

2.5 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement of the Minister for Economic Development regarding (j) category licences:

Would the Minister advise whether the number of locals seeking employment, especially school leavers and those completing further education courses, is factored-in to the equation for granting (j) category licence under the Regulation of Undertakings process? If so, what impact, if any, does it have on the amount of licences issued?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf (The Minister for Economic Development):

The short answer is yes. The Housing Minister is responsible, of course, for the Housing Law granting (j) category to employees. I am responsible for the Regulation of Undertakings Law issuing licences for businesses, most on a three-year licence basis. However, we work together as a Migration Advisory Group with an Assistant Minister from the Chief Minister's Department so that we are entirely joined-up. Ensuring local people have jobs and receive training is our top priority. Also opportunities for school leavers is also a key consideration and is frequently discussed and made as a condition of many licences. Unemployment is at its lowest level of some years and locally qualified employment is at its highest level for some years. A standing invitation exists to any Member - including Deputy Baudains - if he would like to come and meet with me at Ministerial time to discuss how we go about this.

2.5.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

Could the Minister, therefore, reassure Members that the previous requirement that employers would make sure that they actively tried - should I say - to procure employees locally, and had a process in place to train up people to replace those that were leaving in the future, that that is not being diluted or allowed to be diluted with the current issuing of (j) category licence?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I should preface the answer by saying it is the legal responsibility of the Housing Minister to issue (j)s but we are entirely joined-up with Deputy Gorst and Senator Le Main and myself. In fact, I would say to the Deputy that in fact we have even fortified what we are doing in terms of encouraging businesses to train. I would go further and say yesterday I had a meeting with the Minister for Education dealing with the Skills Executive; dealing how we are going to be putting in place more conditions on licences to ensure training is put in place for not only (j) categories but also for locally qualified. All businesses have to train. They have to employ local people and I am acutely aware of the importance of job opportunities for school leavers.

2.5.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Can the Minister give us concrete examples of where he has reduced, deferred or withdrawn or not allowed to go forward applications for (j)s and instructed a company to employ local people?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Again, the Deputy will know that I do not issue the (j)s. It is the Housing Minister that does so, but we are entirely joined-up. I would never discuss an individual application on the floor of the Assembly; those are private and confidential. But again I reiterate my offer to both Deputy Le Hérissier and Deputy Baudains to come and see what we are doing. The figures stand for themselves I think. Members will see that the numbers of locally qualified people under the definition of Regulation of Undertakings - those that have been here for more than 5 years - are up. The growth of employment is for locally qualified, more than 5-year resident, population and we are doing it every day. Not only at the Ministerial level but the department. Every day businesses... if you have a (j); if you have a non-qualified; you have got to prove that you have exhausted the supply of locally qualified. Moreover that you trained your locally qualified people, raising productivity; job opportunities for all.

2.5.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Could the Minister confirm then that the number of (j) licences, as a policy issue if he is not able to deal with individuals, is now being reduced because there are many more locally qualified people available?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

I do not think I have to tell the Deputy a third time, I am not legally responsible for (j)s. If he wishes to examine the Housing Minister on the (j) policies, then he can. But it is quite clear, the numbers of (j)s have increased but the overall employment has also increased. (j)s are very difficult to get but we do... if we are expanding into new areas of financial services, in education areas, we need to put new manpower, new brainpower, into the Island to assist the locally qualified market too. I think the figures stand for themselves and show that our policies are working.

2.5.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I believe it is time the Minister called States Members together for a briefing as to what is happening with the immigration policies. But can I ask, while he considers that, if he would extend his personal invitation to me to come to find out what is happening, I certainly do want to know. Can I ask specifically - because of some complaints that I have had - that he will look into whether or not there is any truth in the matter that the accession countries of the European Union who were previously here through a work permit situation, have not accumulated that 5-year residency while they were on their work permit scheme? Surely it would only be justifiable after the accession came into place. People are complaining that part-time work, in particular, is not there for school leavers during holiday time because people from the accession countries are taking these positions. It might be anecdotal; it might not be factual. Will the Minister agree to look into this issue and tell us how those jobs are safeguarded and how those 5-year residencies are established in truth?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

A lot of questions. A massively important issue. I will try and be brief. Of course the standing invitation exists. We have already had - and Deputy Gorst and Senator Le Main will confirm - briefings on population. I do not know whether the Deputy was able to attend at the time but, yes, of course we will. The Council of Ministers is discussing this week a population paper and there is going to be some public debate about the whole issue of population. As far as the accession countries are concerned, I would draw the attention of the Deputy to the Employment Report that we published last week, for the first time reconciling the Regulation of Undertakings numbers with the social security contributions. He can see the numbers of the new accession countries and other nationalities totally reconciled for the first time. As far as job opportunities are concerned for our young people and people in part-time work, I do not think there has ever been a situation where there are more job opportunities for part-time working and we are doing everything we can to ensure that we are bringing together people who want to work with employers. There is more to do but I think that I would say that it is not just would I agree to look into it; we are doing it and we are doing it, I hope, quite well.

2.5.5 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

Would the Minister inform the House how far talks have extended with Social Security in job matching people - locally qualified people - who, under the income support system, will probably be able to do a lot of the jobs that are now done by residents of under 5 years? How many talks have taken place and how many jobs have been identified that could be done by the local workforce?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

What is happening is that we are bringing together the skills development and the job opportunity work that goes on with Education and Social Security and Economic Development. Before, they

used to be three silos - I think it is fair to say - between the three different departments. The Skills Executive work that we are doing - which we discussed only yesterday - is going to bring that together. I agree with the Deputy that there is still more work to be done to bring together employers seeking staff with those staff that are seeking employment, and those discussions are going to be brought forward by dismantling the remaining silos that exist between Social Security, Education and ourselves and putting together... you are going to see some news in the next few weeks of how we intend to fortify our efforts.

2.5.6 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I was delighted with the Minister's response. Delighted because the reconciliation of the Regulation of Undertakings numbers and the Social Security numbers is something I have been asking for for years. I am very delighted that he is looking into the issue. I would very dearly like to have a copy of the report that he referred to. If I do not have it, could the Minister please repeat what report that is that shows the reconciliation, please, and can I get a copy from him?

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

If the Deputy's email system is working, he had it. I think it was about 12.06 p.m. last Wednesday. It is called "*The Labour Market Report*".