

## **2.1 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the processing of firearms applications:**

Will the Minister inform Members whether there is a specified period in which an application for a firearm certificate should be determined? What is the average time taken to process an application and the average time taken for renewal?

### **Deputy A.D. Lewis of St. John (The Minister for Home Affairs):**

I thank the Deputy for his continued interest in Home Affairs or matters that concern this department. I can answer in this way, Sir. A memorandum of understanding exists between the States of Jersey Police and the Comité des Connétables on the administration of firearm certificates. Currently this includes a 14-day time period for the States of Jersey to complete record checks on applicants in order to inform the Connétables and assist their decisions. This period is currently under review. It is extremely difficult to give average figures for processing applications for renewals, however, the police are finding the existing 14-day period difficult to achieve and for this reason have suggested that the period be extended. This was raised at the meeting of the Firearms Law Liaison Group last month and a new proposal is now under discussion.

### **2.1.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement:**

I would ask the Minister if he believes it is reasonable that somebody who holds a small amount of firearms and possibly has done so for over 40 years should have to wait 8 weeks or more for a simple renewal. Where does the delay occur? Is it with the police or is it with the Constables?

### **The Deputy of St. John:**

There could be a combination of reasons and without looking at the individual case it would be impossible for me to state exactly what the reason was here and now. However, what I would say is that it is very important that any application or renewal is thoroughly reviewed and that may sometimes involve reviewing references which is often the cause of the delay. No particular circumstances are the same in each occasion so I really could not comment on this particular issue. All I can say is that every effort is made to expedite this process.

### **2.1.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

Will the Minister accept that the full process of the applications and renewal of firearms certificates including that of visitors' permits is in rather a mess and it would be opportune maybe for the next Minister to take some hold of the problem? If he is going to pass on a passing on message to the new Minister then maybe the message he passes on is that the present system is cumbersome and really needs a review of the whole issuing process.

### **The Deputy of St. John:**

The whole process has been reviewed in full consultation with firearms user groups. That is what the Firearms Law Liaison Group is partly about. There is always the opportunity to improve a process and that is an ongoing subject that the Firearms Law Liaison Group will look at. We are in the process at the moment of completely reviewing, for example, the application form with a lot of assistance from the issuing authorities which are the Connétables. I decline or deny the accusation that it is a mess. It certainly is not. There are always improvements that can be made and one that I would point out to the Deputy is that we are currently looking a possible web-based registration process, in conjunction with States Procurement who are looking at a whole web strategy for the States, enabling applicants to complete on line before going to see the Connétable which will of course speed up the process. It is an ongoing process. It will be looked at continually and I would urge my successor to do that.

### **2.1.3 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:**

It does seem somewhat curious to me - I must press the Minister - that it should take so long. These are not isolated cases. Of course until the later amendment comes along, people run the risk

of becoming criminals through lack of expedition at Police Headquarters and the Constables. Could the Minister advise who exactly is responsible within the police to ensure that these matters are moved along quickly because a check on somebody that already has a firearm certificate should not really take 4 or 5 weeks. Are these police officers on holiday? What exactly is the cause of the delay?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

The reason is as I stated earlier. Every application is different and I would not like any officer to rush through an application. They have to be done thoroughly and if that takes time, that is what it needs. The Connétables inform all applicants 3 months in advance of the expiry of their certificate giving them 3 months opportunity to get their renewal in. Unfortunately, that is not always the case and I would urge any firearm applicant to apply early so that they can be expedited and processed efficiently. If, however, they are late, they are prioritised and those that are going to expire soonest are dealt with first. Every possible effort is made to make the process move along as quickly as possible but the individual case is quite different and some will require more work than others.

**2.1.4 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:**

Would the Minister confirm that the primary objective in issuing gun licenses is the safety of the general public and the present filtration system which we have in this Island surpasses certainly that of the U.K. (United Kingdom) and should be retained? **[Approbation]**

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes, I totally agree and I thank the Connétable for his comments. But there is a balance between the safety of the public and encouraging sport shooting. We are very good at sport shooting and I would not like that sport to be comprised in any way. However, public safety is also a serious concern and must always come first.