

2018.04.09

2 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour of the Minister for Economic Development, Sport and Culture regarding grants to small businesses in order that they might comply with the Discrimination (Disability) Regulations: [OQ.63/2018]

Given the Discrimination (Disability) Regulations will come into effect from September 2018, will the Minister be awarding grants to small businesses to help them upgrade their premises in order to comply with the regulations?

Senator L.J. Farnham (The Minister for Economic Development, Sport and Culture):

In short, there are no plans currently to provide such assistance. Having said that, the regulations do not contain a specific requirement to upgrade premises to achieve compliance with the law until September 2020 so there is time to work with business to ensure that they can meet their commitments. I would say that I am inclined, and whoever is in the new Assembly, I hope will feel comfortable in offering support for businesses, not just with this but other areas of social responsibility we are putting upon them.

3.2.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

While I fully support the disability regulations, is the Minister aware ... also I must declare that I am a board member of EYECAN, the Jersey Blind Society. I fully support the new regulations coming in but is the Minister aware of how much a cost and the burden of this is going to be on small businesses and does he think there should be assistance in the future?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I thought I alluded to that but, just to be clear, businesses will simply be expected to do more than what is reasonable improving the accessibility of buildings. It is important but many reasonable adjustments can be inexpensive and relatively easy to implement and it is expected that the majority of changes will be relatively straightforward. Having said that, there are some that will not be and I do support, in principle, support for businesses to help to achieve these standards.

3.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

On a wider base does the Minister have a budget for assisting with industries' adjustments in the light of the Discrimination Law?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Not in the current budget but, of course, that will be a matter for the next Minister and the next Assembly during the process, but I would also refer the Deputy to the finance and manpower statement that was part of the regs when they were approved and he will see that some money has been put aside to help businesses in an advisory capacity.

3.2.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I thank the Minister for his reply which is very constructive. Will he also come down on businesses that are refusing access to guide and other assistance dogs under the Discrimination Act?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I think the law will do that but I think many forward-thinking businessmen and women realise that by adhering to these rules they are creating business opportunities for themselves.