

2.2 Deputy R. G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour of the Minister for Social Security regarding the sufficiency of IT systems for the Low Income Support Scheme:

Does the Social Security Department possess sufficient IT systems to enable it to handle the introduction of the Low Income Support Scheme?

Senator P.F. Routier (The Minister for Social Security):

Yes, the Income Support system will be integrated into the existing social security system. As with the introduction of any new benefit - as we are currently doing with the TV licences - it will require a software update. The inception phase is now underway, with the aim of completing this project in time for the introduction of income support in May of 2007.

2.2.1 Deputy R. G. Le Hérissier:

Could the Minister tell us whether, in the last few years in the run up to low income support, that all IT budgets have indeed been on target? Could he identify where there have been problems or slippage and what are the exact additional costs?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The new social security system, which has been in place now and up and running for over a year, had a fixed price contract with that and that was at a cost of £7.2 million. It is quite a large system which has to have everybody's details and all their particulars recorded in an orderly manner and the additional cost, which will be put in for the implementing income support, will be in the region of £1.8 million.

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

In view of his answer, talking about a target date of getting the low income support in place by April next year, is the Minister aware of any problems of obtaining accurate figures relating to income distribution since the income distribution survey has not been repeated and that, in fact, income figures from this year's household expenditure survey are not likely to be available until June?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I am not sure how that relates to this specific, particular subject but the income distribution is going to be updated this year and it is going to influence, obviously, the figures which are brought to this House for approval later on in the year. So, we will be able to have that information available to us to help form our judgment to ensure that the income support system that we bring forward is set at appropriate levels which are affordable.

2.2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Would the Minister give details of exactly how the income distribution data is to be updated since it is quite an extensive survey and took quite a few months in 2002 to do the original survey?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I am advised that the income distribution survey updating will be available for us to help influence our decisions in time for the States to make the decisions it needs to at the end of this year.

2.2.4 Deputy R. G. Le Hérissier:

How did the Minister assure himself that the £7.8 million was indeed value for money and what kind of checks were there in place to ensure that?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The £7.2 million, which was spent on the original system, was obviously audited and we had the assistance of the Computer Services Department and there were obviously value for money considerations with that. We are advised that what we paid as a fixed price contract was very good value for money. In fact, I will go further than that to say that the suppliers of the system put in... it ended up costing them more money than they anticipated, and they obviously did not achieve, as a company, out of it what they were anticipating. We got very good value for money.

2.2.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

May I return to the question of how he envisages the income distribution survey being updated? Will he supply the House with a written reply when he finds out how it will be updated?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Yes.