

Dear Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Commission,

I read on the website of the Lower House of Parliament that 22 January 2020 will once again be the date of a procedural meeting of your Commission. I think it would be a good time to catch up with you again. Moreover, it is almost two years ago that the intervention of the central government took place in February 2018.

This last fact, in particular, has given rise to some rumours on the island: there are said to be personnel changes in the Government Secretariat in the air. Although I do not like to get involved with rumours, it is, of course, an apt peg to bring to your attention once again that the provision of information from the local government to the Statian population is virtually non-existent. I don't know if I've ever told you the so called *mushroom routine* (was once given to me in a former work environment); it seems to me to give a concise account of how the information provision here on the island goes: "*keep them in the dark and feed them with shit*".

In the agenda of the procedural meeting I see at the end - under item 14: overview of unplanned KR activities - St. Eustatius mentioned twice but with a disappointing priority. So be it. I have to learn to live with that. Nevertheless, I would like to take this opportunity to bring a few points to your renewed attention.

On your initiative, a comparative study has been made into an optimal relationship between St. Eustatius (or broader: the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom) and the "motherland" European Netherlands. The comparison concerned the way in which, in addition to the Netherlands, Denmark, France and the United Kingdom, the relationship with their overseas territories is maintained. After the publication of the report, however, I no longer heard any developments.

Another point concerns the financial infrastructure on our island. Six months ago, the Ministry of Finance and PriceWaterhouseCoopers published a number of documents on this subject. Wherever further discussions may be held (BES bank versus NL banks, euro or at least the US dollar, rolling out BSN's about the Caribbean Netherlands), it has become deafeningly quiet around this subject.

Another point of attention concerns air connections. A neat report with recommendations, aimed at the public and regular air connections based on PSO's, has seen the light of day. Based on this, I see the possibility of making a balanced 'business case' for cost-covering air connections with the Leeward Islands when this is seen in conjunction with the periodically necessary 'medical flights'. But this subject also seems to have fallen off the consultation table.

I recently informed you about developments in the field of public health and education. You have received a copy of my observations, sent to the Committees of the House of Representatives concerning VWS and OCW respectively. I hope that these observations will lead to desired changes in policy or administration. I await... (what else can I do?).

These are just a few "larger" subjects on which I would like to see more insight into concrete developments. The fact that "closer to home" progress has not yet been made with the road renovation project may not be something that results in deaths or injuries, but I wonder what fuss would have been made in The Hague if similar projects in the European Netherlands had

made the same "progress".

And so the general feeling of being a second-class Dutchman (i.e. inhabitants of St. Eustatius) is only given more nourishment. Moreover, the inhabitants are not consulted or even informed about these (non-)developments. Well, I get the feeling that you would also like to see things differently. I hope so. This hope for "better" is the light I would like to see in the proverbial tunnel.

Let me conclude by wishing you a fruitful consultation in which I hope that in the new year 2020, which we have in front of us, truly concrete developments can be welcomed on the various topics mentioned above.

Kind regards,

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