties rather than merit, riding the coattails of a well-known political family or dynasty, without proven independent qualifications or achievements.

The faction would like to know if there is any truth related to that article that came out regarding the hiring process within the tax office. A lot of civil servants approached the faction about that, and they had grave concerns. How do they know next time when applying for a job that they would be fairly given a similar opportunity, and a Minister wouldn't come and say, the MinisterMinister wants the Minister'sMinister's family or friend to get a job? The faction would also like for that advice to be sent to Parliament. The faction believes that we have to be able to set the integrity and build back the trust within the civil service regarding the hiring process.

Another reason why that's concerning is because in the third-quarter report it mentions the Government's concerns of lack of skilled personnel, capacity shortages in departments such as Finance and project management.

The faction continues and states that the Minister, in a couple of interviews, mentioned that persons don't even need to file. The faction would like some clarity on that.

Is there a legal basis to file? Because the faction would like to know, based on the Minister's two interviews, has that position changed, or is that still so? Do persons have to file their taxes?

The faction believes that Members of Parliament need to hold not just each other accountable but also the Government accountable for the things that we say on the campaign trail. The faction plans to hold all accountable, including the Ministers for things that they said. Is there a legal basis for the public to file?

In that same interview, the Minister also mentioned about tax returns, and that the Minister would like persons to be able to get their tax returns faster. Has there been any improvement in terms of payments of tax returns? Can the Minister show the measurement tool being used for that? The faction advises of one way that it could be done, namely by showing what has been the budgeted amount for the last six months in terms of tax return payments. The faction would like the budgeted amounts for the years 2023 and 2022.

The faction mentions the article from the Prime Minister regarding the Christmas voucher, and the faction thought it was very interesting. The previous administration increased the Christmas voucher in 2023 to 250 guilders, and they had to go through a procurement process.

The faction saw a survey come out from the Government stating, "Where would you like to get your Christmas voucher?" So, that means you're bypassing the procurement process. In the end, the Government decided to put the money directly into the accounts of the civil servants. The faction thinks that this could be a good move. It also states that that would be tax-free; it would be untaxed, which the faction thought even more interesting because we have the workers of TelEm that are complaining about their payouts that they're getting, and they are fighting to get it tax-free, and they're being denied. How is it possible that the Government could decide for itself, 2,000 employees, getting it tax-free but that availability to the staff of TelEm is not possible?

Can Parliament receive the national decree that was used to be able to execute this? Also, has the Governor signed this LB already? The faction would hope that we didn't use an MB to circumvent the legal process that we typically follow to be able to execute this. Can Parliament have the national decree that the Government used to be able to execute this payment of 250 guilders? And is it indeed tax-free?

The faction continues and mentions that during the summer, the Minister and the unions had a back-and-forth regarding the COLA and the vacation pay. The Minister at that point in time said that no, she's not going to get locked up for anyone; there needs to be a legal basis, there needs to be legislation to be able to execute the payment of the COLA and vacation pay.

Six months later, the faction is happy that the COLA and vacation pay that was started by the former administration, were executed. But where is the

legislation now? It's been six months later. It has been executed and not just being executed; it has also been budgeted for in Budget 2025 without legislation.

The Minister indicated that in the past Government, we put the tax—we put the tourist tax in the budget, and there's no legislation to back it up. The faction would say that the Minister has made the same mistake by putting the COLA and vacation pay in Budget 2025, and there's no legislation there. How are we paying it out? Going forward, you have budgeted for the payments, but there is no legislation.

In addition to that, because the vacation pay and the COLA were already paid out, that means you already started to execute on the draft legislation that the past Government presented, which would also mean that the Minister is enabling the other acts of that legislation.

Persons have been coming to the Government requesting their jubilees—the 15 years, 20 years, and 25 years. The faction is asking the Government to please execute that also. The Why is the Government taking a stance on only executing part of the law that we have and not the others? The faction would like to know from the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance if the jubilees for 2024 will be paid out. How many jubilees do we have based on the legislation? So, the 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, even 45 years—how many persons are entitled to that in 2024?

In the quarter three report, it is stated that the debt of GDP ratios is approaching or exceeding recommended thresholds, raising alarms about fiscal sustainability. That was quarter three of 2024, yet still, the Government took on another loan, which is the GEBE loan, that was not part of that time, the quarter three report. What is our position now if, in quarter three, we already thought that was a risk? What is our position since then? Can we break down this risk? Can we add a percentage of the risk level?

It also mentioned that there is limited fiscal space for additional borrowing without jeopardizing the country's creditworthiness. Since then, the Government has taken on the loan of GEBE, so how much more has this risk increased the creditworthiness? And what is our current creditworthiness?

Can we get an update on the tax systems? The faction has requested these from Parliament and the TWO reports but does not believe they've gotten them.

Can we get an update on the tax system since there was no appeal done? What is the current timeline for the new tax system? Is there another or a new bid going to go out? Are we going to just hand-select who we want? Are we going to start a whole new process? Can we get a detailed update on the current tax system?

The faction states that the budget for 2025 has a significant increase in revenues in comparison to 2024. In the presentation of the Minister, though, it was stated that there are no new policies, and specifically, let's say tourist tax, among others, were mentioned. So where does these millions of revenue come from? If there are no new policies, where are we generating this revenue from?

When the faction looks at the quarterly report, the risk for the Government is the capacity to be able to collect funds. It also states that Government needs to be able to put pressure on individuals to pay their taxes and hold them accountable.

So, there are no new policies. How is Government increasing millions of guilders in revenue? What new additional pressures, what additional controls, how much additional controls are we planning to execute within the next few months to be able to generate this revenue?

The faction would also like to know what the current cash on accounts for Government is.

The faction would also like to get the top 15 entities that we owe and the amounts.

The faction mentions the loan and inquires if we paid the loan payment in October. How did that affect our cash flow? What are our cash flow projections for the next 3 to 6 months?

The faction inquires about the financial statements of the government-owned companies and how much these are taken into consideration when it comes to the income of the Government.

For example, one in particular is BTP. The faction would like to know if the Minister has read the financial statements from BTP and the comments from the auditors. What is the risk that BTP faces, and what is the Minister's opinion on those risks in particular?

Does the Minister believe that payments from certain entities that are outstanding and owed to the Government—let's say, for example, casinos—should be waived in any way? The same question applies to any other entity reflected in the financial statements of these different government-owned companies.

The faction continues and states that upon perusing the budget, the faction found the budget to be something easy to like but very hard to love for the following reasons. Easy to like. In the sense 99% of the projects that the faction is seeing in it are that of the prior Government, but harder to love in a sense of, as the Minister alluded to, there were no new policies. The faction understands on one half yes and the other half no to why there were no new policies because yes, the new policies that need new laws drafted, the Minister didn't have enough time to do it, and no one had enough time to do those. But the faction is of the opinion that not all new policies need new laws. The faction is a bit perplexed as to why zero new policies were in the budget.

The faction notes that it gets more information on what this Government, and the ministry of Finance wants to do moving forward from newspaper articles than from this budget. So, the faction thinks we could have done things a bit differently.

The faction continues and mentions the debt-to-GDP ratio and the interest-to-GDP ratio. The faction would like to receive those from the years 2010, 2015, 2018, 2020, and 2024.

As it pertains to the tax-to-GDP percentage, the faction would like to know what the Minister's plan is because the faction is seeing a lot of, ad hoc plans for taxation: transaction tax, the new vehicle tax, garbage tax from the Minister of VROMI. What is the long-term plan as it pertains to the tax-to-GDP percentage? The faction mentions that Sint Maarten is 27%, Aruba is 35%, and Holland is 39%. We know where we don't want to go, but the question is, where are we going? The faction doesn't believe it is the intention to implement all these tax ideas and then to find out what our percentage is. The faction thinks that we'll be at a surprise at that moment, and the faction thinks we're working backwards if we were to do it that way.

The faction continues and mentions the vehicle tax plan that the Minister shared in the paper. The faction didn't get the complete gist of what the Minister wanted to do when it came to the article. So, if the Minister can clarify this—

because how the faction read it, it's going to be based on weight, and the weight classification begins at 3,500 kg.

The faction would like to know who the Minister consulted with. Which external experts did the Minister consult upon coming up with this vehicle taxing based on weight? Was the Minister of VROMI consulted in the matter?

The faction mentions statements regarding transaction tax, changing the vehicle tax, and garbage tax. The faction is of the opinion that these are all good initiatives if done the right way. But the faction is concerned as it does not see anything that pertains to reforms in taxes—wage tax. As well as stimulating grant taxes or incentives when it comes to small businesses, as well as tax incentives for electric vehicles (EVs), etc.

What is the Minister's stance on sin tax? The reason why the faction is naming these four different forms of taxation is that these are in the manifestos of the majority of the parties that are in the coalition. The faction is seeing articles being written on all different types of taxes except the ones in the manifesto that they ran on and promised. The faction would like to understand what the plan is as it pertains to those taxes, and what the plan is for tax reforms moving forward.

The faction would like to know the Minister's stance on indirect taxation. The faction thinks the Minister explained it in short during the previous budget debate, but the faction expected to see more or hear more about it going forward. What are the short-term plans?

What is the projected expectation for the change in the vehicle tax? What is the Minister expecting to collect in difference once that is changed, compared to what it is now?

How far are we since the approved addendum for the ENNIA agreement left Parliament. The response was discussions are ongoing with key stakeholders. The faction believes that this is pretty vague. It was stated that discussions are ongoing with key stakeholders for a public-private partnership.

Can this mean that the Government is discussing with other individuals to buy it? Does this mean that the Government is in discussions with the Curacao government and Sun Resort to acquire the property? Can more context be given to this point?

The faction is happy to hear the Minister attempt to clarify, but it didn't answer the question in the end. The question was not regarding acting positions and so forth. The faction agrees with the Minister and knows there are a few other acting positions in the ministry.

In this case, the article stated that there was interference in the process of the hiring. Now, the vacancy for this same position came out while the Minister was there, so that means if the Minister wanted this person that was acting to be placed, the Minister just had to write an advice to put them in position. The faction agrees with that. The faction encourages the Minister to continue to work on that process. However, in this instance, the Minister put out a vacancy for that position, so the Minister did not consider the person that was acting; not the department.

Is there any truth to the article? The faction would like to know if the Minister sent a letter to P&O saying, "Stop this process and appoint this person."? Did P&O say, for example, "Hey, this is the person that won fair and square, but since you want to appoint this person, we'll oblige"? The faction indicates that it posed the question to the Prime Minister as well.

In the past P&O clearly stated that they don't change their advice. You can put "niet akkoord" and hire who you want, and the faction would respect that. The faction believes that the power was by the Minister to appoint the person and make them permanent.

When it came to the vouchers, the Minister indicated that they were not taxed, but the pay slips came out today. The money is in the account, and it's not taxed. The civil servants and unions are asking for clarity. Is it taxed or not?

The Minister also mentioned some law. Which law is it?

The Minister further mentioned that no LB or MB was used, but it was a CoM decision. The faction is of the opinion that this means that for dark hours for ambulances, for justice workers—any payment that you need to make happen, just use a CoM decision. No ministerial decree, no national decree was used to make the payment.

The faction is happy for that, however the faction believes that this means that the Minister doesn't have any excuses going forward when it comes to payments of other civil servants, especially justice workers.

Regarding the filing of taxes. The Minister mentioned article 41b of the Income Tax Ordinance and that citizens don't have to file based on this article. The Minister also said that based on the policy of the Tax office, legislation supersedes policy. So in the end, in 2025, persons do not have to follow this procedure because law supersedes policy.

The faction mentions the posed question regarding the plans as it pertains to the elimination of taxes for seniors. Can this question be answered with a timeline for completion?

The Minister mentioned that she doesn't put out advertisements for job vacancies. However, the faction would like to remind the Minister that she is responsible for everything that happens within the ministry. The Minister is "eindverantwoordelijk". Maybe the Minister might not be technically sending it out, but someone within the ministry is acting on the behalf of the Minister. The faction is of the opinion that once a person is in an acting role, the minute they apply for the job it then goes into the role of the recruitment process. Is this wrong?

The faction is of the opinion that as a government, you have to have a vision and a goal. To say that that is not there is very worrisome. Without vision the people will perish.

Ministry of General Affairs

The faction would like to thank the Minister of General Affairs and the Government for continuing the disaster fund that was started under the previous administration. The faction would like some clarification regarding the GEBE loan that is right now on the table, which was approved in the 2024 Amendment. The faction would like to know what conditions are tied to that with respect to the operations of GEBE. The faction notes a disaster with the airport as it regards years of CFO and an agreement being made. Is that the case here?

What is taking so long with hiring three Os, O's two Os, O's or one O? The faction knows that that process was concluded quite a while back. The faction would like to get an update on that. Or is it being held off until the money comes, and then we have to appoint someone? Is that a discussion that is taking place?

The faction would like some clarity from the Prime Minister because every time the Prime Minister speaks, he talks about being less dependent on

the Netherlands, but the actions prove otherwise with respect to the different loans. What is the stance of this current cabinet with assistance? We all know how the CFT and all these things are set up, but the faction finds it a bit misleading to the general public. At one point the Prime Minister is saying we are too dependent and that we need to move away, yet the Prime Minister is putting us in more debt with the same party.

The faction would like to know if the Prime Minister can provide an overview of all the vacancies for the "brandweer". The vacancies that are needed and also highlight those that are critical and may be the reason why they are not filled. Is it budgetary concerns? The faction states that if we need to make any amendments, we can do that. The reason for this question is because within the fire brigade, there are persons that are held back given the fact that they cannot get their promotions for quite a while now. The faction would like to know how the Government is dealing with those cases.

The faction mentions the resettlement and the concerns with paying out of persons who have occupied land illegally. The faction mentions that in two instances, there were persons who were, in the opinion of the faction, not paid out in the right way. The faction would like to know, based on those two very clear cases that stood out, if any resolution has been made for the persons who filed complaints via the Government and also at the NRPB in terms of getting their payout.

The faction would like to get an update regarding the three complaints that came in, the status of those complaints, and if they are being addressed.

In line with what the faction mentioned earlier to the Minister of Finance regarding nepotism, the faction mentioned that Millennials and Gen Z refer to the current Government as "nepo babies." Another term that comes to mind is cronyism, which refers to the practice of favoring friends, associates, or close acquaintances when appointing individuals to positions of power, employment, or granting privileges regardless of their qualifications or merit and what happens is that it undermines the fairness, transparency, and efficiency, as decisions are based on personal relationships or the party.

The faction loves the lights on the lamp poles; they are beautiful. The faction loves the Christmas atmosphere and the feeling that it brought. But it doesn't change the fact that it's cronyism and nepotism. No matter how good of a feeling that the faction has, it doesn't change that fact. The Prime Minister has a letter that endorses a particular foundation to be able to operate and decorate the lamp poles.

The faction's question to the Prime Minister is: are you going to do this endorsement letter for every entity? The Aquatic Foundation just came from Budapest the other day. They needed a lot of donations to be able to travel. Are you going to write an endorsement letter for them so they could also get funding for their sport? Having an endorsement letter from the highest body and the highest person in the country in terms of power carries a lot of weight. Is the Prime Minister going to write an endorsement letter for the Football Federation, the Soccer Federation, the Flag Football?

Which other entity is allowed to come to the Prime Minister to get an endorsement letter to be able to get funding from the community? The faction guarantees that the Prime Minister writing that letter is a lot stronger than the average person on the street writing a letter.

When you do write this endorsement letter and they are applying for a subsidy for Government, the power is in your hands. The power is then in your hands or the relevant Minister's hands. So how do you now, as Prime Minister, write an endorsement letter to the Government, for example, and then deny their subsidy request or support?

How do you separate the entity that got the permission? Why couldn't it be, let's say, Funtopia or another foundation, or the Home Foundation? Why this particular entity? Maybe another entity could have done it even cheaper. So maybe the donations that they got could have been tripled or doubled in terms of value. Maybe Funtopia already has a certain amount of lights; maybe they could have added more flair to it. So how did the Minister determine that this one entity can do it best?

The faction would like to know if the Council of Ministers approved this. The faction also understood and saw in a letter, a previous letter, the Wever Works Foundation. Why didn't they get it? There's another good entity that works around the clock.

The faction would like to know if the Council of Ministers approved this letter before it went out. Because then the faction would want to hold the other ministers accountable going forward.

On top of that, this isn't only the opinion of the faction but this is also the opinion of the Minister of TEATT.

The faction would like to know if the Prime Minister feels in any way responsible. Does the Prime Minister feel in any way that this was cronyism? Does the Prime Minister feel the fact that the colleague Minister has called you out on this and said, "Hey before you continue down this line"? Because Minister Heyliger- Martin, she was also doing the Christmas lights, right? Why is there so much competition? Why can't she execute what she has to execute? Why can't we support her in getting the lights done?

The faction really respects the Minister of TEATT for making her position clear and even after doing that, still being a team player and saying that we did this together.

The faction also asked the Minister of Finance regarding the letters to the civil servants. The faction appreciates the Prime Minister giving civil servants days and the 250 guilders. What the faction didn't appreciate was that the Government had a survey go out requesting: do you want days, do you want Christmas vouchers, do you want this, do you want that? And the majority of persons actually wanted the two weeks days, the two weeks days that the Prime Minister offered. But little did they know that they were never going to get two weeks because we were going to have budget debate. So why offer things to make the civil servants feel as if they were going to get it, knowing that it was never going to happen?

Can the Prime Minister indicate how it is possible that the 250 guilders become tax-free if it's a gratification? The faction would like to know if this LB went to the Council of Ministers. The faction would like to know if the Governor signed it off if the Government did an MB. Is there any advice from Legal Affairs? The faction loves it when precedence is set. Because when the other institutions come and say, "I would like to be paid out tax-free," when TelEm staff comes and says "I'm being paid out," please let it be tax-free for me also. How do you separate who gets what and who doesn't? Why not just do what we always do, give them the voucher instead of putting the vouchers at risk?

The faction states that all the questions regarding the vacation pay and so forth, the legislation, the bra 8, the questions that the faction posed to the Minister of Finance also relates back to the Prime Minister because the faction knows they have to work on it together. Where is that legislation and how is it possible that we're going to execute half of it, for example vacation pay, Cola, but not execute the part of the jubilees? Is the Minister going to pay out the jubilees in 2024 since they are also entitled to those?

There was a contract for SZV and maintenance of the building. Is the Government continuing with that? The faction doesn't see that reflected in the budget for 2025. There were three options: ABC, one was 2 million guilders, one was a little above, and one was even higher than that. Because the Government had a history of not maintaining, etc., SZV was taking over the total maintenance and so forth. Is the Government going to continue with that, or is the Government saying no, we're going to handle everything ourselves?

If they are planning to continue with it, where is that reflected in the budget?

The faction would like to know if there are any investigations happening within the Ministry of General Affairs. How many, what type of investigations, and why? HR-related, fraudulent, criminal, any of those, any investigation.

The faction noted in the presentation from the Minister of Finance in reference to vehicles and gas that now research is going to be done, and then it'll be put in the budget, but we've been monitoring this already. The former Minister of Finance would send detailed reports on gas usage to every Council of Ministers via the secretariat. Every Government vehicle has a card, and the usage could be checked online.

The faction indicates that MP Wever mentioned about vehicles being on the French side and so forth. The former Minister of Finance established a team of individuals that would check on a monthly basis; for example, if there are 10 vehicles in VROMI supposed to be doing inspection, why is L55 at 300 guilders and everybody else is at 100 guilders? The team was then able to zoom in and hold those persons accountable. Why has that stopped?

The former Minister of Finance also did that, for example, with the phones. The previous Government cut all of the post-paid phones and made everybody go to prepaid, and that saved us a significant amount of money. And even there, we would use the data to say, we could cut people lower or increase. Why is this Government not continuing with these measures that could, one, save you money, and two, hold persons accountable?

The faction doesn't see any kind of measures where we could already start to save money or generate money.

The faction noted the comments of MP Meyers regarding governments falling, and that's a reason why persons, entities, and businesses would not want to invest in Sint Maarten. But the faction is of the opinion that a real reason why persons would not want to invest in Sint Maarten is for one reason: the statement by the Prime Minister that Sint Maarten is bankrupt. That's a severe reason why persons would not want to invest in Sint Maarten. When, you have the most powerful figurehead stating the country is bankrupt, which is not true, which was later corrected by the Minister of Finance.

The faction appreciates the idea regarding the Christmas lights. What the faction doesn't like is basically the manner in which the Prime Minister went about it. The document signed was written in the last week of August, which means the Prime Minister had enough time to do a small little tender and do it the right way. Include the Minister TEATT or do a cross-ministerial something. "There's no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit." And the faction thinks this is a perfect example. If it was done the right way, we wouldn't be here talking about it right now. Moving forward, the faction thinks everybody would appreciate it if the Prime Minister were to just respect the protocol and do things the way they should be done.

In February, in the Minister's opening address, the first thing he said as a Member of Parliament, was that for the rest of 2024, he will make do with the budget put forward by the outgoing Government. But as of 2025, he will be presenting a super budget. Seeing that this budget, the 2025 budget, is basically 90% to 99% of the projects from the prior Government. No new policies from the current Government, no new revenue generation ideas—nothing from the new Government—is this what the Prime Minister meant, with a super budget?

Government-owned companies. What is the idea for the sitting Government as it pertains to shareholder representatives? Is it going to stay under the Council of Ministers, or will it go back to the individual ministers, such as, for example, the Minister of VROMI for GEBE, the Minister of TEATT for the airport, etc., etc., or will it stay under the Council of Ministers—basically, the Prime Minister himself? What is the vision of the coalition moving forward as it pertains to that?

The faction indicates that at the last budget debate, the faction asked the Prime Minister, what is the update on the appointing of a management board, seeing that right now there are no statutory directors, and because of that, the current director is functioning with a mandate from the supervisory board. The

supervisory board is under the Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister himself. So basically, the Prime Minister is running GEBE, indirectly. Considering that this Government prides itself on good governance—at least says that—the faction would like to know when the proper steps will be taken to appoint a management board. Especially when it comes to making long-term plans when it comes to GEBE and what stands before them? What are the plans for the management board?

At the budget amendment, there was a motion presented by the now MP Ottley for relief and passed. It had enough votes to pass, but the Prime Minister was against it for whatever reasons. He has a right to. Also against it was the President of Parliament. But the President of Parliament then asked the Prime Minister to come with his own ideas or with the Government's ideas within two weeks to Parliament. Three weeks later, after the two weeks, at the press briefing, where the Prime Minister was asked about his plans to return to Parliament, seeing that it was over a week overdue at the moment, the Prime Minister said that Parliament is not serious and that he isn't going back to Parliament until Parliament gets serious.

The faction doesn't know what the Minister considers serious. The faction sees this two ways. The faction sees that as a disrespect to Parliament but namely as a disrespect to the President of Parliament.

The faction doesn't know if that is standard practice moving forward or if the Prime Minister thinks that's normal. But the faction would still like to know what from the motion has been executed or is in the works.

The faction would also like to know what the Prime Minister is for. What's your idea, or what is the Government's idea as it comes to GEBE relief? At the end of the day, the bill is still coming, the people are still suffering, and even though we differ in opinions, we are here for the people.

The faction mentions that one of the main things on the URSM's Manifesto is GEBE relief. The faction heard the Prime Minister mention just now that his new cabinet has been sitting since the 26th of November, but the faction would like to remind the Prime Minister he has been sitting since May. Seven months later, the faction would like to know what the update is as it pertains to the GEBE relief.

The Christmas voucher. The faction mentions once again that it is a good idea. Although the faction knows that subsidized school teachers are not 100% civil servants, what about the subsidized school teachers? Are they not due something? The faction knows they fall under the school board, but what are the plans for the subsidized school teachers?

What is the Prime Minister's vision for national health insurance in Sint Maarten? The faction knows what he's against. He was against it in 2018. Seemingly, the SAAHA has not been executed, so he's against aspects of the SAAHA. The faction would like to know what the Prime Minister is against exactly pertaining to the SAAHA. What would the Prime Minister like to change pertaining to the SAAHA? If the Prime Minister doesn't like the SAAHA, no problem, what is the alternative? The faction believes we are kicking this can down the road further and further, and the state of SZV is not getting better.

Seven Seas. The faction would like to know what is the frequency of the maintenance schedule, so basically, how often are the plants maintained, and does GEBE have an overview of these costs?

When was the last time that a maintenance audit of the water plant was done? So, the one in Cupecoy, the one in Point Blanch, and the one in Cay Bay. The faction questions how GEBE can make long-term plans if they don't know the financial state of the water plant every year. How can they incorporate the water plant in their plans if they don't have an overview of the financials? By them not having these things, they have basically no leverage every time the contract is up for Seven Seas.

The faction is of the opinion that you can go two years, three years not knowing what the maintenance plans are, if it's being maintained, what's the financial expenditures. And all Seven Seas needs to do is come with a nice plan. If you sign on the dotted line, we're going to do this, that, and the other. The faction believes that this takes all the leverage away from GEBE.

If the Government wants to meet with Seven Seas pertaining to GEBE and the water plant, who is in attendance at these meetings?

The faction continues and mentions that the water plant in Cay Bay, is about 30 years old. Point Blanch is a little younger. Cupecoy is in a deplorable state, to say the least. What are the plans when it comes to the maintenance of the upkeep, other than the machines, of the plant itself, so the exterior building?

The Saba Bank. During 10-10-10, there were a lot of things divided up, one of them being the percentages of Saba Bank. The faction thinks Sint Maarten got 8% of the Saba Bank. If it's not that, the faction would like to be corrected. What are the essential minerals? What minerals are in the Saba Bank? Is it fisheries? Is it oil? What is it exactly?

The faction would like to know if Sint Maarten received an offer from the Dutch Government pertaining to the shares of the Saba Bank. Did Sint Maarten receive an offer, and if they did, how much was the offer?

The faction would like to know what the plans are of the Prime Minister as it pertains to the road network in Sint Maarten. The faction knows it doesn't fall under the purview of the Prime Minister, but in one of his recent speeches, the Prime Minister spoke about plans for the road in the speech given at the groundbreaking of the repairs for the Carnival Village. Can the Prime Minister elaborate more on that?

The faction is seeing a lot of different ideas of taxation. Everything from transaction tax, vehicle tax, garbage tax, and all types of taxes that were not part of any of the parties' manifestos. One that was a part of the manifestos, in particular of the URSM, is the elimination of taxes for all senior citizens. The faction would like to know what progress the Government has made on that. Is the Government busy with that, and what are the long-term and short-term plans pertaining to the elimination of the taxes for the seniors?

The faction would like to have a "meetbare" answer, so basically not that it is being looked into, but more of by this and this date, we expect to be this far.

What is the Prime Minister's stance on zoning of Sint Maarten? In particular as well, what is the Prime Minister's stance on zoning of Mullet Bay? If yes, what is the time frame that the Prime Minister has when it comes to that?

The faction mentions the situation with NRPB and this Xing Yang company from China. Does the Prime Minister understand the economic impact that this decision, or lack thereof, is going to have on the island of Sint Maarten? Because it's easy to say, "Oh, at least the projects are going to get done." But what is going to happen in the aftermath?

The faction indicates that this is not something that's unique to Sint Maarten. This has happened in other countries; look at Jamaica. The company will come in. It is subsidized by the Chinese Government. They're mobilizing and still submitting costs for projects that are 30 to 40, sometimes 50% cheaper than the local competitors. Something makes no sense. Then, once they come to Sint Maarten and they have all the major projects, eventually, the local labor market will be dependent on these projects.

If you tender and you get awarded a project 40% cheaper than the local competitor, you can only imagine what those hourly rates are for that company. What is the ratio of foreign to local workers coming in? Is it 80/20? Is it 50/50? And even if it's 20 or 50% local, what will these locals be earning?

For example purposes, if a tradesman is making \$100 a day, but when this company comes in, they disrupt the market and now that person is making \$60 a day, what's going to happen by the time this company leaves Sint Maarten with the few local companies that actually survive it? Because if you think after you work for \$60 a day, you're going back to making \$100 by the old company, it doesn't work like that. The faction would like to understand if the Prime Minister understands the economic impact this can have on Sint Maarten.

The faction has understood that no contract has been signed, but in Holland, that same Chinese company has their heavy machinery and materials on the harbor to be shipped to Sint Maarten. The faction would like to know what the exact situation is when it comes to this. The faction knows the Prime Minister is aware of this since June. What is the Prime Minister going to do about this particular situation that threatens the economy of Sint Maarten?

As it pertains to the water plant, what are the plans to expand on the buffer period that we currently have? Because right now, if a crisis happens with the water plant, the current buffer capacity we have, in Maarten could last 8 hours with the tanks. The faction understands that St. Thomas has a buffer capacity of two weeks. The faction would like to know what the plans are to increase the buffer capacity. If we are talking about resilience and long-term planning, the faction believes that the buffer capacity of the water is a very integral part of that.

The faction would like to know what the current status is of the function book for the firefighters.

The faction poses the following question once again. Is the Prime Minister willing to also make endorsement letters for other entities when they do come to the Prime Minister for non-government-subsidized money? Period. Are you going to do that for every entity—not only foundations, every individual, every entity that comes to you for that?

The faction was going through some governance standards and ethical review standards. One of them states, for example, especially in a position of power as the Prime Minister: neutrality. Public officials must remain neutral and avoid any action that could be seen as endorsing one private entity over another. That's corporate governance, ethical governance.

Another one is perceived favoritism. Endorsing a private entity can create a perception of favoritism, as the faction mentioned before, particularly if the entity benefits from government contracts and policies or not—which is not in this case.

Undue influence. As Prime Minister, endorsement carries significant weight and may pressure the private entity to comply with requests, leading to concerns about coercion.

The Minister of Finance mentioned that the 250 guilders was paid out net. That means a "bruto" amount was paid out. In the letter to the staff, the Prime Minister mentioned that 250 guilders will be paid, but obviously, the amount is different because a "bruto" amount was paid out seemingly or had to be paid out so that they could have received it net. On the pay slips of the civil servants, the wage remains the same, and the "netto" 250 is there. So, what is the "bruto" amount that has to be paid?

The Minister of Finance also mentioned that the civil servants are now responsible to make sure that they file properly the 250 guilders. Also, if you look at the amount of civil servants that we have, let's estimate at 1,800 at 250, that's between 450,000 guilders to half a million guilders. Anything above 50,000 guilders needs a national decree. The faction would like to know if a national decree was used in any way to make this payment.

Did this Council of Ministers only use a CoM decision to make a payment? Because then we can't have excuses for other payments that need to come.

The faction continues and mentions the jubilees. The Minister mentioned how many persons needed jubilees for this year, but the Minister also mentioned

that he is not going to talk about payments because that's under the purview of the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance said it's under the purview of the Prime Minister. Who's going to make the payments to the civil servants that you mentioned? The faction thinks it's 40 of them this year—the jubilees: 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 years. Are you going to make these payments this year? The Government made payments in vacation pay and payments in Cola. That means you're executing the legislation, and all you need is a CoM decision to make the payments. Is the Minister going to make the payments for the jubilees this year?

As it relates to the cronyism and the Christmas initiative, the Minister mentioned full transparency. Since we're talking about transparency, can we get an indication on how much money was raised for this initiative?

And the lights, when they are done, will they be going to Government? Will Government be able to get these lights? Will they be stored so next year we wouldn't need an endorsement letter from the Prime Minister again? We will just use the ones that we have now to continue to decorate.

As it relates to the Chinese company and the NRPB, the faction has the following comments and questions. One minute, the Prime Minister is saying that no contracts are signed—which is true, no contracts are signed. Next minute, the Prime Minister says the companies that were awarded the contracts are now going through another process when it comes to the final stages before you sign a contract, meaning the contracts were awarded. The Prime Minister even named the projects of which the contracts were awarded, to the very same company that has not signed a contract as yet, only because they're going through certain procedures before they're able to sign.

Then the Prime Minister says that they are having dialogue with the World Bank and the Trust Fund about their concerns. Which concerns? What is the goal of this dialogue? What is the intended goal?

In the same breath, the Prime Minister is saying canceling the tenders will result in claims to Government. In another breath, the Prime Minister is saying, once the company is here, we will treat them with the same respect as it pertains to the local laws.

The faction is of the opinion that the Prime Minister is saying we could jump high, jump low, they are coming. At the end of the day, the faction believes it's being masked by the fact that some projects local companies did not sign in for.

The faction continues and mentions, let's just look at Marie Laurence for a bit of context. Contractors requested critical project details from the NRPB in the final stages of their bids. Instead of getting timely responses, they received delays and incomplete answers, leaving a 25-page list of unanswered questions before the bid deadline. In the final days of the submission, the criteria of which these companies have always performed and submitted the bids under were abruptly changed by the NRPB and raised by the NRPB, to which the local companies found themselves unable to meet the new requirements—companies that have been working with the NRPB from since its inception.

How are these requirements and criteria abruptly raised, and then hides behind the excuse of no one signed up? Of course, no one signed up—you raised the bar. The faction would like to know based on what was this bar raised.

How can a foreign company who has to mobilize their heavy machinery, has to mobilize their workers, has to pay for room and board, has to pay for everything that has to do with mobilization, and still bid on a project when it comes to materials and execution—still bid 30 to 40 to 50 percent lower than the local contractor?

And then, it's said there's no proof that they are government-subsidized. What kind of research was done? The faction would like to know what kind of research was done and what kind of third-party entity was brought in by the Government or whomever, NRPB, to investigate the matter.

Furthermore, are there any questions posed to the NRPB as it pertains to any kind of affiliation with anybody that works with the NRPB with this Chinese company? Have these questions been answered? Have these questions even been posed?

The faction asked the Prime Minister for his opinion on the stakeholder representation of government-owned companies—not the definition of what a stakeholder representative is. The faction asked for the Prime Minister's opinion on how he thinks it should be moving forward.

As it pertains to the criteria being changed, whether or not anything was ratified by the previous Government—which the faction does not see how something going on during the summer has to do with the previous Government that left office since May. Criteria is made clear prior to bidding on a project. So,

if anything was ratified by the previous Government or any government, it would have been done and made clear prior to the bid, and not during a bid.

These funds, provided by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and administered by the World Bank, were designed to rebuild the nation, strengthen local capacities, and empower the people. The faction does not see from that mission or vision how anything that's happening now complies with that of the World Bank and Trust Fund.

The faction mentioned that the case was closed since April with the previous Government that was sitting there regarding the NRBP payout. The faction urges the Prime Minister to get all the relevant documents so that he can be abreast of the situation.

The Minister of TEATT mentioned that although the scope of works changed the marketplace didn't have to retender, while the Prime Minister said that once the scope of work change you have to retender. The faction is of the opinion that the Prime Minister is 100% correct. The faction would like some clarity on the point for the marketplace not being retendered from the General Affairs perspective.

Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication

The faction mentions the Sint Maarten Tourism Authority and would like the Minister to give an indication as to what are the bottlenecks that are stopping this from coming to fruition. Is there an update on the organizational structure of the Sint Maarten Tourist Bureau? We know that many staffers are working outside their function. Is that the case with all other departments within the ministry, and how is this being dealt with? Persons that are working outside their functions, are they being properly compensated for such?

The faction mentions the process of the appointment of the CEO and COO of the airport. Does the Minister align herself with the decision made by the airport board regarding these appointments? It is the understanding of the faction that vacancies have been advertised indicating preferred candidates. Is this so? Does the Minister perceive this as a fair and transparent hiring process? What actions have they taken since these concerns have been made public?

The faction points out that the CEO function was advertised publicly, while the COO function was done internally. The faction believes that

consistency is key and notes that you have the same board making different decisions for a similar type of position. What is the policy where that is concerned, and does the Government endorse this type of behavior if this is the case?

The Marketplace. The faction recalls there was a very nice ceremony with the groundbreaking, but since then, the work has remained stagnant. The faction has heard different reasons as to why, but nothing convincing. The faction notes that in Sint Maarten, when we do temporary things, they end up lasting for years. The faction hopes that that is not the case because you would have those persons over in the Old Government administration building parking lot, basically not making any money and not making ends meet. The faction feels that that is quite concerning and mentions that if it wasn't ready, then we should not have moved them.

Once the scope of work changes in a project in a tender, and it is decided to use a different material, does the tender have to go out again? The faction believes this is the case. The faction notes that the scope of work has changed with this whole Marketplace, but a new tender was never put out. Is this the reason why the work has halted? If so, when will the new tender be going out? Was this communicated to the public?

The faction mentions calibration. Based on the complaints the faction has been hearing, the faction would like to know if all the pumps at the gas stations are properly calibrated. Has there ever been any thought via the ministry of TEATT to add a small fee for the calibration of the different instruments? Not only by the gas station but around the different scales as well. The faction knows that this is a task that is executed by the department, but it is kind of a loss similarly to when persons import animals. The faction believes that we are the only place in the world that doesn't charge for that, while it does take an administrative process.

The faction believes that there are different ways we can generate revenue, but we just have to be willing to do it.

The faction knows that the issue of illegal barkers has been something that has been plaguing the country for quite a while, and even most recently with a very disturbing video on one of our local beaches. What steps have been taken or will be taken to deal with these types of situations?

The faction has taken note of the publication announcement of the opening days of business on December 25th, 26th, and also on January 1st, but the faction was informed that it's only in Philipsburg. The faction is hoping that this is a typo because the faction would see this as a sort of discrimination. If this is only for Phillipsburg, does the Minister intend to send out controllers on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, and January 1st to do these controls?

The faction would like to congratulate the Minister, the ministry, and the staff, but in particular, the tourism office, STB, regarding Sint Maarten Flavors. The faction thinks it's a good initiative. The faction would also like to congratulate the French tourism office for their St. Martin Gastronomy Festival. What the faction would like to know is if it's any way possible to be able to do it as one. The faction thinks we have to start to be able to pull our resources together and have a bigger impact. The faction would prefer to see one St. Martin Food Festival celebrated on both sides of the island. It would have a much bigger impact, and it also was very confusing for some tourists. The faction thinks we should just do two big weeks of a grand festival; it would have a lot more impact and the marketing would be bigger. So, can we please next year not have Sint Maarten Flavors but have one big collaboration and have one St. Martin Food Festival with music, food, and competitions on both sides of the island? The faction believes that it'll generate a lot more revenue and a lot more eyeballs, and the marketing will be a lot easier.

The faction has mentioned in a previous discussion that this is a DP-led Government and is being led because of the Minister of TEATT. The Minister sees other ministries not doing things, and the Minister just does it.

The Marketplace. The faction wants to be certain, because your colleague, the Minister who you're helping out with the garbage bins, said that once you change anything of a tender, if you change the design or whatever, you have to do it over. You can't just change the tender. So, please, because you mentioned you're changing designs and so forth, has the Minister had this discussion with the Minister of VROMI on the possibilities of this?

The only thing the faction is a little disappointed in, the faction wishes the Minister didn't do this a few months ago. The Minister has a tender out. The deadline was supposed to be September 13th, 2024. The faction continues and states that the Minister put out a tender for consultancy services. What does that say? What are consultancy services? What do you want the person to do? One of the tasks is availability to travel on behalf of the ministry on short notice.

The faction continues and mentions the requirements: a large professional network, strong financial economic background, results-driven. This is probably the most subpar tender the faction has ever seen from Government—ever—and the faction questions why. The faction doesn't want to assume, but it tinkers on the whole crony nepotism thing.

The faction would like to know who got the tender. What was the amount budgeted for this tender? Did this tender go through the Council of Ministers? What was really the goal of this tender? What kind of services did the Minister want from this tender? So, the company, the name, the person, the individual. The faction would like to know, seeing that the deadline has already passed, so who initially was chosen to execute this tender?

The faction notes the claim of MP Kotai on the amount of TOT tax to be paid by Front Street and Back Street. The faction would actually like the Minister of Finance and the Minister of TEATT to be able to provide that information. What is an estimate of what that revenue looks like? Because the faction knows that, for example, a lot of our revenue comes from businesses like insurance and banks and stuff like that.

Please let us know what that computation looks like so that the faction can also compare to other areas, like maybe Simpson Bay or Cole Bay, and see that maybe those areas also need beautification, especially if that data shows—and the data could be there—that those areas might be generating more because of the type of businesses that are there.

The faction takes note of the comments of the previous speaker about proper policies and actually being okay with what is being done within VROMI because, at the end of the day, the faction hopes that the ministry of VROMI does exactly what the announcement says. The faction would like them to set precedent going forward so that January coming, the faction can bring its own motion of disapproval. Because once VROMI does that, then the faction is going to require the ministry of TEATT to go and raffle business licenses also. Where is it going to stop?

In Curacao, the Minister of Finance put information on Facebook. The judge said—it is as good as publishing in the "Landscourant." That's how powerful it was, where the Government lost over 10 million guilders because a Minister was too fast to put things out without again dealing with legal affairs, and the Government lost. The faction is happy with our legal mind inside of here

agreeing with the Minister executing it. The faction wants the Minister to execute it because the faction wants to see then how you're going to do it for others.

The faction believes that it has to be on an equal basis. The faction doesn't believe that you can go and raffle away a process. So, where does this stop?

The faction recalls a publication on the famous marijuana legislation. What exactly is covered within marijuana legislation? How many suppliers will be supplying the island with marijuana? How many licenses will be dispensed to be able to sell it legally, and how does someone apply for a license? In the past, and decades ago, we all know how licenses like these would go. So, to make sure there's a transparent process, the faction would really like to know how someone applies for these licenses.

Jet Air. Jet Air went bankrupt a while back. The faction recalls that there were conversations with EZ Airways, and then WINAIR got upset, and then the faction didn't hear about anything again. The faction would like an update on this. Currently, if someone is going to Curacao or Aruba, the tickets are almost twice as expensive as they used to be. WINAIR has a monopoly right now, and it doesn't really help with pricing. The faction questions if this is going to stay the way it is or is WINAIR going to expand, thus being able to drop the prices, or if another airway is going to take part in that route.

The faction is aware that Goddard Concessions already used to cater to the major airlines at the airport, and now, since the reconstruction of the airport, this company has procured, not one, not two, but three, and allegedly even more, concession stands at the airport if you include the VIP lounge. The faction would like to understand how did such a thing happen.

The faction recalls in the previous budget debate the faction explained at lengths the reports done years back as it pertains to the gambling affliction on Sint Maarten and the various research documents and the reports on it. The Minister then promised to look into it. Seeing that we are two months further, the faction would like to know the update and if the Minister kept her promise.

The faction mentions the departure tax at the airport. The faction believes it is currently \$60 per ticket, per person, or lower.

Right now, the revenues from that solely stays at the airport. Is there a reason for that and why a certain percentage doesn't go directly to the government coffers?

The faction has been, over the last couple of weeks, hearing everything about tourist tax, garbage tax, vehicle tax, and transaction tax. Every other day, it would seem like a new minister is in the newspaper unveiling their tax initiatives. All of these taxes, except for the tourist tax, can't be found in any of the manifestos. The faction did not see, in particular, the DP-named ones—any publications on those taxes. These are the taxes as it pertains to helping job creation, taxes as it pertains to reforms for small businesses, and taxes as it pertains to new ideas for the wage tax, sin taxes, indirect taxation, as well as taxes when it comes to alleviating tax for electric vehicles. All of these are taxes that were named and campaigned on by the DP, but the faction is seeing none of them back in any ministry DP-related articles. So, can the Minister explain if there are plans for the other types of taxes? As it pertains to the tourist tax, when would that be implemented? Does the Minister have any long-term or short-term plans as it pertains to that?

The faction continues and states that the one thing, with the exception of the tourist tax, that all of these taxes have in common with one another is that they all affect the small man. The faction would like to know what taxes or revenue-generating ideas does the Minister have as it pertains the lottery fees law. Will that be raised? Will we collect more money from the lottery booths? The casinos. What are the plans for this?

The faction would like to know how much revenue was collected from the lottery booth fees in 2024 to date.

The faction commends the Minister on her cross-ministerial initiatives. This is what the faction meant with cross-ministerial cooperation.

As it pertains to shareholder representation, the faction would like to know the Minister's stance on that. Does the Minister believe it should go back to the various ministries—for example, the airport would then fall under TEATT and the harbor, etc.—or should it remain as is in CoM and thus under the Prime Minister?

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO). The faction mentions that the Minister recently attended a CTO meeting, her first, and was pinned with a CTO

pin. What do we owe CTO in terms of money? The faction can only imagine being part of such an organization is not for free. What kind of benefits do we have as members of the CTO?

The faction believes that because we're always focusing on beautification is why we have a parking problem today. What are the sustainable plans for Philipsburg moving forward as it pertains to parking and any other initiatives that Philipsburg stands to benefit from?

St. Martin Taxi App. What does the ministry have planned for that in collaboration with the owners? Does the ministry have plans for the taxi app? Does the ministry want to work with the taxi app—maybe not as it is, but does the ministry have any vision for that? If so, how does the ministry plan to incorporate that and help boost the company as it pertains to putting commercials on the flights for tourists to know what to download as they land?

Is the ministry in contact with the owners, and when last did the ministry speak to the owners?

The faction would also like to know about the backlog in business licenses. What was the status of the backlog when the Minister entered the ministry? What was the state of affairs with the business licenses then? What was the size of the backlog then, and what is the size of the backlog now? How many business licenses were signed in the last six to seven months?

The faction mentions the Marketplace and the FIDIC and states that when it comes to the FIDIC, there's a pre-awarding stage and a post-awarding stage. In the post-awarding stage, you can't just go and change the rules. Then, you also have to have the clauses already in your contract, if you want to make changes. The faction wants to confirm: were those clauses to make any aesthetical changes to the Marketplace already in the contract?

If you go through FIDIC and look at the guidelines for bid changes, it also has, areas when it talks about the deadline's submission. It also talks about equal treatment so that every other contractor needs to have an equal opportunity.

The faction also wants to confirm that with the FIDIC, based on the contract and the TOR that went out, aligns with your vision to make the changes, that it is allowed legally and that it is even allowed with our laws.

With respect to the CEO and COO appointments, the faction heard the Minister mention that these are no longer statutory positions. The faction also

heard the Minister mention that internal recruitment has been done before. The faction agrees with internal recruitment but doesn't agree that sometimes we do it and sometimes we don't do it based on the preferred candidate.

What is the policy when we do internal recruitment? Is it so that because it is no longer a statutory position, it can be done internally? In that case maybe the CEO position could have been done internally as well.

Marketplace. Once you change the aesthetics of something, the price changes. It either goes down or it goes up. It can never be that the price remains the same, and if that's the case, then the faction would like to get some documentation in terms of the new agreements that were made to substantiate such.

The faction would like a timeline as to when these acting positions will be dealt with. When will these advices be handled off?

With respect to the opening for the 25th, the 26th, and the 1st, the faction would like to know if this is for stores in Phillipsburg only. If so, how do you then handle discrimination? Where does it stop? Does it stop by Prince Bernard Bridge? Does it stop by Sundial School? Can the Minister give clarity on this?

The faction notes that the Minister stated that no permit was given for gambling on the boardwalk. However, the event is happening on the 21st and the 22nd. The faction would like to know how this differentiates with a situation that happened a month ago in the village, where this person was stopped for similar activities. This was a citizen. Is the Minister saying that the Government is allowed to do what it wants?

The faction knows that based on the bingo event permit guidelines, you have to fill out an application form. Was this application form filled out by the Minister of VROMI?

During the last budget debate, the faction implored the Minister to look into the gambling affliction reports and studies done years back. The Minister promised she would, but now the Minister is stating that she is waiting on the Gaming Board for their perusal of the gambling affliction reports. The faction asked for the Minister's opinion.

Referring to other questions, the faction heard, especially about the CEO/COO appointment, basically the shareholder being the Government, that the Government was not informed of the change in statutory director. Basically, Government is saying, "I don't know."

The articles of Incorporation being changed without Government knowing and basically Government owns the airport, is basically Government saying, "I don't know."

The airport now has a CEO and a CFO as directors. Why was this changed, and who's the advocate of this change?

Ministry of Justice

The faction would like to know from the Minister of Justice how many persons within the ministry of Justice have done a document verification course and what level are they on. How often do they participate in refresher courses? The faction believes this is quite important as we have heard of different situations of the past where this was quite necessary.

How many critical vacancies does the ministry of Justice have right now, and how does the Minister foresee the fulfillment of these departments?

The faction would like to know how the Minister sees the opportunity for former uniform officers, once they retire, to carry a firearm for up to 5 years before they have to "herkeur"?

The faction notes that we have seen a rise in gun violence, especially over the last couple of months. The faction mentions that it brought the topic of a gun amnesty program up already. You would not only be able to bring in your firearm but also have a job placement company on site to provide opportunities at the same time. The faction believes that a gun amnesty drive, attached to a recruitment drive, would help and then you would at least have provided more options for your population who find it difficult to find work.

What are the plans moving forward, long-term and short-term, for the scooters and two-wheelers overtaking in the traffic, whether on the left or on the right side? Especially seeing that the faction doesn't think there's been a week in the last couple of months without a motorcycle accident. What are the short- and long-term plans as it pertains to curbing that and vehicle safety on the road, as it pertains to four wheels and two wheels colliding or two wheels on two

wheels? The faction knows the law isn't there yet, but if someone is on a bike doing a wheelie going down a road and collides with another bike, causing an injury and a casualty, and that person dies. The faction believes that in the current law, the person is not held liable for that person's death. Moving forward, what are the plans for that? The faction is of the opinion that the ramifications and repercussions are not to the level that they need to be. The faction is of the opinion that the laws are quite outdated. Does the ministry have any plans or vision where that is concerned?

The faction continues and mentions that when it comes to the retired uniform officers, the question was more geared towards if there is willingness to adjust the law to suit our situation because a lot of these legislations come from the Netherlands then to the Antilles and we just inherit them as is. We have our unique situation. Self-defense is a justifiable reason, once given all the proper criteria that is set in a policy to allow a retired uniform officer to have a firearm. The faction hopes that the Minister can reconsider.

The faction would like clarity on the 45 critical vacancies. Where is the majority of these vacancies, and can we consider, then, based on the fact that you mentioned, Minister, that there are only three that are budgeted for, that we increase that number? Because if we don't plug these holes, you will continue to have increased sick leave because you're forcing staff members to work double and longer than double shifts in certain instances. The faction believes that finding funds for this is essential.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport

The faction mentions that there is a situation where if a child is born on October 1st, they are considered to be born late. The faction continues and states that imagine somebody born on September 30th and somebody born on October 1st have to start the school year completely after. The faction finds this quite unfortunate but understands there has to be some sort of cut-off. Some schools allow you to do a sort of test to see if you are up to the level and then allow you to continue. Has the ministry already been working on some sort of way to make this a structured policy to at least allow the child to display their skills because the faction believes the date is between October 1st and December 31st, for which they will be considered born late? Is there any consideration being put into changing this structure?

The faction mentions NIPA and the allocation of land to NIPA to expand the campus by the former Minister of VROMI. This initiative was aimed towards developing skilled labs, a modernized kitchen, and a potential dormitory for students. The faction believes that it is important that we support and facilitate the advancement of the students in the technical and vocational skills. As has been echoed for years, the traditional methods of calculating the subsidies, based on the student headcount, do not adequately address the higher operational cost of the technical and vocational institutions across the island. Given the significant increase in material costs since Hurricane Irma, the faction would like to know if the ministry has adjusted the subsidy calculation to ensure that these schools receive fair and sufficient funding. Can the Minister provide a comparison of subsidy allocations before and after Hurricane Irma?

Recognizing that the technical and vocational schools incur expenses beyond the mere student numbers, such as cost for materials like cement, and food items, the faction would like to know if the Minister agrees that a review of the subsidy framework is necessary to reflect these unique operational costs. If yes, what steps, if any, has the ministry taken or plans to take to ensure that these institutions are adequately supported? If this is the case, can the faction get a timeline as to when it is expected? If not, can the faction get a timeline as to when some consideration can be put into this point?

The faction has seen recently that we have had a lot of athletes that have done great things. The discussion has always been that we are not doing enough for our athletes as a country. The faction agrees wholeheartedly with this statement. The faction would like to know if there is some sort of plan already within the Department of Sport to not only acknowledge but add some sort of substance to what we do for our athletes. Are there any thoughts within the ministry already, and if not, how can we assist as Parliament?

The faction mentions the Monument Council. What is the status of the Council and putting another one together? The faction also remembers murmurs of a Monument Fund. Is that something the Minister will be working on moving forward?

The faction knows that the Minister believes in STEAM learning. Can the Minister further elaborate on exactly what STEAM Learning is and what elements the Minister wants to adopt?

The faction also noted that the Minister would like teachers to attend yearly CPDs (Continued Professional Development courses). Is the Minister planning to implement this? If yes, how does the Minister intend to monitor this?

What are the consequences if teachers do not comply? Who is paying for these courses, and how does this fit into their hours?

The faction read of mandatory enforcement of IEPs (Individualized Education Programs) for students with specific needs. How can the Minister ensure the effectiveness of this if, currently, we have compulsory education but we do not have compulsory testing?

The faction mentions sports. Does the Minister have any short-term plans as it pertains to the Sports Federation, seeing that they have a new board and there are currently no funds?

What are the Minister's plans as it pertains to incorporating Eco Learning into the curriculum?

Ministry of Public Health, Social Development, and Labor

The faction would like to know what is the Minister's vision on Mental Health. The faction thinks that this requires a lot of structural change, manpower, and finances. Is there an implementation? Has the ministry already been working on one?

What are the top five priorities of this Minister in terms of his vision for the ministry of VSA?

The Health Bus. What is the vision for the Health Bus moving forward? A significant amount of money was invested in 2015, and at the time it was something state-of-the-art. However, over the years, it has lost its status.

As it pertains to youth healthcare and data collection, what are the plans for the digitalization of that department? How can the Minister ensure that certain things can be looked up with the click of a button?

My colleagues alluded to the last couple of weeks –your second day on the job, and you were bombarded with a lot of labor issues.

The faction mentions the alleged problems at CPS. What are the Minister's concrete plans to resolve that issue or at least coming to the bottom of it? The faction indicates that there have been reports done a couple of ministers ago – what has come of those reports? What are the conclusions of them, and what are the steps moving forward?

The faction is aware that the Minister is an astute proponent of mental health, but the faction doesn't know if the Minister is aware that 90% of the staff on the first floor are currently seeing a professional regarding their mental health state and the workload they have been under for the past couple of months and years. What are the Minister's short-term plans as it comes to morale in the department and the understaffing? The faction indicates that the clinic dealt with 4,500 students and 250 babies this past year, and they have a staff of three. The faction finds this a very alarming situation and is curious to the Minister's vision moving forward.

The faction would like to know if the Minister intends to push forward with the SAAHA. If not, what is the Minister going to change in it? If it's not this, then what is your vision?

The faction continues and mentions the situation at the Flamingo Hotel at the Hilton. The faction would like to know what the concrete steps are moving forward, what you're going to do, how you're going to do it, what you've done already, and what you would like to do. The faction knows some things aren't always achievable, but the faction would like to know the plan and where the Minister would like to take it.

The breakfast programs. In the past, these programs have always fallen under VSA. Why is it under VSA and not under Education? Is the Government planning on keeping it that way?

General Healthcare and vector control. What is the status of the vector control unit and what are the plans of the Minister for that moving forward? Just a couple of days ago, there was an article based on a mosquito disease somewhere in the British Islands in the Caribbean, and warnings were issued. Years ago, there would have been fogging, so spraying of insecticides. The faction hasn't seen that in a while, and mentions that the vector control unit used to handle that. The faction doesn't know if there is still a unit or if there are certified people in that unit who just aren't in the unit. In 2013-2014, there were

three people who passed the BAVPol, but they were never sworn in, and nothing was ever done with them.

As it pertains to the CPS, the faction would like to know if CPS workers are seen as frontliners. During COVID, they were, but now they're not front liners anymore. The faction would like to know officially whether they are seen as frontliners, and if not, why not?

The faction continues and mentions that thinking about revenue generation – has the Minister ever considered CPS as a separate entity which is government-subsidized? Right now, CPS does not charge for anything. For example, a COVID-19 vaccine on the French side is \$150, and on the Dutch side, it is free. If CPS were to be its own entity, it could charge for adult vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines, yearly contributions, flu vaccines, vaccination records, or even charging tourists for yellow fever shots. The faction believes that these are all things that can generate revenue sources that could go back into the government coffers. Is this something the Minister is thinking about or would consider moving forward with?

What is the Minister's opinion on the idea for revenue generation?

The digitalization plans for the departments, in particular youth healthcare. The faction would like clarity on this.

The Minister mentioned the buses, but the faction didn't get if that is in the plan of the Minister moving forward as it pertains to the rejuvenation, renovation, or repairs of those buses.

As it pertains to the Flamingo case, the faction would like to request a hands-on approach from the Minister in this particular matter. Because, as has been understood thus far, there are a lot of trust issues, and the faction is not directing this to any particular entity or person, but it thinks this requires a hands-on approach from the Minister.

And as it regards the cannabis legislation, the faction feels that it can't be that two Ministers are working on the same legislation—or have to do with the same legislation— and give two different answers. When you read what's in the written media, you get one impression, and when you ask a question face-to-face, you get a totally different answer.

What are the ministry's views on the whole situation with rotating specialists? If we're faced with certain situations, we have to adjust in order to make sure that there's continuity, but the faction believes that the rotating specialist project has caused more harm than good. Is it the intention to cut out the whole rotating specialist? What is the plan where that is concerned? Is it because we don't have enough volume?

Can the Minister please give an indication as to what are the ministry's views in terms of how that is going to continue?

Medical referrals abroad. Sometimes, someone starts their treatment in Panama, then they end up in Colombia, then they back in Panama, then in Santo Domingo, and then in Colombia. What is the intention of the ministry where that is concerned?

What is the long-term plan moving forward where that is concerned because it can be quite bothersome for the patient. The faction is of the opinion that the continuous change can never be good.

Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure

The faction would like to know the position of the Minister of VROMI on the side road project. That was an initiative that was started by the former administration, and during the months of June and September, there were a lot of different hiccups. It started back full speed, and we see the hiccups again based on the complaints within the community. What are some of the challenges? What is taking place? What is your stance on it? What is the status of it?

Can the Minister of VROMI provide a schedule for the side road project so that persons could be at ease in knowing when, how, where, and what? Also, is there a particular emergency hotline number that people can use to contact VROMI?

What is the latest on the housing project that was earmarked for Hope Estate? What is the current status of it? What is needed from our end as Members of Parliament in order to get it back on, if it is off? The faction knows that this project is a great initiative and guarantees that it is very much needed.

What is the Minister's position on the Vineyard Heights project? That was a project that was initiated quite a number of years ago, and it was halted. It was brought to court by some of the persons of concern, and the ministry won the court case. How are we going to proceed with that project? The faction believes that it is a great opportunity to allow persons to own their own home. Will the Minister be starting something completely new? Will the Minister dust off the project that was there, already written, brought by the New Works Department, Permits Department, and also the Domain Affairs Department and the Infrastructure Management Department?

The faction mentions the lower part of Over the Bank that is inhabited at this moment with all the structures that are there. There was a town hall meeting about two years ago, and the idea was to issue the land to those persons that have been occupying it without any legal permission and legalize their situation. What is the update on that? If not, how does the Minister view this in terms of allowing those persons that have already been living there, in some instances over 20 years, to be able to own the property that they have their home on?

The faction mentions the road works and that the former administration left about 6 million guilders in the capital expenditure budget. Is it the intention of the ministry to just continue to do the patchwork in Sucker Garden until a more permanent solution is done in terms of the complete resurfacing? Or is it to leave it as it is right now until next year to continue with that?

The faction referenced an article from July 10th of this year where the Minister mentioned that since taking office, his focus has been on building trust within the ministry to the public; as such, several policy measures are being implemented. One way in which Gumbs indicated this trust can be rebuilt is by providing quality infrastructure to the people of Sint Maarten. The article further goes on to say that for too long, the focus has been on quick fixing and paving roads without priority given to the sustainability and the quality of the road; under my mandate, this is going to change.

The faction would like to know if the change isn't happening because of finances or does the Minister plan to do this next year or the year after. The impression that the public was given is as though the scope of works, in terms of the quality of the work, would be different or better, but it is just the same. Those public tenders already took place.

The faction heard the Minister mention a more long-term SLA. Is it the intention to put it on a bid instead of one year, two years, or three years, as it's done with other bids? If yes, how, and if not, why not? Because one of the complaints is that the one year is done in no time so it doesn't give room for investment, so the faction would like to know the Minister's thought process where that is concerned.

Little Key. The faction saw an article on November 15th where Princess Beatrix was here and it was mentioned that a letter of intent was signed to put Little Key as a protected area. The faction was a bit confused about this, because in July of 2023, the former Minister of VROMI released an article via the ministry that the Council of Ministers approved Little Key as a protected area. The follow-up trajectory that had to take place is that after the approval the Prime Minister would then have to submit the letter of presentation to the Governor. The faction would like to know what the Minister signed.

The faction mentions that in 2020, there was 0 CapEx, 0 guilders, and 0 cents. The faction indicates that the former administration left the ministry with 9 million for roads alone. The faction is not seeing the work being carried out to match up to that amount. What is the reason that the processes, when it comes to, in particular, road repair, are taking so long, given the fact that the bid was already done? When the new Government took office on May 3rd, the bid was already completed. It was just a matter of starting the works. The intention was to start the work in April and then it was moved to May. What was the cause of that delay? Was it manpower?

The faction took note of an article a couple days ago with VROMI securing 1.9 million euros for the stormwater infrastructure pumps. The faction would like some clarity on this. Are these the same pumps that were being negotiated with BZK and the Department of New Works, as well as the consulting company that was assisting? The faction would like to know if this is that money or something totally different.

The faction continues and mentions that in 2019, MP Irion presented a motion that was passed trying to exempt first-time homeowners from paying certain taxes in terms of transfer fees. The former administration revived the Mortgage Guarantee Fund and was able to get persons to resign and appoint certain individuals. They then hit a roadblock in different areas. The faction knows that this is a great thing and that it can definitely help our citizens in terms of homeownership. Would the Minister consider dusting off those plans and

continuing with the Mortgage Guarantee Fund in order to make sure that there are opportunities for our people to own homes? What would be the ministry's plan concerning the development of homes and also the implementation of the fund? The faction would also like a timeline on this.

Does the Minister see anything wrong with the raffling of the process? Is the Minister planning to retract this officially? The Minister has a lawyer next to them who has also been working a lot with the Government and on good corporate governance, among others. Does the Minister see anything wrong when it comes to Government accepting sponsorship?

The faction also advises the Minister to look at any of the integrity documents from the Integrity Chamber that have come to Government in the past regarding gift policies, among others. Also, regarding receiving funds and the reason why. In addition, what legal basis did the Minister use to be able to even accept or want to accept sponsorship?

The faction wants to confirm if this will be retracted. Does the Minister have a license or permit to be able to do this? Does the Minister believe in any way that this puts certain citizens at a disadvantage when it comes to this raffle?

In the past budget debate, the amendment of 2024, but also on radio, among other things, the Minister mentioned that they're doing things differently and how the asphalt has to be a certain number of inches. The faction happened to be at two locations, not the last one where the Minister was, and saw when they cut the road, and did a little measurement, and it wasn't what the Minister said it was going to be. It was exactly what was done in the past. So, in the last few projects where the Minister did the asphalt, was it 6 to 8 cm or inches, as the Minister mentioned, or was it the same way that it has always been done after roadworks, heavy rainfall, etc.?

What is the current update and timeline for the stoplights? The action noticed that two of them were on, which was a little confusing. There are no signs indicating that the stoplights are not working, so some individuals were actually stopping. The faction advises that some signs be put in place so that people know it's just a test.

For the last budget the faction asked for the amount of long lease, the top 10 offenders. The faction is hoping that since then, the Minister has gotten that information. What are the amounts for the top 10 outstanding offenders

when it comes to long lease? The Minister cannot talk about revenue generation, etc. if this information is not available or cannot be accessed. The faction would appreciate this information being submitted.

How many building permits did the Minister deny during the time that the Minister was in office? Not just holding back from the process, but how many building permits were denied and sent back to start over? The Minister also mentioned that building in the hills or stopping construction in the hills has to be addressed. Is that a plan for 2025? We cannot continue to say things on the radio, etc., but when it comes to execution, there's nothing. Is it going to be a selective area where construction can happen or not?

The faction would like to know about the policy the PFP championed regarding the construction pause and if that is going to happen in 2025.

The faction would like to know what the Minister's plans are for traffic congestion, specifically in the L B. Scott Road, Ebenezer, and South Reward Area. Furthermore, the faction would like to know the top three priorities that the Minister would like to complete in 2025.

The faction mentions criteria for the roads. What are the criteria that the roads are judged on when it comes to the main road resurfacing project and selecting roads? The faction has seen a road selected that the faction had some questions on, so the faction is curious about the criteria behind selecting the roads.

The faction would like to know what the Ministers' plans are for now as it pertains to flood-prone areas that are well known and what are the steps towards a master plan for that.

The faction remembers inquiring a couple of months ago about St. James Estate and whether it was still on the list to be resurfaced. The Minister mentioned that it was, and it also came up that the overhead lines were a hindrance to anything being done and the Minister made an inquiry at GEBE. The faction never heard back from the Minister on that matter and, therefore, would like an update on that.

The faction would like a list of all preparatory resolutions that expired in the last three years and those that are still current.

Garbage tax. The faction would like the Minister to explain exactly how this would look like and how it will be collected. The faction has heard rumors that it might be added to one's GEBE bill, and the faction would like clarity on whether that is true. The faction is vehemently against it, as long as we still have a fuel clause problem.

The faction continues and mentions the new vehicle tax idea that was released by the Minister of Finance. The faction would like to know if the Minister of VROMI was consulted on this and if he had any say on the idea that is on the table right now.

What are the plans of the Minister as it pertains to revitalizing the Housing Foundation, in particular their debts.

Drainage. The faction would like to know what, from the projects that have been done up to now, like the Long Wall Road, Point Blanche Road, and LB Scot Road, drainage solutions were implemented during these times? The faction points out that tilting a road does not fall under the category of drainage. What ideas does the Minister have for upcoming projects?

What are the unpopular decisions that the Minister is prone to make in his tenure? Can the Minister clarify this?

The faction believes that the Bethlehem Estate is one of the only development projects, that has been done the right way, in the opinion of the faction. In the faction's estimation, they haven't gotten the sufficient backing from the Government to complete their project, especially as it pertains to the exit and connection on the Belle Plaine Road. The Minister, in his prior function, knows a lot about that.

The faction believes that we have to realize, aside from the fact that it's a local family undertaking this project, they need the Government's support. However, the Government has needed them many times in the past for various projects dating back decades. The faction believes that now, as they are waiting for assistance to expedite their project, it is important to remember that in the future, the Government will need them again, especially in regard to specific links. The faction knows that without their involvement, one of those links will never happen. The faction would like to know what is the Minister's plan to assist where possible, whether it be cross-ministerial efforts.

The faction mentions the garbage tax once more. What is the Minister's projection for revenue as it pertains to the garbage tax? How much does the Minister expect to collect once it is implemented, and is it on its way?

The faction makes mention of the question regarding the recently publicized article from the Minister of Finance and if the Minister of VROMI was consulted on the vehicle tax idea/plan prior to the article being released.

The faction is seeing a constant trend of justifying current actions with alleged wrongdoings from the past. And in the same breath, the Minister alluded to not constantly looking back at the last 5, 10, 15, 20, 30 years as we move forward. So how can the Minister say that in one breath but then justify, not explaining—justify current acts by comparing them to comparable alleged wrongdoings in the past?

The United People's Party-faction has taken note of the draft and has the following questions and remarks.

Ministry of Finance

The faction would like to know the true sentiments of this budget from the Minister of Finance. Does this budget reflect Marinka J. Gumbs? Can the Minister of Finance calculate what would be the financial impact for 2025 and 2026 incoming projections if the profit tax was reduced to 15% and it was implemented on January 1st?

What would it mean for implementation at the tax office? Besides legislation, what else needs to be done? The faction mentions the ENNIA saga and that it was stated that no agreement will be signed unless a prior agreement is signed with Central Bank guaranteeing Sint Maarten first right of refusal. Can this agreement with the Central Bank, which guaranteed us the first right of refusal, be provided?

The faction mentions that during the budget amendment, the faction echoed numerous times that a meeting should be held, a brainstorming session, between the Council of Ministers and the Members of Parliament on revenue-generating ideas.

There were a couple of them that were mentioned. The faction saw that the Minister of Finance herself mentioned the personalized number plates. The

faction believes the idea about the weight for road tax is also a good idea, as it is also used in the Netherlands. In the meantime, the faction has heard nothing from the Ministers and neither from the Presidium when it comes to putting that meeting together, which would help the whole country.

And in a meeting like that, the faction believes you would definitely have not just a coalition but also the minority bringing ideas. Seeing that that didn't take place, the faction could not expect anything else than a budget that will have almost nothing when it comes to extra monies coming into the coffers.

Projects that are now in place. Can the Minister of Finance give us an idea on what and why these projects were chosen or prioritized above the others? What is the return on investment on any project that is pending now?

When a project is actually paid for by Government, whose responsibility is it that that project is properly executed?

The faction would urge that the Government goes back between today and 2010 to every Government that has been in place since country Sint Maarten and review all projects and if they were properly executed or even executed at all. There's one or two that the faction is aware of that need revising.

The faction would like to know the Minister of Finance's stance on the idea of purchasing one or two buildings in the Netherlands to house our students. Would that be possible? Can something like that come out of CapEx? Seeing that the students who are living in the building themselves are the ones who will be paying it through study financing, the faction believes that collection of those funds won't be too difficult.

The faction truly likes the idea that Member of Parliament Webster-Jansen mentioned concerning the visit to the Point Blanch House of Detention. The faction will definitely be looking forward to that date when we do something like that.

Will the Minister of Finance be for or against the idea of a sin tax on Sint Maarten? This is the taxation of alcohol, tobacco, gambling, winnings the proceedings of that, prostitution, and sugar products. The faction is of the opinion that these are all revenue-generating to the country.

The faction is happy that the Minister mentioned her thoughts on the tax refund and, when the tax office needs to pay back taxes, and that it should not be something that is requested but that it automatically happens.

As it regards the tax office, the faction indicates that it did mention that because of the post office problems, a lot of letters are being sent months and months after. Can the Minister look into this?

The faction mentions the sin tax once again and that the Minister of Finance said that we would have to look into how it would work with the French side. The faction believes that if that is the case, we will get absolutely nothing done. The faction believes that the French side will not follow taxes or what Parliament decides here on this side.

The faction has seen a lot of things come from Parliament. In almost every Public meeting, the President of Parliament poses questions concerning the plastic ban. It has been years that this has been going on. The faction reiterates that the reason for asking for a meeting with the Council of Ministers and Parliament is to make sure that if Parliament starts working on something, that it is also in line with what the Government sees and that they could see themselves executing the plan. Otherwise, the faction is of the opinion that it makes absolutely no sense. Parliament could come up with a hundred wishes and motions like we've seen numerous times before.

The faction hears the Minister speak of exploring the option to make pension tax-free. Is this reflected in the budget as a priority? How much was allocated for the draft? Has the process begun, and what is the legal trajectory?

Is it in the works, or is it being explored?

The faction cannot believe that this budget 2025 reflects the Minister of Finance. There are no policies, no nothing, and therefore, the faction cannot believe that it reflects the Minister of Finance. Although amendments will come, and should, the faction is being asked to approve a budget with hopes. To approve a budget that's not showing anything but stuff from 2024. We will hope that an amendment happens, hope that policies are added. The faction indicates that there is a surplus of 1.6. and that other Minister could have also put policies or priorities that they wanted.

The faction continues and indicates that it noticed that 750 thousand guilders have been taken from the budget of Parliament. Parliament needs means and ways to do our job. We need extra budget allocated for legal assistance and more in Parliament. To have one person and 15 Members of Parliament, the faction believes that the budget should be reallocated back to Parliament because it's too long and too much. The faction hears from other parliamentarians that we do not have the means compared to the Government. The faction hopes that the Minister will support a budget amendment that would

allow more funds to be allocated to Parliament, whether it's extra hiring. This will allow Parliament to present more additional laws and help the process go very smoothly.

The Minister said the following as it regards the collection of outstanding payments in tax: "From a collection perspective less efforts in pursuing old debt may be justified. This is because the cost to collect outweighs potential revenues, making it an inefficient use of resources. Additionally, over time, locating businesses responsible for those debts becomes more challenging, as some may no longer be operational or become insolvent. As Minister of Finance, I believe it is more beneficial for Government to put its efforts in strengthening compliance and ensuring future tax efficiency rather than expending resources and unlikely recovery." The faction indicates that this is exactly what the faction meant with GEBE. The faction hopes now that this is understood. If we put our resources into ensuring compliance moving forward, we would see how much more revenue would be collected.

The faction mentions that it was stated that the 250 guilders was paid net. If that is the case, what is the "bruto" amount that was paid?

Ministry of General Affairs

The faction states that the budget reflects 95% of the previous government, but the 5% is very critical. The faction warned against this in the 2024 budget amendment. We cannot just take the CapEx from 2024 and shift it to 2025 as if it's guaranteed. The faction asked the Minister of Finance if it's guaranteed, and she stated no. When you reflect now, in the 2024 Amendment, it was stated, for instance, that Charlotte Brookson High School would move to 2025 CapEx, the new phase one of the Cay Bay project, finally addressing Cay Bay, would move to 2025 CapEx, and land purchasing of 18.2 million would move to 2025 CapEx. This includes home projects, cemetery purchasing, and expansion. The faction states that we have limited capacity to almost none right now for burial. We are at a crossroads right now with capacity and land.

The faction would like to point to answers from the 2024 budget, when asked specifically for revenue generating projects it was stated by the Prime Minister, that this is a budget amendment and that the revenue generating projects will be in 2025 budget. Now we're in 2025 budget and this is a line taken directly from the budget: no new initiatives and revenue enhancing initiatives will ensure that the surplus for both years remain limited. The 2025 draft budget

only considers initiatives that started in 2024 and that will be taken to 2025. The faction would like the Minister to be very cognizant of the answers. The faction believes that with no initiatives, it shows a lack of vision to move this country forward.

The faction mentions that there is an uproar at the airport. The faction would like to know the sentiments of the Prime Minister to the uproar with the CEO selection or pre-announcement of a CEO selection at the airport. What is the update on the placement of the management of GEBE? The faction believes that it is about time that we start to shift from this temporary management when a whole assessment was done. What is the holdup at this moment?

What is the update with TelEm's CEO and the CFO? What is the update on placing the director? Is the contract for Mr. Dupersoy up? Who will replace him, or has that process started?

The faction mentions capital investments and would like to know what the 50,000 guilders increase for new investments is by SG of AZ. Please provide an update on the agreement between the Netherlands and Sint Maarten as it pertains to the 75.6 million guilders. Is there a draft? Is the Minister of VROMI involved in these discussions? The faction would also like to know the amounts spent for, specifically, the Minister of AZ's cabinet for travel for 2024.

The faction mentions the Minister of General Affairs and that he is popping up at the hospital, in meetings with the police, and at every other ministry, but the faction is lacking him at AZ. The faction is lacking the real responsibility. Not just to come and tell us that we have to take loans, but tell us where we can have access to additional funding. The faction indicates that we just came back from the Netherlands, and in the discussions, there were different avenues where the islands can obtain funding. This is what the faction needs to hear from the Prime Minister. Where can we obtain grants?

The faction needs to feel, and the civil servants need to feel, that the Prime Minister is taking their interest at heart. It is okay to send gifts and gratifications, but when we talk about longevity, the updating of the scales, and the placement, That is what the civil servants need. How are we going to make government more attractive? Let us focus on what we can do to enhance that aspect.

The faction mentions the visit to the prison. There needs to be a lot of attention on prison guards for security and safety measures. There are prison guards that have been working for many years without LBs. The faction believes that we need to update that situation.

The faction would like to clarify that just like the budget there's no revenue generating measures just like our wishes there's no way forth unless it seems to be that we set the trend or motion, therefore patiently waiting for a relief brought forth by the government that is considered more feasible and more reasonable.

The faction has gotten some concerns from businessmen, especially when it comes to the construction sector on Sint Maarten. The following questions to the Prime Minister are all related to the Trust Fund monies that each Sint Maartener has to pay back in the form of taxes eventually and what is happening with these monies.

According to the budget, the Sustaining Program Effectiveness and Advancing Resilience (SPEAR), which is financed by the Trust Fund, aims to improve the institutional capacity and effectiveness of the NRPB and the public administration of Sint Maarten, so that the project results are sustained after the closure of the Sint Maarten Trust Fund. The faction continues and mentions that the project consists of two components. The objective of component one is to improve the effectiveness of the NRPB operations so that the remaining projects financed by the Trust Fund can be successfully completed before the official closure date. This component finances agreed operational expenditures for the implementation, management, and monitoring of the Trust Fund projects. Component two focuses on strengthening government institutions and systems. A total of 23 million has been allocated for this project—approximately 20 million for component one and 3 million for component two—over a five-year span, 17 million from the Trust Fund, and 6 million from the government of Sint Maarten. This is to be broken down over 5 million per year per component.

What exactly is the money geared towards? Personnel? To improve the NRPB? How is this specifically?

The faction would like an update on what has been done regarding the unfair bidding practices of the NRPB with the awarding of contracts to the Chinese contractors. Has this company been exempted from TOT? From payments to SZV?

How many work permits were granted for this company? Did this contractor contribute to the NIPA via the SOS policy established under the former Minister of VSA?

How does the NRPB ensure alignment with the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), particularly the focus on supporting the local workforce and the economy?

The faction hopes it is understood what is actually happening. The faction indicates that a Chinese company places a bid on a project on Sint Maarten, that is funded partially by Sint Maarten and the Trust Fund. This company does not pay any taxes. Most probably, this company will also bring the materials from China, so the local vendors of materials will definitely not get a piece of that pie, which in turn means that Sint Maarten will not collect TOT on those materials. This is a problem for the faction.

Can the Minister confirm if the local contractors are being sidelined in favor of foreign companies? Specifically subsidized Chinese contractors. Can the Minister explain how this aligns with the goals of the Trust Fund?

Why was there a second bidding round for the smart shelter project initiated by PAHO, when local contractors had already submitted their bids since January 2024?

What measures are in place to ensure transparency and fairness in the bidding process, particularly when foreign contractors are involved?

Why were local contractors not informed about the status of the initial bids for the smart shelter project despite repeated inquiries? The faction understands how frustrating it must feel for them, asking questions over and over and not getting any replies.

Is the NRPB taking into account the long-term economic impact on Sint Maarten's local construction industry when awarding contracts to foreign entities?

What is the government doing to mitigate the potential loss of revenue and employment for local contractors and suppliers if subsidized foreign contractors dominate the market? Right now, there's a company that has to send

home 40+ employees who were working on a hospital, because a Chinese company came in. That sounds like a problem to the faction.

Has an economic impact assessment been conducted regarding the use of foreign contractors like Xing Yang Number Two Construction Engineering Co. LTD in these projects?

Why have the compliance requirements for local contractors repeatedly been made excessively stringent, potentially excluding local companies from participation?

How does the NRPB justify allowing foreign contractors to bid on projects without attending mandatory site visits as required for local bidders?

Is it consistent with the intentions of the Netherlands as a donor for funds from the Trust Fund to be channeled to foreign contractors, potentially undermining Sint Maarten's local economy?

How does the government ensure that funds provided by the Netherlands for rebuilding and resilience efforts remain within the local economy?

The faction received a message inquiring why we don't add a 2% tax to all monies that leave the country, like Rapidito and MoneyGram. The faction has been thinking about it and considers it unfair for locals who already pay taxes and then have to pay \$2 to send out money; the faction believes that this is "dubbelzinnig." However, when it comes to foreign contractors taking jobs of locals and getting exemptions, the faction believes that yes, something is wrong there.

Has there been any review or oversight mechanism to evaluate the NRPB's decision-making process and its alignment with the NRRP?

What is the government's position on the involvement of foreign contractors subsidized by their home government in projects funded by the Trust Fund?

The faction states that the Integrity Chamber in 2021 took 1.1 from the budget, in 2022 2.4, 1.5 million in 2023, 2.4 in 2024, and now 2.5 in 2025 totaling 9.5 million over a five-year span. Based on article 39 of the Integrity Chamber,

the Minister of General Affairs, in consultation with the Integrity Chamber, shall send a report to the Parliament of the effectiveness and effects of the national ordinance in practice within four years of the entry into force of the national ordinance. Six months before the expiry of the term referenced to in the first paragraph, an evaluation committee shall be established by national decree to investigate and determine whether this national ordinance has led to the anticipated improvement in the policy of the general promotion and integrity in the country. The committee shall also be charged with preparing the report referred to in the first paragraph and shall advise the Minister of General Affairs on this matter no later than three months after the date of establishment referred to in the first sentence.

The faction would like to know if this has taken place. If not, can this assessment, as per article 39, be taken up in this budget, please?

The faction would like to ask the Prime Minister, did anybody in your term of hiring require dispensation to work in your cabinet, and if they require dispensation, was this requested?

What is the role of a caretaker government? What can you do and what can you not do?

As it pertains to GEBE, anything over 50,000 guilders that is not budgeted for requires board approval. The faction is pretty sure that the purchasing of some generators was not budgeted for, and we needed urgent action. Therefore the faction would like to see the contractual date on the purchasing of the first 10 generators. When was that agreement signed?

The faction would like to see the date, confidentially, of the board's approval that allowed the purchasing of these generators or the transfer of funds for these generators.

Since we cannot ask for the amount of money that was received for the Christmas lights, the faction is asking, confidentially, for a list of the sponsors that these letters were sent to, on behalf of the Prime Minister. Not the amount, but the persons, the sponsors that the Prime Minister sent the letter to. Did CoM approve the letter?

Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication

The faction would like to know what the update is or the plan for pre-clearance. Last time we were in discussions, the faction noted a split between parties in the Coalition on pre-clearance. Pre-clearance is something that the

faction also approves. Thus, the faction would like to know what is the status. Is this eventually going to be in the governing accord?

As Minister of TEATT, is there a collaboration to provide some type of reassurance to not only Front Street and Back Street but also people in general? The faction would like to focus on Front Street, Back Street and touristic areas such as Maho. Is there a collaboration with the Minister of Justice to bring some sort of comfort, especially during Christmas time? The faction warned and said that it is customary to see an increase in these types of robberies during this time.

The faction is not seeing that hunger that the Minister had when she first came in as it pertains to revenue-generating measures, policies, and activities. The faction misses the pictures where it states that the Minister of TEATT increases flights here. The faction isn't seeing updates on new cruise line expectancies. The faction believes that it is very important and that it is reflected in the budget of 2025. With the increased revenue-generating policies through the ministry of TEATT, we can ease the burden of taxation on our people.

The faction would like an update on the health levy. Is it still at the SER? It was sent as "spoed" and thus the faction would like to know if a response was given back. The faction would like to know if the Minister is in favor of this.

The faction advises the Minister not to take it upon herself to think that she can control the ministry, the ministry is controlled by the workers. They have policies that are ready to go. The faction mentions the red carpet policy, the lottery booth fees, and the safety fee. The faction is waiting to see when the airport is going to pay the Government that.

The faction asks the Minister of TEATT to remove the TOT added in the breakdown from the Government; the Government is, therefore, committing an illegal act. TOT is not supposed to be passed on in the invoices. The faction would like the Minister of TEATT and the Minister of Finance to remove this from the gas breakdown. It was 87 cents per liter this month.

The faction would like to congratulate Sint Maarten, the Minister of TEATT, and the Harbor on the FCCA conference. What was the cost to carry out this?

The faction would like an update on the water park.

The faction would like to hear the vision of the Minister to bring Sint Maarten ahead. We see that Anguilla is catching up. They just need to follow us, and we need to be innovative. The faction believes we can do things to remain ahead. What is your vision and innovation to keep us as the mecca?

The faction would like to see the fire of the Minister rekindled where the Minister is focusing on bringing more tourists to this country.

The faction mentions the budget amendment meeting, where, once again, the faction had a lot of ideas, and at the time, it seemed very much receptive by the Minister, but the faction hasn't heard anything yet concerning a meeting to put these in place.

In meetings with the CFT, one of the things that came right at the faction was the return on investment on anything that Government does. This is not shown and reflected back into the budget.

How does the ministry plan to diversify tourism beyond traditional markets? What specific outcomes are expected from the 5 million ECOTourism investment?

Are there detailed timelines for the Philipsburg Improvement project?

How will the airport expansion of 12 million address long-term regional competition?

What percentage of the marketing budget, the 8 million, targets niche markets like luxury tourism?

Is the Government collaborating with private stakeholders for the Philipsburg Marketplace?

The faction applauds the Minister, because during our previous meeting, the faction made it known that there were already discussions with the tour buses to be able to stop at the marketplace, and the faction has seen a couple of buses stop already.

The faction would like to know how the ministry ensures accountability in spending on promotional campaigns. What plans exist to address environmental concerns with increased tourism?

Why is there no significant investment in cruise tourism beyond infrastructure?

Are there projections on return on investment for the 15 million Harbor development project?

How are public-private partnerships being utilized for tourism initiatives?

Can the ministry provide metrics for success in increasing airlift?

What measures are in place to ensure equitable benefits to small businesses?

Is there a strategy on leveraging the Caribbean regional market for tourism? How does the ministry mitigate the risk of overspending on marketing campaigns?

The faction noted while leaving Panama on the strip to go to the airport, the faction saw one big sign that said, "Make Barbados your next vacation destination," The faction believes that this is very efficient because it's the last thing you see when you're leaving a country, and you're already thinking about where your next vacation destination will be. This is something the Minister could look into. Just imagine sitting at the airport in Curacao and seeing a big billboard saying, "Make Sint Maarten your next vacation destination." That would definitely mean that, at least, if we catch 10% of those people to come here to Sint Maarten, it would make some sense. The faction remains open to having dialogue, bringing some ideas, and seeing how we could move the country forward.

When a project is paid for by Finance but it's a TEATT project, once it's paid, whose responsibility is it to actually make sure that the project is properly executed once there's a change of guard?

The faction noted a couple of days ago that there was a robbery in Philipsburg. This robbery was not with motorbikes as they usually do, but it was a car. This means that a car drove on Front Street and was able to drive straight out of Philipsburg. Now, there's a project that cost the country a little over \$370,000 USD to place cameras in the Philipsburg area, but also along all the side roads, traffic booms were to be placed. The faction has seen the cameras come

up but has never seen the traffic booms. It was paid in its totality. So that would not be something too difficult to find.

In the technical meeting with the Finance team, a comment was made that most of the money that comes into the coffers comes from taxes. At the time, the faction inquired how taxes could be collected if there are no businesses, no jobs, and no building permits. The first step is the issuance of business licenses, managing directors' licenses, vendors' licenses, operation licenses, and work permits. Is the Minister aware that if a business license was requested in January 2024 and to today it is not issued, that we have lost one year of business license fees, one year of managing director's license fees, taxes, and SZV, AOV?

The faction advises the Minister to please request a full view of all business license requests that come into the ministry and a timeline on how long they take to reach the Minister's queue to be approved because it climbs up really quickly. 150 to 200 business licenses or permits being awaited upon is a loss to the country.

The faction would like to know of the opening positions at the Harbor and the hiring process at the Harbor. Can the Minister explain the hands-off approach? Is the Minister or the ministry involved with any hiring process with the Harbor?

What are the thoughts of the Minister of the Government taking over the loan for the Cause Way bridge? The faction thinks that the opportunity presented itself and that it is one that we missed. It can be a good opportunity for the Government to acquire the loan and then receive on a lower interest rate. We can then use it as an asset. In turn, it would free up the Harbor for more investments and opportunities.

Ministry of Justice

The faction mentions that it realized that Sint Maarten has an issue with undocumented persons living here and, especially those that were born here. The working population was smaller than the pension population, which means that the working could not sustain the pension. Inevitably, it will run out. In that seminar we learned the importance of allowing persons to obtain, whether it's residencies, so they can curb the abuse of working under the table. Can the

Minister indicate how many persons have made use of article 3, first paragraph, under I of the National Ordinance of admission and expulsion? How many persons have obtained Dutch nationality by making use of the aforementioned articles? How many are minors?

Can the Minister indicate to what extent the recommendations stated in the report "Situation Analysis on Children and Adolescence on Sint Maarten 2020" have been taken into account?

Is the Minister familiar with the report "The Rights of Undocumented Children in Curacao as a Shared Responsibility 2021"? Have the recommendations in this report been followed by Sint Maarten?

Can the Minister indicate how many undocumented persons are on Sint Maarten? How many are minors?

Can the Minister provide the data of the number of applications for resident permits that were submitted by stateless individuals in the last 5 years? How many of these applications were approved, denied, or are still pending?

Are there any existing partnerships with international organizations, such as the UNHCR, to address the situation of statelessness and undocumented persons? If so, what are the outcomes of these collaborations?

Are there any ongoing legislative or administrative reforms aimed at addressing the challenges faced by stateless and undocumented individuals? If so, can the Minister provide a timeline for implementation?

The faction continues and mentions security. The Minister of Justice is responsible for the safety of the country. What are the plans of the Minister of Justice to address and combat crime? The faction states that we have seen an increase in gang violence or shootings. What are the plans of the Minister to tackle that?

The faction would like to congratulate the head of the Justice Committee for putting forth a fruitful meeting in such a short time at the Point Blanch Prison, where we got an in-depth look at the situation. We actually saw the living conditions of the cells, and we actually were able to hear not only the prison's grievances but to see the shortcomings of the prison guards. The faction states that we often see various ads go out, and we don't normally see ads for prison guards. What is the plan of the Minister as it relates to the prison guards, their situations, and ensuring that many of them get their LBs?

What is the timeline of the new prison? The faction noted an increase was added to the amount of a new prison and would like to know what it is for.

In the meantime, while we await a new prison, life is continuing at the Point Blanch Prison, and we have a humane responsibility to those in there. Many may see they are criminals; however, due to the fact that it is not customary to offer life sentences, we have to realize these persons will return to our society. If we do not rehabilitate them, we all are affected. Jail is not made for animals; it is made for humans. The faction is of the opinion that we have a responsibility to ensure that the human rights standards are met.

The faction would like to know the plans of the Minister to strengthen border control. The faction is aware that this is a very difficult task considering we share open borders with the French side.

The faction would also like to know the task of the Minister in finally paying the police officers. What is the amount needed to pay the police officers? How many LBs are remaining to be signed?

The faction has the following questions and comments for the ministry of Justice. As regards the prison, what is the timeline for the completion? How is the 6.5 million prison allocation distributed? Are there programs for reducing recidivism among inmates?

What steps are being taken to combat youth crime?

What's the ministry's plan to address the understaffing in law enforcement?

The faction has always said that a country where you pay your justice workers poorly will have high corruption. They will easily be enticed to do things that they shouldn't be doing. Are there any plans to look at a different pay structure? The faction knows everyone wants their LB, but they have heard some of those salaries from justice workers, and most of them need an extra job on the side to be able to take care of their families.

What role does technology play in improving law enforcement efficiency?

Can the ministry ensure accountability in community policing initiatives?

How does the disaster management funding integrate with national security?

What measures exist to improve response time for emergencies?

Are training programs adequately funded?

How does the ministry ensure equitable distribution of resources? Is there a long-term plan to phase out outdated equipment?

What partnerships exist in improving correctional services?

How is the ministry addressing corruption in the justice system?

Are there provisions for mental health services in correctional facilities?

What is the waiting time for residency permits? How many residency permits are pending today as we speak?

The faction mentions that it was extremely happy three days ago, on Cole Bay Hill by the roundabout, when there were three or four police officers directing and helping with the traffic. That made so much sense, and it helped a lot because, coming from the Simpson Bay area, it went really fast. The faction would love to see this more often. The faction understands that there is a problem with the number of police officers, but "ter informatie" for the Minister of Justice, some time back the TEATT inspectors were the ones that helped direct traffic. The problem they had with it was that they felt no one respected them. The then administration pushed to make sure all were BAVPol'ers. The faction believes that this is something the new Minister can look into and see about the cooperation from that department. It makes a lot of sense, especially in the Cul-de Sac and St. Peters areas in the morning.

The faction asked specifically about the budget to pay the police officers. The Minister indicated that it was in the budget, but the Minister didn't say the amount.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport

The faction mentions "Ministerplaats" for students that we have abroad in the Netherlands that have to go through "loting" for crucial education streams that are needed here on Sint Maarten. Can the Minister look into that and let the population and the faction know how that works and if it still exists.

There is a study that was done, and it speaks of the financial struggles that our students in the Netherlands have compared to those in the U.S. and Canada. Could we get that report from the Minister? The faction would like to know if the Minister has any plans when it comes to dealing with that.

As the faction has mentioned multiple times, the idea of housing in the Netherlands for our students. Whether by means of purchasing a building or a floor and slowly but surely increasing the housing for our students from Sint Maarten. The faction believes that this is extremely important.

The faction notes that the scholarship fund was cut by 572,404 guilders. Could the Minister elucidate why?

Concerning capital investments, why was the ICT hardware and software for the Department of Education cut by 68%? This is a little over half a million guilders—522,000 to be correct. Was this for the digital tracking system for the school buses?

The faction knows that because the ministry of Education is not a ministry that produces money for the coffers of government, it is quickly sidelined. The results are that our kids, when it comes to sports, youth, and Education, they suffer. This is a ministry that is dear to the faction. The faction would like to know why those cuts were made. Did the Minister have any say in those specific cuts in the budget?

Why has the government not included investments taken out of the capital investment budget for 2024 in the recent amendment for the Charlotte Brookson Academy?

The faction knows the Minister will do her utmost best and pass by every school to have a dialogue because that's the only way to hear exactly what is happening and where the struggles are. The faction cannot understand how a school could have no printing paper, ink, or toilet paper and that they have to go out and seek donations. That is not something the faction would like to see happen any longer.

Ministry of Public Health, Social Development, and Labor

The faction mentions the request for the Minister's intervention in certain matters. The Minister was told that the intervention did happen. The faction noted that the hospital workers are no longer wearing black, so whether its by the Minister's intervention or pressure on the management, the unions were heard and an agreement was met up to this point.

The faction was also made to understand that there was a meeting with the Hilton group. Can the Minister provide an update on such?

Is the mediator involved in this Hilton dispute between the workers and the management?

As it pertains to VSA, what is the update on the SAAHA? The faction would like to know the Minister's opinion on the SAAHA.

What is the update on the SZV 1b that can offer insurance to sole proprietors, bus drivers, and taxi drivers? This is something that has already been worked on and went to the Council of Advice. This is a piece of legislation that is much needed.

Regarding the increase of minimum wage the faction would like to know if this was done by indexation. Will it be done by LBham, MR? Is this using Q2, which in the legislation gives more time to adjust? Are you using Q2 for this calculation? As it pertains to the increase of the pension, the faction is very happy with this. The faction looks forward to January 1st, 2025, to see the minimum wage increase become a reality and the pension increase become a reality.

The tourist health levy was led by VSA. The faction would like to know who is taking the lead. Is it Finance, TEATT, or VSA?

Cannabis legislation. The faction is happy to see the revenue-generating measures. The Minister of TEATT put out an article, but the faction points out that the opium legislation falls under VSA. The faction would like to know if the Minister of VSA is taking the lead in such.

In the 2022 census, it indicated that the category for 65 plus has increased over the past 10 years from 5.3% to 12.8%. Many 65-plus persons are completely dependent on AOV and need additional assistance. What initiatives does the ministry of VSA have planned to improve the lives of the elderly?

The faction would like an update on the Sint Maarten General Hospital. Is the date of completion the same?

The faction states that SZV is very important. The faction would like to know the Minister's plans to curb the bleeding of SZV. What are the plans of the

Minister as it pertains to the OZR payments and the plans as it pertains to the tariffs? We have seen that the doctors are screaming for an increase in tariffs, but tariffs have not been changed for a long time. What is the position of the Minister and the ministry as it pertains to the tariffs?

The faction indicates that 98% of VSA is just spending; however, the 2% is work permits. That is where the little bit of revenue can come in.

The faction mentions that it has prepared an amendment to the National Ordinance regulating foreign labor and an LBham. Unfortunately the LBham cannot be submitted through Parliament. Therefore, it was sent to the former Minister and the ministry for review. The ministry has responded and indicated that they have no current plans to make such amendments at this moment. A lot of the aspects that was put into this amendment was based on discussions with the NESC and their visions to help curb and open up those bottlenecks.

The faction believes that this would be a good opportunity for Government to create additional revenue as they have expedited fees and different aspects in this LBham. If the Minister is open to such, the faction will gladly send the LBham whereby the staff of the Minister can review. If the Minister is open to such, it can be implemented and therefore additional fees can be brought to the table.

The faction states that in discussions with the business communities, many have stated that they would pay an expedited fee to get through and expedite this process. And according to the country package, one of the number one reasons for the illegal hiring of foreign workers was the process. The faction believes that if we find a way to curb the process, but ensure that this is only done once you have maximized the ability to hire locally, then we can have a win-win situation.

Does the Minister have any plans for dealing with the mental health of our kids on Sint Maarten and also those studying abroad? The faction believes that it is imperative that the Minister puts a plan together. There are a lot of studies done and many ideas that come from all corners of Sint Maarten. The faction encourages the Minister to grab them and put a plan together. One that will actually work.

The faction would like to know how many work permits are now pending in the office of the Minister waiting for his signature.

Are there any requests in the Minister's office for the opening of a new elderly people's home similar to what we call the White and Yellow Cross? The waiting line at the White and Yellow Cross is extremely long, and a lot of our elderly are left out in the cold. If there are none, does the Minister have a plan for expansion or for encouraging other businesspeople to move forward with opening a new White and Yellow Cross?

The faction notes that the Minister mentioned having a meeting with the employees from the Hilton and used the word "anonymous" numerous times. The problem remains that an employee is being abused by a group or feels abused but does not feel comfortable enough to come and file a complaint at the labor department—a department that should actually be there for the employees. Because that information will, one way or the other, get back to their employer, where they will then feel victimized. It is not the first time that people are complaining concerning this entity. It is also not the first time that an investigation has taken place or questions were asked.

The faction understands that the Minister doesn't want to divulge too much of what is being done or what the Minister is actually doing, but it does expect that the persons who brought this information to the Minister are kept informed—whether or not on the floor of Parliament.

Can the Minister let Parliament know where one could receive the information to be able to open a facility like the White and Yellow Cross? What is the procedure?

The faction continues and mentions the sin tax. The faction didn't hear the Minister mention his sentiments on a sin tax —the taxation of sugar products, alcohol, tobacco, gambling, and prostitution. The faction believes that this would be something that would benefit the ministry of VSA the most. What are the thoughts of the Minister on this?

Something as important as the health levy and the tourist tax, the answer that was stated is that the cabinet has not seen it yet and that it's at the SER and in DIV. This is one of the most important tools that is being mentioned as revenue generating by this Government. It was brought by the previous Government, but it one of the most important tools you are hearing by this Government. It was started, and it was paid for under the ministry of VSA. The faction suggests that the Minister has his staff review and ensure, because it was viewed to be as well as a health levy. Once the money goes into the coffers, the

original intention within Government was to allocate a certain amount of funds to SZV to deal with that backlog. The faction would like the Minister to take control and ensure that he protects SZV.

AOV is not taxed; it's lower than the to-be-taxed threshold. Because it is so low, our pensioners who receive AOV solely are suffering and those who can receive extra income are taxed.

As it relates to cannabis, the faction would like a meeting to be called where a clear overview can be given to the new Members of Parliament and the public to go through everything and every aspect of the cannabis legislation. The process hasn't even started. The company needs to sit with each ministry and go through and prepare the legislation. Nothing can happen unless Parliament approves.

The Minister stated that he cannot speak about it for legal purposes. What legal purposes? The Minister of TEATT is clearly spearheading it and speaking about it. The faction supports this because it's a revenue-generating measure.

Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure

The faction mentions sewage and persons in the South Reward area who have sent letters. The conditions are extremely horrible.

The faction continues and states that after the rainfall, the presence of the Minister was not felt. The faction is of the opinion that the road repairs were not quick enough. We have persons who are still dealing with issues of excessive water in their houses. The faction indicates that the Sucker Garden Road is horrible.

The faction knew that VROMI would run into problems as it pertains to the budget amendment. VROMI took some massive cuts, such as almost 47 million guilders.

The faction would like to know what the update on housing projects is. What is the intention of the Minister?

The faction would like to know if the Minister of VROMI is involved in the discussions with the Netherlands as it pertains to the 75 million that has to deal

with GEBE. Last time it was noted that the Prime Minister was spearheading it, but the Minister of VROMI said that discussions would be had so that VROMI, who is the responsible Minister of GEBE, could assume that role back. What is the update?

The faction mentions that it has seen throughout the past year that the residents of Simpson Bay have been having many town hall meetings and meetings against the development and ensuring the protection of the Simpson Bay beach. The faction is not against development, it is pro development but also for protection of what is there, especially our beaches. Have those discussions been brought to the office of the Minister of VROMI? What is in place to ensure that the residents of Simpson Bay know that while the permits were given, they can rest assured that the protection of the beach and the residents of Simpson Bay are considered?

The faction would like to know what the update is with building permits. Are building permits now on halt pending GEBE's restoration? Or is it that only for major projects at this moment is what seems to be on halt? If so, why?

The faction mentions the Cay Bay project and the Middle Region Phase 2 project. The faction noted that it was moved from CapEx 2024 to CapEx 2025 and shifted to CapEx 2026. While the faction understands that GEBE was a crisis, we have many other crises that we are facing. The faction is of the opinion that VROMI is taking the biggest hit.

Does the ministry of VROMI have any tenders in the pipeline? Any infrastructure or new works?

What is the update on the Ring Road? Is it the intention of the current Minister of VROMI to continue the Ring Road? Is it an idea that the Minister would like to facilitate and move forward with? If the Minister has a different idea in mind, the faction would like the Minister to inform of this.

What is the idea of the Minister on a race track?

When does the Minister think we can get the Ring Road Project moving, even if it's 26 or 27?

The faction indicates that on page 42 of the budget, there seems to be an error in the amount that is there for new investment, one line shows a deduction

in the new investment of 29.7 million and below with the total, there's a total different figure used that shows a deduction of 18.9 million. Which one is the correct one?

If it is the 29.7 million we're looking at, that is 30 million less for projects that the ministry may have had planned. What impact does this deduction have on your plans?

During the budget amendment meeting, there were a couple of discussions concerning two things. The first is the garbage pickup in the St. Peters area. The faction is of the opinion that it has gone from bad to worse. The faction has reached out personally, as a very concerned citizen of the St. Peters area, to the garbage company, and was told that their truck is down. That's why they're picking up with a different type of truck with two men by hand. It's actually very worrisome because it's not being done properly or not being done at all. Garbage has not been picked up in that area for about five days.

In the last meeting, the faction also asked the Minister concerning the car wreck project and mentioned one or two roads. The people from those roads are still asking if anything will be done as they can't even get inside to their roads because of all the old wrecks parked up on those streets.

The faction continues and mentions the cut in the budget. The faction is somewhat perplexed because of how many building permits are still pending in VROMI. The faction would have thought building permits make money, so let's push those out so we can make more money and have less cuts.

The faction would like for the Minister to highlight his challenges and his plans on dealing with that, as it is very frustrating to many people who have taken loans and are waiting to build their homes.

The faction also mentioned in the last meeting that a specific person who requested a building permit years ago was told that it was denied. They asked the faction to help him formulate a letter explaining that he no longer needs the building permit. That letter was submitted, and he's asking for a reply on the letter because he has the marshal delivering a bill by him. That is also very worrisome for him. The faction feels that in the beginning, the Minister was very available, so the faction would like to encourage him not to lose that.

Can the Minister give a breakdown on how it actually takes place when someone files a complaint concerning a resident in a district that is running his or

her sewage water onto the street, and it is constantly every day? Can the Minister give an idea and tell the public how the public could file a complaint? Is there a phone number and email address that pictures could be sent to, and how does the ministry take that complaint and move forward with it? Apart from garbage, sewage water is also a problem in the neighborhood.

The faction wouldn't have a problem with anyone charging for garbage because that is normal everywhere else in the world. However, the faction would like to see that some of those funds go right into the ministry directly and allocated to, for example, being able to hire more inspectors or train those that are there to become inspectors. There should be some type of oversight on the garbage disposal and how people throw their garbage outside. To charge for garbage and that it disappears in the bottomless pit of the coffers of government makes absolutely no sense to the faction, unless it's allocated to something that is going to benefit what it is collected for.

The Nation Opportunity Wealth-faction has taken note of the draft and has the following questions and remarks.

Ministry of Finance

The faction inquires about the specific measures implemented in the Budget 2024/2025 to improve the tax policy in Sint Maarten. How will the Ministry of Finance focus on improving tax policy and contribute to strengthening the Country's economic position? What is the Ministry of Finance's plan to reduce backlogs in debt collection and improve tax revenues? Regarding training, the faction would like to know what types of training are being provided to the tax authority staff to improve their skills in tax collection and assessment.

Regarding assessments, the faction notes that when people file their taxes, it is after some years that people receive the taxes assessed. What is being done to improve this? Can it be done in a more generic manner so that persons can receive the assessments faster than having to wait 2 to 3 years for an assessment from 2020 or 2021? What is the ministry of Finance doing to accelerate this process?

Ministry of General Affairs

The faction inquires about the number of fire officers currently being trained through the Netherlands Institute for Physical Safety (NIPV). How will this

strengthen the incident management capacity? The faction would like the Minister of General Affairs to clarify the expected impact of the commander training for noncommissioned officers on improving the leadership within the fire department.

What criteria are used to prioritize which government systems will be migrated to the cloud first? What steps are being taken to test and validate the migrated system before it goes live in the production environment?

Can the Minister of General Affairs provide a breakdown of the 129.600 guilders allocated for the cloud-migrated project, particularly regarding the SLA contracts, licenses, and other associated costs?

What is the timeframe when documents are being vetted for turnaround at JZ&W? When documents are given to JZ&W, what is the turnaround for the next step? Seeing that it is a "bestuursorgaan," people request things from the ministry daily. Hence, when can the people expect answers when the Minister of General Affairs requests JZ&W to vet documents?

The faction mentions GEBE and has the following questions. How has the Government addressed relief for the people of Sint Maarten in the Budget 2025 regarding GEBE issues? Despite previous assurances, GEBE still has outages and cuts during critical periods like the holiday season. What immediate measures are being taken to address the disruption and ensure reliable service? What long-term strategies are being implemented to improve GEBE's infrastructure and financial stability?

The faction would like the Prime Minister could define the portfolio of Prime Minister/ Minister of General Affairs. It is very often said that the Prime Minister is in every Minister's portfolio, and we are not in a crisis.

Does the water tank in Cupe Coy, across from Sapphire, have water to supply for the Lowlands area?

What function does the VDSM have when investigating a candidate for a 'vertrouwensfunctie'?

What is the situation with the Secretary-General position at General Affairs, which is currently vacant? When will this be filled? Can the Minister inform us of the reason that this position became vacant in such a short time?

This question is posed to the Minister of General Affairs because the faction understood that this was because of victimization to the highest degree.

Ministry of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication

The faction would like the Minister to provide an update on the current personnel working within the EDC, including their roles and specific tasks related to implementing the approved investment policy and diversification strategy. Additionally, how does the ministry intend to evaluate the effectiveness of the annual subsidy provided to the EDC for activities such as creating a National Investment website, developing promotional materials, attending trade fairs, and engaging with major investors to ensure that these efforts yield measurable economic benefits?

Can the Minister provide an update on the reconstruction of the marketplace? It was noted that the project would be completed before the peak season. However, there has been no visible progress or indication that the project is nearing completion. Every day, the faction hears the cry and frustration of the vendors who feel neglected, and they remain temporarily relocated to the back, with no timeline; when can they return to the front and continue to give their service?

The faction inquires how often the controllers inspect supermarkets to ensure compliance with the basket of goods and bread policy and how frequently reports are generated to indicate the level of compliance among these markets.

What are the strategies being implemented to improve data collection and marketing efforts to increase tourist arrivals and enhance revenue generation? How does the ministry plan to create a more competitive tourism product that aligns with the increasing arrival and accommodation capacity of Sint Maarten?

Could the Minister elaborate on the concept of island hopping and how incentives like free services from hotels, such as free nights, free breakfast, and shuttle services, are being promoted to attract tourists to Sint Maarten?

What is the projected impact of the marketing campaign with MSC cruise lines for passengers departing from Sint Maarten before and after their

vacations? How does the ministry plan to track and evaluate the success of this campaign?

Can the Minister provide an update on the progress of cleanup and beautification projects, including signage improvements and border signage initiatives?

The faction mentions the Taxi App. Has the Minister engaged in any meetings with the TEATT inspection team in collaboration with the police force to discuss the enforcement and alleviation of the illegal transportation issues on the island, particularly involving gypsy cabs between the Harbor and the boardwalk? The faction indicates that it is very concerned about these developments because these have led to alarming conflicts with taxi drivers and resulted in inappropriate behavior in front of tourists visiting the island. Bear in mind that taxi drivers are ambassadors of Sint Maarten. The faction believes that such a negative light can lead to the detriment of our economy.

Ministry of Justice

The faction inquires about the Minister's plan for the ministry of Justice.

The faction would also like to know which law firm currently represents the ministry of Justice, and how much this service is costing the Country. How many civil servants' cases are currently pending?

How many police officers have resigned in the past 9 years? The faction posed this question because people currently work longer at Burger King and McDonald's than at the police force. We have invested so much in our police officers, and we have seen them leaving after one or two years.

The faction mentions that the former Minister of Justice contacted the Chief of Police when there were discussions on the rise in crime. The former Minister also instructed to put a multidisciplinary team in place between the Police and the Coast Guard as they all have special authorities. The faction mentions that the ministry did have several of these teams in the past, but that to date, we haven't seen that team put together to tackle crime: Customs, Police, Coast Guard, Immigration, etc.

The faction understands that there is a person in the Minister's cabinet who has worked in the Ministry of Justice in a Senior capacity. While the faction welcomes the knowledge and experience that this brings to the table and

recognizes its value, and having no doubt that this is also the case here, the faction wants to ask the Minister if she has considered the possibility that there may be: a want to settle scores; and that this makes the Minister's personnel uneasy. How does the Minister intend to reassure her Justice workers that they will not be treated unfairly and without bias?

What is the Minister's plan to address victimization within the ministry? It is the biggest ministry within the government apparatus that directly has social issues. Does the Minister have an open-door policy? Does the Minister have an open-door policy and a listening ear so that their concerns and problems can be addressed adequately?

The faction mentions the recent comments in the media regarding the short staffing affecting the ministry of Justice. The Minister's comments were in response to a question posed to the Minister by a local media house. The faction commends the Minister for recognizing that it is the Minister's and the Government's responsibility to address the short staffing. The faction emphasizes that this particular responsibility is shared and calls on the Minister's colleagues to support the Minister in resolving this pressing matter.

As the Minister is aware, short staffing places a disproportionate burden on Justice personnel who consistently report to work faithfully, as it often requires them to take on additional responsibilities to compensate for absent colleagues. Too often, this happens with no additional compensation. This imbalance increases the risks of more sick leave in the organization. How does the Minister intend to keep the Justice workers, who continue to report for duty and deliver results despite these conditions, motivated and energized?

Additionally, given budgetary cuts imposed on Sint Maarten by our so-called partners, it is extremely difficult for departments to carry out their tasks effectively. The faction would like to know from the Minister what discussions are planned in the coming weeks with these partners to advocate for better protection of the budget of the ministry of Justice and to realize more financial flexibility in the ministry's budget and how it is allocated.

How does the Minister intend to ensure that the necessary resources are secured to uphold the safety and security of our Country and safeguard the tourism product, which is essential to our one-pillar economy?

In the past, steps have been taken within the ministry to introduce and work on income-generating measures aimed at strengthening the financial position of the ministry and contributing to the Government's coffers. Despite these efforts, the measures have yet to be fully realized or implemented due to various challenges encountered. The faction would like the Minister to confirm whether these initiatives, such as the increases of the "leges" (fees) in the "Legesverordening"), and other income-generating initiatives for the ministry, remain a priority. And if so, how does the Minister intend to address the challenges that have hindered their progress and ensure their successful implementation?

What is the status of Batch 12, regulating the new salary scales and functions of the 25 justice employees? Before leaving office, the former Minister of Justice signed the advice, and the batch was delivered to the Governor. The faction understands that the batch is on the Minister's desk. Hence, the faction would like to know the status of Batch 12.

What is the status of Batch 13? The compilation was in progress. How far is that batch process?

What is the status of the function book ratification that allows the Justice employees to receive retroactive payments from October 10, 2010, to December 31, 2022? This was a pending matter of which the faction was informed that it was at JZ&W. The faction refers to the question asked to the Minister of General Affairs regarding the length of time that JZ&W has to give advice. The faction states that GovernmentGovernment should be continuous and believes that at this time in our history, we don't have the time for any more delays.

What are the Minister's plans for staffing issues in critical functions at Point Blanche Prison? The majority of staff are females. The faction is of the opinion that more male staff need to be encouraged to work in the prison. The faction states that it is also known that the vulnerability of female staff with inmates do exist. Hence, the faction requests the Minister of Justice to look into this issue and come up with a plan to tackle this.

What is the status of the function book for the employees of the Point Blanche Prison and House of Detention? The faction has seen the salaries, and staff shed tears because they collect almost nothing.

What are the plans to tackle the backlog at the immigration department regarding residency permits, general letters for dispensation, and visa exemptions, etc.? The faction indicates that during the tenure of the former Minister there were about 2000.

Has the back pay for police officers been accounted for in the 2025 budget?

Are there provisions in the budget to address staffing shortages or improve working conditions for law enforcement?

What is the plan for funding overdue maintenance and upgrades to police facilities and equipment?

Given the ongoing issues with the LIOL not being in order, which has impacted the proper placement of staff in the correct salary scales at the Voogdijraad, can the Minister provide an update on the steps being taken to resolve this matter and what measures are being put in place to ensure timely and accurate salary adjustments for employees transitioning within the ministry of Justice?

The faction mentions that it is the Minister of Justice's prerogative to decide if an inmate can attend a family funeral. The faction is cognizant that the Prosecutor's office or other institution within the ministry might give negative advice, but it remains the Minister of Justice's prerogative to make that decision.

What is the status of the new uniforms for the Customs, Immigration, and Police Departments?

Have the funds budgeted by BZK been allocated to the ministry to refurbish the prison cells? If so, what is the projected timeline for the completion of this project?

The Customs Department has been working diligently to intercept illegal substances, and the faction applauds their tireless efforts to protect Sint Maarten's borders. With the frequent seizures of contraband, there are growing concerns about adequate storage space. Can the Minister inform us if there is enough storage space for Customs?

Additionally, is the storage located in a secure area that does not pose a risk to the safety of the officers? If not, has there been any collaboration with other departments, such as the Police, to assist in storing confiscated items?

The faction mentions that the Customs Department's main office is facing significant deterioration, including mold infestation. Can the Minister inform us if the ministry has taken any steps to improve the current state of the building? Are there plans to explore alternative office locations?

The Simpson Bay police outpost is also in a deteriorating state. A simple lock on the door has been damaged for a long time. The faction does not understand why this is not fixed. Also, the fire extinguisher has expired since 2015. The faction believes that a serious walkthrough by the Minister is needed.

The faction mentions the LBham for the Coast Guards signed off 5 days before the former Minister left office which was handed over to the Prime Minister. The "aanbiedingsbrief" had to go to the Governor. The faction understood that the letter did not go to the Governor. Hence, the faction would like an update on the status of this LBham regulating the salary scales/remuneration for the Coast Guards.

The faction continues and has the following questions. How many CPOs, community police officers, does the ministry have? As it was mentioned that they also do training in Miami, the faction would like to know how long this training is and how much it costs.

How many police officers does KPSM have compared to how many actual FTEs? This is for the police officers, not the staff. Police officers, detectives, etc., and also "Landsrecherche."

What is the plan of approach for the police force?

Who pays the personnel at the Prosecutors Office? Does Sint Maarten pay the personnel and the Prosecutor? And from whose budget does it come?

Do we pay "huisvesting" for the Prosecutors, or is it incorporated in their salaries?

The faction mentions that the transparency of the Minister and initiative to have a Town Hall meeting is beautiful.

Regarding the statement in which the Minister mentioned that the Firm was terminated, the faction would like it to be clarified if they were actually terminated and why. The Minister also mentioned that the representatives that represent Government is Gibson and Associates. The faction would like to know

what is going on and why. The faction has seen firsthand great representation from the Firm. Hence the question.

It should not be that the GovernmentGovernment is just being represented because we are on a retainer, and nothing fruitful is coming out of that representation. "Dat is verspillend van geld".

The faction requests the Minister to investigate the matter regarding no new uniforms and boots. Can the Minister do due diligence to ensure that the officers have proper attire to approach the people in a short time? The Police are in dire need of uniforms and other resources.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport

The faction has the following comments and questions for the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport. It is mentioned that a high school will be built. The faction would like to know if this is referring to the Charlotte Brookson Academy for the Performing Arts in Sint Maarten.

The faction states that earlier this year, concerns were raised about the school's financial integrity and unaccounted-for funds. What measures are being implemented to ensure proper fund management for this project? Is this a loan for this institution?

How does the 2025 budget address the shortage of classroom space or educational resources?

Ministry of Public Health, Social Development, and Labor

Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure

This report is to be considered the Final Report.

Stipulated in the meeting of the Central Committee of December 20, 2024.

The Reporter,



S.A. Wescot-Williams