



## **Quality Sweepers and Maintenance B.V. Files Complaint at Ombudsman**

“Questions solid waste tender 2021-2026 procedures, process and guidelines”

**St. Maarten based local cleaning company Quality Sweepers and Maintenance B.V. (QSM) has filed an official complaint at St. Maarten Ombudsman. QSM was one of the 23 companies that participated in the Solid Waste Tender 2021-2026 held on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021.**

**The publication of a press release by MP Christopher Emmanuel on February 21, 2021, raised many doubts and questions, resulting in QSM losing all confidence in the bidding process and procedures. There is an old saying “Where there is smoke there is fire”. This has led to QSM sending multiple letters to the Minister of VROMI dated February 23rd and March 19th with questions and expressing great concerns about the reliability and transparency of the tender procedures, in which it was also requested to immediately freeze and halt all operational activities related to the Solid Waste Tender and allocation of parcels until clarity could be provided on this, to date no answers to the questions were received from the Ministry of VROMI.**

**Despite all efforts to receive clarity about the tender process, on March 17<sup>th</sup> it was made known by the Minister of VROMI via the media that the tendering of the solid waste contracts has been completed and that 5 contractors have been awarded 5-year contracts for 7 parcels. The main question that immediately arose was, how could one contractor be awarded multiple parcels while it was clearly stated in (bold) the Terms of Reference that “One parcel can be awarded per family per household”**

The minutes of the Jan 8th information meeting showed that the above provision was removed. The question is who removed this vital provision, why was it removed, and did the Council of Ministers approve this change? QSM assumes that in a government vetted Terms of Reference vital changes such as this, can only be made possible through the approval of the Council of Ministers. Without the said approval this could be deemed illegal.

After the terrible storm Irma in 2017, St. Maarten and its people again suffered greatly, in 2020 to present now a result of the pandemic. It would be quite baffling, if it was found that the person(s) whom we have elected to represent and protect our interests has removed such an essential clause. In these unprecedented times, government should be responsible to create gateways to facilitate economical boost, job opportunities and prospects whereby more families can be fed. [SEP]

Experience and strategy, aimed towards revolutionizing the cleaning industry has resulted in Quality Sweepers delivering a high-quality bid book with a well-calculated, highly competitive, and realistic pricing for Parcel 1 (Philipsburg and Point Blanche area). The Ministry and its advising bidding committee did not award QSM with the Parcel that was tendered on, being Parcel one. Taking into consideration, the thorough research and time invested into compiling QSM's comprehensive bid book, this result is extremely uncomprehensive.

Based on the bid prices for parcel 1, which was made public during the closed door tender on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the tender was awarded to the third highest bidder in the selected price category. The question then arises why the highest bidder was chosen, given that QSM was demonstrably the lowest in the same price category? In a time where Government is facing obvious financial challenges one would assume that it would be prudent to explore the most favorable price in combination with keen evaluation of the contractor's mandatory documents and its presented bid book.

Quality Sweepers has made its name by taking the cleaning of St. Maarten's biggest cultural event “Carnival” to a next level, in the village by implementing a seamless system to eradicate the flies problem that has been plaguing the village for years, improving the hygienic aspect of the festival and remedied the previous eye sore on the streets with its revolutionize street sweepers by cleaning the route immediately after the parades, usually leaving the streets in a cleaner state than it was before.

A public tender should be fair and transparent if this is not the case, it then becomes an uneven playing field making it favorable for some and creates a disadvantage for others. QSM took part in the Solid Waste Tender 2021-2026 with the hope to create an immaculate environment for Residents and Visitors alike, through the company's ability to produce high quality work together with its dedicated trained staff and modern machinery. QSM remains focused on one of its objectives “365 Days A Year, A Cleaner St. Maarten”