



Parliament of Sint Maarten

Staten van Sint Maarten

Parliamentary Year 2017-2018-115

National Ordinance establishing the annual accounts of Sint Maarten for the service year 2013 (National Ordinance annual accounts 2013)

**Report
No. 5**

Parliament in its meeting of the Central Committee has exchanged views with the Government on the Draft National Ordinance establishing the accounts of Sint Maarten for the service year 2013.

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

The United Democrats Faction has taken note of this draft National Ordinance. The faction would like to know if there is an estimate or timeline on when Parliament will receive the 2015, 2016 and 2017 financial statements.

National Alliance Faction has taken note of this draft National Ordinance. The faction would like to know about the approval and enactment of the 2012 financial statements. Does the Minister and the Ministry see the need for a crisis law and is it planning to present such a law? Is this a priority seeing the situation we are in? What is the Ministries stance on presenting such a law? Does the Ministry feels itself, qua human resources, properly staffed, to be able to carry out and live up to the goals within their action plan? How much longer can we continue to function under this tight belt, where you constantly need resources, so you are here in Parliament explaining why we are in 2018 discussing 2013 and 2014 and at the beginning of 2019 we will get to the rest. How can we live up to our obligations to the people of Sint Maarten if we are not able to hire necessary personnel? Do the checks in the presentation (7c), represent the achievement of the 5 goals of

the action plan? And the areas that are blank, what is Finance doing differently to the other Ministries and if that can be called best practice, can it be shared with the other Ministries so that we can get that type of compliance across the line? Is this something because you were busy with it, you were implementing as you were planning? What do the other Ministries have to do to become compliant? What do these checkmarks actually mean?

The faction further mentions that the figure that is being pledged by the Dutch is known. How much of that money thus far has been put into the trust fund for Sint Maarten and how much of it has been allocated to Sint Maarten?

The United Sint Maarten Party Faction has taken note with interest of the draft. The faction questions what the hurdles are after signing off on a financial statement? Does it have to come back to the Ministry for corrections? Or did the Ministry do what they have to do? The faction suggest that financial statements should include a timestamp. It allows us to identify bottlenecks within the system. Where is the biggest bottleneck? What is the timeframe for different institutions to deal with these documents? The faction would like to know what mechanism the Minister is supposed to use to justify creating a budget going forward, if we can't look back and say where we underspent or overspent, this is how we need to adjust going forward? Are we then saying that every budget up until now has just been made on the whim or guesses of the Council of Ministers? Is that the method being used? With relations to the SZV and debts that were there back then. How much corrective actions has been taken since then by previous Ministers of Finance to make arrangements to clear such? Have we seen improvement since then? What has been done since then to improve that situation?

The faction noticed in the financial statement, looking particularly at tourism marketing budget under the TEATT Ministry, that the budget has continuously been underspent, looking at 2013 and 2014. How is it that the Government has continually, as a tourism dependent country, seen a declining tourism budget? You have departments that are not spending their budget, but when you go in, as a department head you feel that even though you know there is budget, especially with some Secretaries General, they make you feel like the country is completely broke. The financial statements, with all kind of surpluses, clearly make you think Sint Maarten had some of the best performances we have ever seen. Does this part of the financial

management throughout the civil service have the Ministers attention? Are the Secretaries General being brought in from time to time, the concerned controller, the various controllers from the Staff Bureau? If you want to cut or stop spending, then come to Parliament and say we think we are going to do a spending freeze on XYZ, and Parliament is the one that should determine whether spending, or budget should be reduced or increased. Not Secretaries General, not controllers, not department heads, not even ministers. Once that budget is approved that budget should be respected. That budget is what has to be used as the basis for executing things in the country.

The faction further mentions that there is no basis for a financial recovery plan. The faction is of the opinion that if the Minister wants to present a plan all the Minister has to do is submit the budget. When you create such a plan and there is no legal basis for it, you are going to run in to a problem with your civil service when they do not have a clear guideline to follow. If the budget that is presented for 2019 is in anyway different from that financial recovery plan, you are actually creating confusion in your civil service.

The faction would also like to know if the Minister told the media that Members of Parliament have given him dozen if not hundreds of suggestions on how to improve the country's finances going forward? How many meetings have we called and giving you the basis as to what we believe is the best way going forward? The faction is of the opinion that there is no relationship with the Netherlands that this Parliament can improve if we can't even improve our relationships with the Ministers right here. Leave the affairs of the Dutch and Parliament to Parliament.

The faction would like to know what the policy is to determine if an advice is turned down based on not enough budget and liquidity support? Is there a real method to determine how you do it? Can the Minister follow up with the Ministers to find out what is really going on with this situation?

This report is to be considered as Final Report.

Stipulated in the meeting of the Central Committee of October 25, 2018.

The Reporter,
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