

23.12.11.

7. Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Social Security regarding progress on the minimum income standard (OQ.244/2023)

I think we might squeeze a bit more out of this particular question. Further to the adoption of P.78/2022, and her agreement to investigate options to convert the minimum wage to a living wage in Jersey and report back to the Assembly before the end of December 2023, which is now, will the Minister advise what progress has been made, if she has considered the concept of a minimum income standard, and what comparisons will be made with other jurisdictions?

Deputy E. Millar (The Minister for Social Security):

I thank the Deputy for his question. I can confirm the information provided earlier by the Chief Minister that the report set out in P.78 is in the final stages of preparation and will be filed with the Assembly before the end of this year. I can also confirm that the report will include information on the use of minimum income standards by voluntary organisations in other countries and an international summary of living wage campaigns.

2.13.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can I follow that up as well with further information as to what charitable organisations concerned with poverty issues were consulted in arriving at the policy, which we will see at some near future time?

Deputy E. Millar:

I do not recollect which charitable organisations were consulted. I know we have gone to the Employment Forum, which is the right thing to do for matters regarding the minimum wage. I do not recollect how widely our consultation went. It will be clear in the report.

2.13.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister agree that it is difficult to consider issues around the living wage without also considering the issue of living rents?

Deputy E. Millar:

The 2 things are not part of ... rent is not part of my remit and I do not believe the report on the living wage and minimum wage will consider rent.

2.13.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister agree that when reports have come forward looking at those living in relative low income, that one of the biggest stresses to that income is the amount of rent in the homes and accommodation that they have to pay for. Could she explain how indeed they can be decoupled?

Deputy E. Millar:

I think that is a difficult question to answer because in Jersey, aside from the minimum wage, we also have income support and income support will help people who are in rental stress.

2.13.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

The Minister said she could not quite recall what charities might have been consulted with on this work. Is she really not able to recall whether Caritas was engaged with, given that the role they have played on the Island as a leading authority when it comes to this particular campaign and the contacts

that they have with economists elsewhere to calculate what the living wage is? Was their expertise not called upon to help with this review?.

Deputy E. Millar:

There is a very wide question moving between minimum wage and living wage. We have looked at a number of comparisons. I think Caritas is certainly mentioned in the report but I simply ... the work was largely conducted by officers. I am going to suggest it really would be better, given that the report will be here very shortly, for people to wait until they have read the report rather than prejudge its contents.

2.13.5 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I do not think anyone has prejudged the contents. We were trying to find out what the contents are. Would the Minister, therefore, inform the Assembly whether she intends, when that report is published, to engage with Caritas so that they can benefit from their expertise on what might be questions of implementation or how to reach some of the more hard to find people in our community suffering from financial vulnerability? Will she endeavour to make that a matter of priority?

Deputy E. Millar:

Again, I think until the report is out there is not much point in having hypothetical discussions.

The Bailiff

Final supplementary, Deputy?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I feel I cannot squeeze any more out of this question. No, thank you.