



Tamara Leonard

Member of the Parliament of Sint Maarten

Honorable Cornelius de Weever
Minister of Justice
Government of St. Maarten
Pond Island

STATEN VAN SINT MAARTEN			
Ingek. 23 APR 2019			
Volgnr. 151 909 / 18-19			
Par.	A	B	W.B.

Philipsburg, Monday April 22nd 2019

Subject: State of Pointe Blanche House of Detention,

Honorable Chairlady,

I am hereby submitting an urgent letter to the Honorable Minister of Justice on the state of the Pointe Blanche House of Detention. Chairlady, it is beyond a crying shame and an embarrassment to the country of St. Maarten to learn about the deplorable and unhygienic situations at the Pointe Blanche House of Detention. It is no wonder that the government and by extension the Parliament of this young country is constantly bombarded by claims of not taking proper care of their people.

There are more than 70 inmates in our prison; living in less than humane condition, afforded less than one hour of sunlight daily. They have to dwell in fungus infested bathrooms and mold-crusted walls. The incarcerated are not animals and we, as decent people, should not stand by and let this situation continue.

My very first question to the Minister of Justice, is if as a human being the dire situation at Pointe Blanche does not affect him in any way?

Chairlady, The prison can be labeled a firetrap with report of insufficient firefighting equipment and enough staff to react timely in the case of an emergency. I would hate to think that there is no emergency protocol in place. That brings me to my next question: What are the security protocols that are in place? And, should there be for instance a fire, how much can be done to contain it before emergency services arrive and lives are lost?

My query can be labeled morbid. The fact is, however, the situation is dire at the prison – inside and out. It is beyond time for the end of patchwork and wastage of money to the proper reconstruction of the prison. What exactly is the plan of the Minister of Justice and why is it taking so long, why have no Minister of Justice tackle this situation since 10/10/10? Water shortages are a norm at the prison. What has been done to remedy this deficiency?

Wilhelminastraat # 1, Philipsburg, Sint Maarten
Tel: + (1-721) 542-0812 / 542-0635 | Fax: + (1-721) 542-0306
Email: info@sxmparliament.org | www.sxmparliament.org

When I think of what is happening at the prison Chairlady, I cannot help but ask: has the Minister ever thought of how a chained dog becomes vicious?

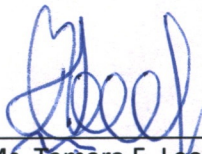
That said Chairlady, please see the list of questions below:

1. What are the present prison policies?
2. When were they developed?
3. When were they last updated?
4. How do these policies compare to the Netherlands and world standards?
5. When was the Pointe Blanche facility built?
6. Is it still suitable for housing human beings?
7. When was the last time VROMI did a building inspection of Pointe Blanche facilities? If they haven't, why not? If they did, what were their findings?
8. Is the electrical cabling and paneling up to date?
9. When was the last time the Fire Department inspected the Pointe Blanche facilities? If they haven't, why not? If they did, what were their findings?
10. Is there enough firefighting equipment in the Pointe Blanche facilities?
11. When was the last time the health department visited the Pointe Blanche facilities? If they haven't, why not? If they have, what were their findings?
12. What is the average age of inmates?
13. How many inmates are repeat offenders?
14. What programs are in place to rehabilitate and teach them a new way of living?
15. How are these people to find a job when they are released?
16. Are there any incentives for businesses to hire or give ex-inmates a new opportunity in life?

17. Will ex-inmate even be able to open a bank account?

Chairlady, I am requesting prompt and precise answers as soon as possible, meaning within a week or less. This matter is too serious for any "pussyfooting" or dodging of the issues at play.

Respectfully,



Ms. Tamara E. Leonard
Member of Parliament