



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
Ministry for Health & Environment
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Gibraltar

PRESS RELEASE

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'Mrs Ellul Hammond has a very short memory,' said Dr Cortes

Mrs Ellul Hammond has a very short memory, as it seems she cannot recall the detail given in answer to her question at last month's session of Parliament. Dr Cortes clearly explained that his comment was made in a wider context than just health care and referred to the policy of the GSD Government regarding charitable contributions. In its latter years in power, it did not encourage contributions from charities.

In his reply, Dr Cortes referred to his own personal experience prior to entering politics when he was directly discouraged by a Minister at the time from trying to obtain charitable donations in respect of his professional work at the Alameda Gardens because, he was informed, that was the former Chief Minister's policy. This, he was told, extended to other areas of Government beyond environment.

It was only after a great deal of persuasion that the former Government finally agreed to such sponsorship. Indeed, offers by one major charity of funding a full programme of refurbishment of children's playgrounds was rejected by the Government of the time and ended up being paid for by the tax payer. Another offer of educational material was later redirected to La Linea as a result of this policy.

Minister for Health, Dr Cortes stated, "I am talking about personal recollection of meetings that I have attended both with the former Government and with the charity in question. I do not think it fair to reveal more details in public but will gladly inform Mrs Ellul Hammond so that she can obtain confirmation from former Government Ministers and the former Chief Minister. He knows I am saying the truth and he knows that I know. Allowing his Opposition Member to insist on this point is unfair on her, and playing on her limited experience."

The Opposition Member needs to be less sensitive to statements about her, especially as it is she who invariably starts this type of confrontation with accusations against Government Ministers. And when she suggests her integrity is being called into doubt she must remember that her leader, when in Government, made it a habit of questioning the integrity of Opposition Members.

The main point, however, is that this Government welcomes and encourages the contribution of charities and other NGOs and will work with them as never before to benefit the community as a whole, not just in health, but in all other areas.

It seems to be becoming a habit for the GSD Opposition, when they fail to perform in Parliament, to repeat the very same questions in press releases a week or two later. It may well be that they are running out of things to say.