

3.10 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Chief Minister regarding the implementation of ‘States’ approval of Assistant Ministers’ appointments’ (P.53/2016): [1(268)]

Will the Chief Minister give an update on the implementation of P.53/2016 and advise when he will be bringing a proposition for debate on how the next Assembly will elect Assistant Ministers?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

Informal discussions have been held with the Chairmen’s Committee, Privileges and Procedures Committee, Assistant Ministers and Ministers on draft proposals in response to P.53/2016. Officers are now taking into account the feedback received and I am aiming for the proposals to be lodged before the summer recess?

3.10.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Would the Chief Minister confirm that the proposals so far have not found favour with anybody on the Chairmen’s Committee, P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) and I am not sure about his Assistant Ministers or Ministers? Can he confirm that his proposals need to be brought to all of the Assembly, as soon as possible, to either endorse, or rule out?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

We all know in this Assembly that changes to the electoral system and changes to the machinery of government do not find universal favour. I have no doubt, and that is the feedback I have received about these proposals as well. She is absolutely right. They need to come from this Assembly. We need to decide whether we want to change our system of government, so that it is fit for purpose, so it is continually improved, so that it can show accountability and efficiency in the way that it operates and this Assembly will need to decide that.

3.10.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister agree that the number of Assistant Ministers should simply be abolished and that the number of Ministers should be increased, as necessary, to cover any standalone portfolios, therefore eradicating the problem of what is an Assistant Minister - which of them have proper roles, which of them do not - and whether the Assembly gets to vote for them, or not?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

That is an option: junior Ministers within a department. We do not need to create extra departments that Ministers, who have responsibility within existing departments, or even streamline departments is an option. But, we will hear many people talking, I have got no doubts, about many and different options. What I want to see is the division removed in this Assembly, so that those people who want to be involved in government can appropriately use their talents in government.

3.10.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Chief Minister has referred to change within government and outside of government. But does he not accept that part of the problem is that we fail to get a strong steer from the Chief Minister and his office as to which way he would see as the way forward in terms of reform of the States?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

They will be seeing a very strong steer when it comes to the machinery of government proposals that I will put before this Assembly prior to the summer recess.

3.10.4 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré of St. Lawrence:

Has the Minister taken account of the recent review, by a member of the House of Lords, of the Isle of Man system? The reason I am focusing on the Isle of Man system is that that is roughly where the proposals from the Chief Minister are likely to take us. Just for his information, the review by the member of the House of Lords of the Isle of Man suggests that their present system risks real reputational damage.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Perhaps it is a good thing that our system has not been reviewed.

3.10.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Chief Minister put on record his support for the principle of what is called the Troy Rule and that, not only should it be preserved, but the Troy Rule should be increased, so that the Ministers and Members of Government, including Assistant Ministers, should not count for more than a third of the overall Assembly?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

No, I will not. The Deputy, I suspect, has been part of some of the informal consultations. If he has not he has obviously heard about them. Those proposals do propose changing that particular rule.

3.10.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I would just like to get the Chief Minister to confirm that, before lodging - and I do say before lodging - that the Assembly is given a briefing on the new proposal, so we can have a full and frank discussion to see if any of them find favour with the Members of the Assembly?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Of course I undertake to do that and I have got no doubt at all that the Scrutiny Panel will also wish to scrutinise the proposals.