

23.11.07

**1 Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée of St. Helier South of the Minister for Social Security regarding the repatriation of bodies (OQ.215/2023)**

Will the Minister advise whether there is any government funding available, other than the death grant, to repatriate the body of a person, with no personal assets, who passes away in Jersey, to their country of origin?

**Deputy E. Millar of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity (The Minister for Social Security):**

I thank the Deputy for her question. Yes, I can confirm that if there are no funds available to the family then government funding may be available to support the repatriation of a body back to Jersey or from Jersey to a ... sorry, back to Jersey or from Jersey to the person's home country.

**2.1.1 Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

If I was to say to the Minister that I do know of such cases, would the Minister be happy to talk to me further outside and find out if further help can be available?

**Deputy E. Millar:**

Yes, I would be very happy to talk to the Deputy because we are not aware of any cases where repatriation of a body is not happening because of lack of funds.

**2.1.2 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central:**

Can the Minister advise what the procedure would be for somebody in that situation who may need access to those funds?

**Deputy E. Millar:**

Traditionally, when someone dies in a Parish, it rests with the Constable of the Parish to take responsibility for the funeral or the repatriation, where there is no family or no next of kin.

[9:45]

The Constable would normally do that. If there is insufficient money in the deceased person's estate to cover the costs, then the Constable can apply to the Minister for reimbursement. I think that is done through normal channels in Income Support, and that will be treated in the same way as a claim for funeral costs. Where there are families, the families can also apply for a special payment for funeral costs, and that is paid by way of a grant in a sum of up to £2,800.

**2.1.3 Deputy C.S. Alves:**

Can the Minister just clarify, does the Constable get in touch with the family or those around the deceased person or are those who are around the person that is deceased expected to make contact with the Constable? If it is the latter, how are they supposed to be made aware of that?

**Deputy E. Millar:**

I am not aware of the mechanics of that, but I believe if there is a death of someone in the Parish where there is no family then the police or relevant authorities will raise the matter with the Constable. Because if there is a family we would expect the family to either go to the Constable or speak to Income Support.

#### **2.1.4 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier Central:**

I wonder if the Minister might explain under what regulations or law these arrangements can be made.

#### **Deputy E. Millar:**

I believe it is a matter of Ministerial discretion. Under the income support legislation, I have discretion to make a payment in these circumstances.

#### **2.1.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

It could happen that the person is not eligible for income support. In that case, what happens? Can I repeat my question, under what regulation or order is this relationship between the Minister and the Constable enacted?

#### **Deputy E. Millar:**

I cannot quote you the exact regulation or order, but I believe I have Ministerial discretion, and I am not aware that there is any problem at the moment with repatriation of people to their home country or back to Jersey.

#### **Deputy G.P. Southern:**

And the eligibility for income support?

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

You have had a supplementary.

#### **2.1.6 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier South:**

Will the Minister indicate if there is any kind of limit on how much funding would be made available to pay for a repatriation?

#### **Deputy E. Millar:**

I think if there is someone locally, we have costs of up to £2,800. I will answer Deputy Southern's question: it is not relevant if the person is not eligible for income support if they are in Jersey, including as a seasonal worker. Funding is available to repatriate the body if there are no other funds available. I am not sure if I answered Deputy Mézec's question because I went back to the first one. £2,800, but I imagine if it was more then we would find the funds to pay more. But, as I say, I am really not aware there are any issues with this at the moment.

#### **2.1.7 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:**

There may not be any issues with this at the moment but I do recall some years ago having to arrange what was known as a pauper's funeral for someone in my Parish who passed away with no funds and with no family. Although it is not something that happens on a regular basis, I wonder if the Minister will commit to working with the Constables to identify a process that can be referred to immediately in such a situation. Similarly for the repatriation, either to Jersey or from Jersey, there should be something readily available for everyone to refer to. Will she commit to providing that as well, please? Certainly in the first instance, working with the Constables.

#### **Deputy E. Millar:**

If the Comité des Constables would like to raise with me any issues, I am very happy to consider them. I cannot speak for something that happened years ago, but I do understand it is normally the

responsibility of the Parish Constables to pay for pauper's funerals, and that the Constables normally do that and have always done that. But I am happy to have a discussion with them, if someone would like to bring that forward to me.

**Deputy B. Ward of St. Clement:**

May we lift the défaut on Deputy Stephenson, please?

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Do Members agree the défaut should be raised? The défaut is raised.

**Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:**

I would like to raise the défaut for Deputy Doublet, please.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Are Members content to do so? The défaut is raised.

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

If I may, Sir, you did not give me the opportunity to ask a supplementary of the Minister.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I looked in your direction and you did not seem to be ...

**The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Sorry, I was expecting you to ask me. Beg your pardon. May I ask one?

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Yes.

**2.1.8 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:**

Thank you. The reason that I would like to ask the Minister is because I did ask her whether she was prepared to draw up a process for the repatriation of people to or from Jersey, so that the public and States Members know where to go and know what they are meant to do? It is a very sensitive situation. Again, I am inviting the Minister to work with the Constables because although the Constable is required to arrange the pauper's funerals, we need to know how much money is available from Social Security, et cetera. There is a link between the Parish and the Social Security Department at that time. First of all, will the Minister agree to meet with the Constables and will she provide written procedure for the repatriation?

**Deputy E. Millar:**

As I have said previously, I am happy to work with the Constables, if this is an issue. I am really not aware that this is a problem, that we do not have issues with people being repatriated. The process is that people can speak to Social Security and it will be sorted out. But if people think there is any lack of clarity then, yes, we can certainly put something in place.