

malta today



Evarist Bartolo

Sunday, 23 September 2007 – issue 411

www.maltatoday.com.mt

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Demoted health promotion chief cites Church intrusion on condoms

KARL SCHEMBRI

MARIO Spiteri, the well-known public face of the health promotion department, will no longer head the government's public awareness campaigns since he was unexpectedly removed from his position last Wednesday.

Contacted by MaltaToday shortly after he was informed he was out of a job, Spiteri said he had "very strongly-based suspicions" that the invisible hand of the Church was behind his removal after he stood his ground against promoting abstinence exclusively as the only means of

prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.

"I had a serious clash with the church's commission for youth (Kummissjoni Djoesana Zgħazagh – KDZ) when they asked for our department's funding to finance their campaign promoting sexual abstinence," Spiteri said.

"I was under pressure to give in to the KDZ's insistent requests for funds but I stuck to my position. My first allegiance is towards the public, and promoting abstinence is something from another era. Who's going to buy that? I couldn't do that and sleep comfortably when the World



Spiteri's cessation: The man behind the government's smoking cessation and sexual health programmes is out of a job

Health Organisation clearly lists abstinence alongside sexual loyalty and condoms as the best ways to avoid STDs."

Spiteri was shown the door through an official interviewing procedure as the health division is undergoing a restructuring process that will merge the health promotion department with the disease surveillance unit that was already headed by Dr Charmaine Gauci.

Dr Gauci will now be replacing Spiteri also on the health promotion front while he will return as a normal department employee. "It is effectively a demotion," Spiteri said. "It's a vote of no

confidence in me. Now they have merged disease surveillance with health promotion. Unfortunately, while we're told that prevention should be more important than cure, it has always been the Cinderella of public health."

Health Minister Louis Deguara said he had no information about any pressure related to the department's sexual health campaigns.

"Nobody in his right mind would base a sexual health campaign exclusively on abstinence," Deguara said yesterday night. "Spiteri gave a very valid contribution and I never

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Restaurant to be developed at Kennedy Grove

JAMES DEBONO

WORKS to construct a new restaurant and other amenities at Kennedy Grove are in full swing even if the Malta Environment and Planning Authority is set to decide on the latest plans for this government project tomorrow.

MEPA claims that the new building is covered by a permit issued in 2003. But MEPA's Development Control Commission is to meet tomorrow to approve "additions" to the original permit for the development of a "recreational landscaped and afforested area with facilities" which also includes a restaurant.

While originally the restaurant was meant to cover 55 square metres, the new amenity which includes a restaurant covers 360 square metres, according to MEPA.

The latest application to develop the restaurant and the landscaped area was presented by permanent secretary in the Ministry for the Environment and Rural Development, Dr Philip von Brockdorff.

The application presented in March calls for "planning consent for additions and alterations to the original permit."

According to MEPA, "the additions and alterations are being favourably recommended."

The original proposal, as approved in 2003, was for a utility building incorporating a small restaurant occupying 55 square metres, a store, first aid room and toilets.

But the new proposal, which is being favourably considered by MEPA, is for a "cafeteria and an

amenities block occupying a total floor space area of 360 metres square".

The case officer report for the application presented in 2007 states that the proposed amenity building's components still include a "restaurant with additional seating areas and a service/store room", as approved in 2003.

But it also states that "the layout and design for this building has been changed."

MaltaToday asked the Ministry for the Environment and Rural Affairs why it was proposing a restaurant in a recreational park, but no reply was forthcoming from the Ministry by the time of going to print.

Originally, two car park areas were proposed, the largest of which included 112 parking spaces and a smaller car park occupying 16 parking spaces.

In the new permit, parking spaces are reduced to 37.

Sant's speech embarrasses Labour



Sant: Disastrous performance

KARL SCHEMBRI

WHAT was meant to be a clever ploy to get equal media attention as the rival governing party on Independence Day was turned into a "veritable PR disaster" by Labour leader Alfred Sant, according to party functionaries in

the MLP's highest echelons.

Labour's officials were outraged at their leader's abysmal performance at the so-called Massfest in Birzebbuga Thursday night, shortly before the prime minister gave an upbeat confidence-exuding hour-long speech on the Granaries in Floriana.

Broadcast live on One TV, Sant's speech was characterised by bizarre body language and a lugubrious tone of voice that stood in stark contrast with the positive message of change he was supposed to convey.

Even the live transmission was marked by mediocre direction, with cameras at

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Nhar ta' Tnejn 8:30pm
fuq Smash TV mill-24 ta' Settembru

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