

20.11.02

12 Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding the work being undertaken to ensure Jersey's supply chain was prepared for the post-Brexit period. (OQ.299/2020)

Will the Minister provide details of the work being undertaken to ensure that Jersey's supply chain is prepared for the post-Brexit period, whether there is a deal between the U.K. and E.U. (European Union) or not?

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

The Government have undertaken significant work with Ports of Jersey, retailers, logistics providers, Condor and other carriers of freight to ensure we are prepared to minimise any disruption brought about by Brexit. Approximately 95 per cent of everything we eat, drink and consume arrives by sea. Air freight carries the rest and is more secure. U.K. retail networks acknowledge the lifeline nature of our supply, its routing and its importance. Logistics companies can and have allocated extra warehousing space near the port that we can use to stockpile non-perishable goods and supplies if that becomes necessary. The Condor fleet has resilience. Dry-dock maintenance this winter was brought forward so that the vessels are ready for the post-Brexit period. The fleet includes the Arrow which is on standby to work alongside the Goodwill freighter and the Clipper.

4.12.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I thank the Minister for his answer. Just to push him a little bit further, at the Beyond Brexit event recently held, and this is a quote: "Disruption could be intensified if there is extra pressure from freight links as a result of COVID and bad weather over the winter but all efforts by the Government and the supply chain partners meant that the potential for such disruption had been kept to a minimum." Could he just open that up a little bit? What does that mean, what has been achieved and what is the disruption minimum?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

At the Beyond Brexit event held recently, several sessions outlined the robustness and resilience of our arrangements and that was a very useful exercise. I just revert to the answers I gave. We have well-tested our contingency plans, not only during our response to the COVID pandemic earlier this year but when we were preparing for a possible no-deal Brexit we tested those contingencies 3 times in 2019 and once again we did the same for COVID. Then I refer the Deputy back to my previous answers where we look at how we have arranged additional warehousing and ensuring that the shipping fleet is in good shape and ready to act accordingly.

4.12.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture would he reassure people on the Island on low incomes who may struggle if there is an increase in prices - and in particular it may well emerge as a removal of 3-for-2 deals, for example, on staples - that there will be support from Government, as there has been support for businesses during the pandemic, that if prices go up due to Brexit there will be some protection in place for people who may well struggle to get through, given COVID and Brexit as 2 issues?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I cannot, on behalf of the Government, give cast iron guarantees that we will provide financial support to businesses hit by Brexit in the same way as we have had to give support to businesses hit by COVID and the work we have done to protect jobs and livelihoods is ongoing. Since the U.K. announcement at the weekend, we are now stepping up our efforts to make sure that the support that is running through the winter will be appropriate. Brexit is an added challenge for us and currently we are not expecting to see disruption in the supply and disruption chains, of course. If we continue to see smooth movement of goods, that should minimise the impact on the price of staples. Of course a lot depends on the deal that is or is not done between Britain and the E.U. and what tariffs may or may not apply. It is fair to say that if no deal is done and we start having to work with tariffs we can expect to see inflation in our staple goods, and we have that very much at the forefront of our planning.

4.12.3 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

We also heard at the conference last week that fuel suppliers have given assurances that stocks would not be affected. Can you just give us some detail on how those assurances were given and how we can all be assured?

Deputy L.J. Farnham:

I cannot off the top of my head. I will find that information out and revert to the Deputy.