

2.13 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding the current gap in low income support provision :

In view of the fact that the Citizens' Fund will not be in place until next year, as part of the low income support scheme, and that the Community Savings and Credit Limited has run out of emergency funding, what action, if any, is the Minister taking to address this current gap in provision?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

I have to admit that I am not clear what the Deputy means by a "gap in provision" as my understanding is that the Citizens' Fund will replace the existing Parish welfare lump sum provisions when that system is in place.

2.13.1 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren:

Well, a government provision is for anybody requiring emergency funds, and I would ask if the Minister would accept that we are in a transition period between the old Parish welfare system and the new low income support scheme, and that there is no uniform adequate approach at present in place for the Connétable to help those who are experiencing sudden financial problems?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I accept and agree that we are in a transitional period, but I am not aware of any gap or unfairness in existing parochial arrangements.

2.13.2 Deputy J.J. Huet of St. Helier:

Is the Minister aware that there is a plan to start-up a community bank for this type of hardship fund, but they are obviously trying to raise funds and it will cover this type of emergency when it starts?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The business plan of the Community Savings Bank is clearly one for them to decide for themselves, and I am well aware of the fact that they have been looking for premises for some time and are trying to get maybe a higher profile for their activities. But I do not think their *raison d'être* is to replace the income support system or the Parish welfare system, but rather to act as a savings bank to help people who perhaps will not have normal access to commercial banking facilities.

2.13.3 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren:

I was given this name by Citizens Advice Bureau, and I understood that they would - and did normally in the past - have provision for emergency funding, but do not have any now. But there is not a uniform approach by the Connétables when somebody needs emergency funding. I would ask - the document today we have on our desks, Taking Stock of Deprivation - whether the Minister accepts that there is current uniform definite access - if somebody really needs money - to getting a small amount of money? Would he accept that this means that those on low incomes who suddenly have a situation of extreme hardship may well fall victim, as suggested in this document, to loan sharks?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I think the Deputy may be confused with various issues here. Certainly, people on low incomes tend to have to go to extreme measures to obtain funding, and it can include

credit cards and loan sharks and that sort of thing, but all I would do is reiterate that there is an income support system in place at the moment - it is called a Parish system - and that is in transition towards the income support system. If there are concerns that the Deputy has about the existing Parish welfare system arrangements, I think they should be directed to the appropriate channels.