

Linette A. Gibs

From: Garrick J. Richardson
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 1:15 PM
To: Linette A. Gibs
Cc: Ann A. Groen-Gumbs; Valerie Brazier
Subject: FW: CC Parliament Q&A
Attachments: CC phl.docx; Parliament 26Feb2021.docx

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From: Gumbs, Marlisha <Marlisha.Gumbs@sintmaartengov.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2021 1:11 PM
To: Garrick J. Richardson <Garrick.Richardson@sxmparliament.org>
Cc: Panneflek, Richard <Richard.Panneflek@sintmaartengov.org>; Lewis, Lyndon <Lyndon.Lewis@sintmaartengov.org>; Linette A. Gibs <Linette.Gibs@sxmparliament.org>
Subject: CC Parliament Q&A

Dear Mr. Richardson,

Kindly see attached Question and Answers from the parliament meeting that was held Friday March 26th for further handling .

With Kind Regards,

Ms. Marlisha Gumbs

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CC Parliament - Public Health Ordinance Amendments

MP Buncamper

- 1. Who will do the enforcement of the Legislation, so pertaining to isolation facility?**
Inspection and Police based on art. 55: Inspectorate appointed (VSA) and police can enforce (see art. 55 and 66): Met de opsporing van de bij of krachtens deze landsverordening strafbare gestelde feiten zijn, naast de in artikel 184 van het Wetboek van Strafvordering bedoelde personen, de daartoe bij landsbesluit aangewezen medewerkers van de Inspectie belast.
- 2. What are the sanctions if one does not adhere to the law for example leaving the isolation facility**
art. 66 sub 3: Met gevangenisstraf van ten hoogste vier jaar of geldboete van ten hoogste NAf 100.000,- wordt gestraft degene die zich onttrekt aan een op grond van de artikelen 20 of 24 ten aanzien van hem genomen maatregel.
- 3. The percentages that we are using are being calculated over which population, registered by census so 43.000 or 60.000**
The figure being used is 59,000
- 4. Which percentage of the population needs to be vaccinated to reach herd immunity and the 70% is based on population of 43.000 or 60.000**
Answer: It is based on the population figure of 59,000. 70% is a benchmark.
- 5. First 3 groups being vaccinated will get Pfizer vaccine the other group will be receiving other vaccines. Is there a difference in vaccine qua being able to get them to St. Marten at a specific time? Does it have to do with quantities? Why are we using this vaccine?**
St. Maarten has received the Pfizer vaccine for the seniors as this has been proven to be the most effective in this target group. The roll out of the vaccines are dependent on the planning of the Netherlands. The choices are indeed related to the supply available in the kingdom.
- 6. There was a survey done. What were the numbers that came out of the survey? What numbers of the ones who do not want to vaccinate?**
CPS, SZV and DCOMM launched a survey in December. The total number of respondents was 1,216. 58% of people said they would not take the COVID-19 vaccine if offered. [Infographic was posted on Govt Website and can be shared with the MPs].
- 7. Who will pay for the mandatory isolation?**
Government has to pay the costs see art. 51:
The Country will bear the costs associated with the vaccination program, as referred to in Article 4, third paragraph, under g, the costs associated with the examination, as referred to in Article 3, third paragraph, under i, and the measures taken pursuant to Chapter 3 of this national ordinance. The Country also bears the costs of the allowances granted to those who lose income as a result of the measures referred to in Articles 20, 24, 26 and 37.

8. **What does the vaccines not being mandatory means for children going to school?**
The vaccines are for persons 18 years and older.
9. **How will the innocent be protected against the ones that do not want to vaccinate?**
That is why we want the herd immunity
10. **COVID-19 becomes official disease in group A. Does it mean now that all doctors must accept COVID-19 as a disease? I need to understand that if this is now a disease, will the doctors treat it as such?**
Making a disease a Group A disease would make it mandatory for health care providers and laboratories to report it to CPS.
11. **If we reach herd immunity will we leave carnival continue during summer**
That will be up to CoM
12. **Is the vaccine and the testing we do compatible for the strains on the island? Does the vaccine work for all of the strains? If you get a shot but you have the UK strain are you cured?**
The Pfizer vaccine has proven to be effective against the UK and South African variants. The testing being done on the island detects COVID-19, genotyping being sent to the RIVM would confirm the presence of variants on island.
13. **Does the law cover the strains? COVID-19 is the name but does the law cover the strains?**
The law will cover COVID-19 regardless of the strain. It is similar for example to influenza being a reportable disease. The law does not stipulate between the various types of influenza for example H1N1 or H3N2.

MP Pantophlet:

1. **How do we combat countries who will mandate vaccination for travel?**
We cannot control what other countries do
2. **No emphasis on how to build your immune system. A campaign focused on prevention and building your own immune system.**
One of CPS' main objectives is health promotion and various health campaigns are executed on a monthly basis through the Health Observance Calendar.
3. **Law that will be passed to place COVID-19 on group A- are there legal repercussions? Those listed in group A- will the laws be implemented to all diseases?**

MP Bijlani:

- 1. Do you believe that the cruise lines and airlines can put a clause of mandatory vaccination in order to travel?**

They can

- 2. In Holland before you take the vaccine you have to take rest 2 days before and 2 days after the vaccine. Is that the case do you have an update on that? For 2 days rest, how as VSA minister how will you assure that employees don't lose money.**

This is not the case.

- 3. For people who had COVID the second dose of Pfizer is kind of not good. How far is that statement true?**

Based on scientific evidence, the Pfizer vaccine is 95% effective after both doses are received

MP Emmanuel:

- 1. When will vaccine be available and where?**

The vaccine is available for health care workers starting on February 22. The general public (starting with the 60+) has started on February 25 at the WYC and will roll out to CPS on March 1, 2021. The vaccination locations (one being CPS) will offer the vaccines from Monday to Friday 8:00 to 4:00 PM.

- 2. Is there an age limit? Young children don't have to take the vaccine? What is classified as a child?**

At this point the vaccine will be given to persons age 18 and older

- 3. What is meant by herd immunity. Can you give an explanation in layman's terms. Why is it important. Is this what we want to accomplish on the island?**

Herd immunity (or community immunity) is when a large part of the population is immune to a specific infectious disease (through vaccination and/or prior illness). If enough people are resistant to the cause of a disease (bacteria or virus for example), it will not be able to replicate or spread in the community. While not every single individual may be immune or vaccinated (for example children or those with weakened immune systems), the group as a whole has protection. By vaccinating we are protecting the whole community. Yes we want to accomplish a high rate of vaccinations on the island.

- 4. In terms of different brands- Pfizer, AstraZeneca, one from India. What is the difference in the brand. How do we know that Pfizer is good for us to use in St. Maarten? Climate probably has something in play. Is it because Holland is using this brand and this is why we are getting it? Have we done a study and why these vaccines are good for us? AstraZeneca is being led in other countries. Why some countries chose one brand over the other. Why did we go with one in particular?**

Based on available scientific evidence, Pfizer has shown to perform the best in the elderly population (95% effective after 2 full doses). The Netherlands has placed orders on Pfizer,

AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines and based on supply, these were distributed among the kingdom based on population figures.

5. Have we had a study/discussion with the Northern side of the island. What was the discussion about? Which vaccine are they using? Are we cooperating?

Health authorities meet on a weekly basis. At the last meeting between CPS and ARS, vaccination strategies were shared. The French side started their vaccination campaign in January and to date, approximately 550 persons have been vaccinated. The vaccine being used on the French side is the Pfizer vaccine.

Based on a recent meeting held with the Prefet and CPS on February 24, it was disclosed that the French side will also be receiving AstraZeneca in the near future. It is the intention for the French side to receive the following vaccines: Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna.

6. Are we asking the general public to be vaccinated? And if not, why not?

Yes. The general public is being asked to register for the vaccine- regardless of age. Appointments will be given to those who first fit the criteria for the priority groupings.

MP Gumbs:

1. What vaccine load has been delivered?

Over 8000 doses were delivered on February 19, 2021.

2. Is there a plan in place to avoid wastage or no shows?

Yes- the intention is to avoid wastage. There is a plan in place at each vaccination location to have a call up/waitlist for persons who for now are on the priority group (seniors, healthcare worker)

MP Heyliger-Marten:

1. Can you explain to us what a vaccine is? Are you putting the virus inside of the body?

Vaccines are the most successful medical intervention we know which has led to a reduction in mortality. Vaccines make your body produce a protein that looks like a coronavirus protein. Your immune system gets triggered by this protein and makes antibodies against coronavirus. When you come into contact with the coronavirus in the future, you will be protected by those antibodies.

2. Temperature check- why?

At each testing location, persons with an appointment will be asked about their current health status. We will be taking a temperature check along with an assessment of flu-like symptoms to ensure that someone is not suspected of being currently infected with COVID-19.

3. 15-minute observation being done- why?

A medical team (including a physician) will be at each location to monitor all persons who receive a vaccine. This period is to monitor for any adverse reactions (for example fainting, lightheadedness, anaphylactic reaction).

4. Are the vaccines free?

Yes- the vaccine is free for all residents of Dutch St. Maarten

5. Would we consider promoting natural ingredients to boost your immune system?

Part of CPS' mandate is health promotion. With that, there are several health events that are promoted monthly, including health eating, healthy lifestyle.

3. When is the next batch of vaccine expected?

St. Maarten received the first doses of vaccines on February 22. Over 8000 doses were delivered. The next batch of vaccines is estimated to arrive in mid-March.

MP Ottley:

1. Tested on the island- 16,994, airport 2,451. Confirmed 2001. What numbers are we using?

The positivity rate that was presented is calculated based on the number of positive cases with a denominator of tested on island- not including those tested at the airport.

The incidence is calculated using the number of positive cases over the total population figure of 59,000.

2. Is there a system in place to monitor the efficacy of the vaccine?

There is a system in place to capture the number of vaccines administered and the reporting of any adverse events.

3. Will there be a card or certificate issued after vaccination?

Yes. The RIVM provided the Ministry (and all territories who have requested such) with a vaccination card that captures the dates vaccinated with batch numbers. This card is similar to the vaccination card/booklet you receive for childhood vaccinations.

4. Monitoring in place- who is this in collaboration with?

There is monitoring in place. All vaccine data are recorded in a database and de-identified data will be shared with the Netherlands.

5. For the vaccines – who will be collaborating with- the CDC or RIVM? Will our vaccines be accepted for travel in America and vice versa.

We are collaborating with the RIVM. St. Maarten has the Pfizer vaccine which is the exact same vaccine being offered in the USA.

6. What is the 70% based on for herd immunity?

This is benchmark.

7. Forced isolation or quarantine. How will this be enforced? If one does not adhere to the law will this have to go via the prosecutor's office?

this is a general question/remark, depending which article is breached it may or may not have to go via the public prosecutors office.

8. What is the consequence of not putting COVID-19 in category A?

Most important consequence would be that government has no legal basis to require that medical professionals (physicians/ labs) inform CPS about (suspected) infections This leaves CPS in the dark how to combat covid and poses a big public health threat for the people. Also government cannot enforce involuntary isolation and quarantine, mandatory medical assessment / medical supervision and the beroepsverbod.

Also no basis for entry requirements airport and harbor (enforcement by Minister possible if immediate action required).

9. Have there been any studies to show that anyone who took the vaccine became positive?

Although some vaccine side effects are similar to the symptoms of COVID-19, the vaccine will not give you COVID-19.

MP Wescott Williams:

1. IS there anything that this legislation provides that was not possible under the MR besides the isolation?

No there is not.

2. Is everyone allowed and encouraged to register now even though you fall in a category that will receive the vaccine at a later date?

Yes- everyone is encouraged to register to receive the vaccine.

3. What are the timelines for each group that will be vaccinated? When will we move to the larger category?

This is dependent on how many persons are registered within the first priority groups. The Ministry is in discussion with the RIVM to assess whether deviations can be made if we have completed vaccination of those registered in the first priority group and whether the option exists to proceed on the next grouping

4. Persons are requested to indicate underlying conditions. What exactly does one have to indicate? Is it a medical condition? Is it expected that everyone would have to understand what is meant by this question?

Persons are requested to indicate if they have any [underlying] medical conditions. This is not a dropdown option, however, a free text field where persons can list any conditions they have. At the appointment time these underlying conditions will be discussed/assessed before the vaccine is administered.

5. Registration to be vaccinated. How is the Ministry ensuring privacy and safeguarding of this information?

Ministry VSA is working with ICT and utilizing existing registration systems currently being used within government. These platforms are secure.

- 6. From the total amount of vaccines that are available for the Caribbean part of the kingdom, what is the amount that SXM will be receiving? Is it based on an amount per island or just a total amount and islands can make use of this based on need?**

The distribution calculation is based on 85% of the population, as I indicated earlier the population size used is 59,000.

- 7. Can vaccinations start on February 22? In the total provided – Dutch Caribbean. Have they taken an amount per island? What amount was taken into consideration for St. Maarten?**

The vaccinations started at WYC and SMMC on Monday February 22nd. We will be receiving enough vaccines to vaccinate up to 85% of our population.

- 8. Are we ready and able the minute the vaccinations get here? Are we ready for all locations?**

Vaccinations have already started for the healthcare workers and for persons aged 60 and over. Not all vaccination locations will be ready at once. CPS will commence public vaccinations on March 1 and after evaluation, there will be discussions on how and when to roll out at the additional help desk locations (Dutch Quarter, Cole Bay).

MP Romou

- 1. Shut ins and elderly. Persons who may not have opportunity to register online. What are our plans?**

Persons who do not have means to register online can fill out a paper form which is available at doctors' offices, the GAB, select pharmacies. Persons can also call CPS for assistance.

- 2. Is there an entity monitoring the person between first dose and second dose?**

Individuals will be able to register through the online portal any adverse effects experienced after vaccination. We encourage persons to contact their doctors if they experience any additional adverse events hours/days after vaccination. Alternatively, people who do not have a doctor but have concerns can call CPS.

MP Marlin

- 1. Is there a plan to come with an emergency law to ensure that the situation at the LU will not be repeated?**

a draft Ordinance is currently under review.

- 2. What is government's general feedback about the vaccine?**

Based on the survey results, most persons were apprehensive about receiving the vaccine, however, a follow up survey will be executed to re-assess public sentiment.

3 What are plans if persons don't want to vaccinate? What do we do with the vaccine? What was our choice based on? What is selection based on or was it on what was offered?

Vaccines will be supplied based on demand. This will be based on amongst other things the amount of persons registered . If the demand is poor and vaccines are not being administered timely, we risk losing additional doses that were earmarked to be sent.

MP Duncan:

1. All vaccines are rolled out when benefits outweigh the risks. Will the VMT monitor and evaluate on decisions needed. Will directives come from the Netherlands?

The VMT will work closely with the RIVM on any directives, however, close monitoring and evaluating is being done regularly. The VMT reports regularly to Minister VSA and the RIVM, however, ultimately decisions taken locally will be communicated to all necessary parties.

2. Based on the department's experience, are there proposed changes to the structure of the Ministry to mitigate future risks? Changes to the institutions?

At the end of 2020, CPS received endorsement from the COM to start to restructure. This restructuring process has started with CPS conducting a needs assessment and outlining goals for positions/vacancies needed to achieve the tasks outlined in the public health ordinance.

MP Brison:

1. Was it due to antigen testing that MP Ottley was telling us?

MP Ottley advocated for antibody testing- not the antigen test.

2. How many antigen tests have been administered on St. Maarten?

This figure is not known as antigen tests are being administered by several doctors and laboratories on the island. CPS is still in the process of validating the efficacy of using antigen tests as a screening tool. Preliminary results of our study indicate that the Abbott test only has acceptable performance among symptomatic people.

3. Why are labs the only ones included when CDC requires various entities to administer the tests.

The guideline for the testing is based on the Healthcare Institutions Ordinance and the Public Health Ordinance, which are both supervised and enforced by the Inspectorate. The guideline does not change the law or create new legislation: it explains how the norms incorporated in these laws are interpreted by the Inspectorate in accordance with international standards to ensure a) reliability of the test results / quality of care and b) availability of reliable test data to CPS / compliance with the public health ordinance while at the same time making certain that US tourist avail of test results that are in accordance with the CDC Order, allowing them to return home.

The Guideline was published in the National Gazette 2021 no 3.

4. Is a policy going to be placed for the conditions of mandatory isolation/quarantine e.g Article 57 with the bestuursdwang. ?

Art. 57: Bestuursdwang is limited only to certain situations as described in art. 23 and 46. Only in these cases the minister can apply bestuursdwang and has to follow the procedures described in the ordinance.

As bestuursdwang is limited to certain situations described in the law, there is no room for additional policies for the airport at the moment since protocols for arrival are already in place via a ministerial regulation that was published last year. Costs for testing is not for the airport. The measures the airport has to implement are clearly described in the law under article 40 sub 2 and the ministerial regulation.

Inspectorate can use its own tools described in the Inspectorate Ordinance.

5. In relation to additional policies regarding isolation: there is no legal basis. Article 20 does not constitute a legal basis for a 'general involuntary isolation policy to set criteria' the criteria are set in the law itself. Only the model described in article 20 can be used when developing a decree mandatory isolation

Buncamper:

1. Why are we being instructed to go with what the RIVM states?

RIVM did not decide for SXM who will go first, however, the ministries of health of the Dutch Caribbean followed the advice of international and regional health advisory bodies when defining priority groups.

While I understand the cultural aspect that has an impact on our population, decision making, we are still as a country expected to function based on mutual agreements made with our kingdom partners.

As Minister I was unaware that this invitation was sent however, please accept my apologies for this misunderstanding.

Please take note that MPs are not excluded, they have to fit the criteria of the relevant priority groups.

2. Where did the number come from? Did the RIVM use this number for the vaccine?

Our information was obtained through the census registry along with NGOs and other organizations who closely work with undocumented persons on the island.

3. Do schools have the right to deny access to children not tested or vaccinated? The COVID vaccine at this moment is not intended for persons under age 18.

4. Data collection in between doses- who is holding this data?

CPS is holding the data.

5. Which vaccine is the best for persons with underlying conditions? We will get back to you on this answer in writing.

MP Romou:

1. Why was June the deadline? This is related to the start of hurricane season. Consensus was reached amongst the kingdom islands to finalize this project in order for us to prepare for hurricane season.

2. What happens if 70% not reached by June? This would be unfortunate but we will continue with the vaccination program.

MP Wescott-Williams

1. Does the Ministry have any indication as to what the number of uninsured persons is at this time? At this moment, we do not have this latest figure, however, we will get back to you in writing with the answer.

2. What is your current preventive health program amidst the pandemic? We continue to encourage persons to maintain a healthy lifestyle. There are plans to roll out a preventative plan with our health and social agencies.

MP Gumbs:

1. **What is registration at? Has there been an uptake in registration since the last time we were here?**

Yes there has been an uptick in registration. We are currently at 4700 registered.

MP Ottley:

1. **60,000 seems low. Yes- the number is based on the 18+ population and not on the entire population.**
2. **Would the amount of positive cases already lead us to herd immunity?**
No it does not.

MP Emmanuel:

1. **Has Min VSA taken the vaccine?** No, however, I have registered for the vaccine. I will get vaccinated when I am eligible.
2. **If it is not proven to stop the spread. Why should a relatively healthy person get vaccinated?**
Getting vaccinated will limit the possibility for disease transmission.
3. **Who is the RIVM- what authority do they have? Do they have an island in SMX?** RIVM is the public health institute of the kingdom. No there is no office on island.
4. **Does the govt have a system to track deaths related to COVID vaccine?**
Yes- we have an electronic patient system to register any adverse events.

MP Pantophlet:

1. **Is the vaccine mandatory?**
No, the vaccine is not mandatory at this moment in time.
2. **When was the timeframe or how did they show that it was most effective in the seniors?**
Based on studies and current evidence it was shown that after the second dose, Pfizer for example was 95% effective after the second dose.

MP Romou:

1. **Does it have to be the same vaccine between first and second dose?**
Yes.

MP Buncamper:

1. **Can we get a presentation on vaccines?**