

2.14 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Social Security regarding GST funds:

Will the Minister advise the Assembly how many people have completed a G.S.T. refund form to date and how many households, if any, were entitled to the refund?

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

I am pleased we have time to answer this question, and I am pleased the Deputy has asked it. As of 28th November the department has processed 2,124 claims for the G.S.T. bonus: 1,694 of these applications have been paid and 379 claims have been disallowed, 51 are pending. This bonus is available to 2 groups of residents. People receiving protected payments through income support who do not pay tax are eligible. The others are people who receive no income support benefits at all and who do not pay income tax, they are also eligible. I would like to take the opportunity to encourage anyone who believes that they qualify for this bonus to request an application form from the department and to complete it as soon as possible. The department will accept applications for the 2008 payment up until 15th December.

2.14.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Supplementary, sir. It is very good to hear the Minister urge anyone who thinks they are entitled to the refund. P90/2008 which was the regulations for the refund states: "Financial and manpower: there are up to 6,000 households probably eligible to apply for this bonus." The Minister has just said over 2,124. So I am very concerned there are around at least 4,000 households out there. What I would like to hear from the Minister, and as it is timed-out on 15th December, people must have these forms in, what steps will he take to try to get to these at least, let us say the average is over but I would imagine at least another 2,000 to 2,500 households or even up to about 10,000 people that need this. How will he get out there to make sure these people get this bonus?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Initially we wrote to everybody who was receiving the transition payments. That was about 3,000 people who we were aware of. We have had a full page advertisement in the *Jersey Evening Post* a few weeks ago. There will be further advertisements appearing over the next few days to encourage people to apply. Of course, there may have been some over-estimation in the original proposition because there is no way of knowing, even from the 3,000 people that we wrote to who were on transition payments, from the records we have we have no idea if they are paying income tax, because we do not have that information available to us. But, certainly I know that there are some people who have been entitled to it, as they have done with the Mr. Kirsch gift, who have not bothered to apply for it because they just have not wanted to apply for it. Although it is there for people I would encourage anybody who does feel that they want the £50 bonus this year to apply and hopefully the adverts that we will be putting in the paper in the next few days will help and encourage them.

2.14.2 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry, just a clarification, really. The £50 bonus this year - obviously that is how it stands - could the Minister inform the House is that per household whatever ... it might be a family of 6 or one in a household, is that how the bonus is worked out? Secondly, can the Minister confirm that people are not entitled, because this has been reported to me, they have received application forms but they paid a small amount of income tax last year based on the year previous, and that has also stopped them from being eligible when G.S.T. did not come into force until May this year? Is this correct, in my understanding and the public's understanding?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Yes, certainly with regard to the first part of the question, sorry, I missed that? My answer was it was as we decided in this House, anyhow. It was ... I cannot remember what it relates to now, I am sorry. But certainly the States decided on the format of the benefit at the time and it is as the regulations that were passed by the House. Certainly with regard to anybody who does pay tax,

they do not apply, they cannot receive the benefit, and it is quite right that people who have paid tax will not be able to get the benefit.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry, it was the £50, is that per household depending on amount of households or if it is one person in the household do they still get the £50 refund? Does he feel this is fair?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Certainly the regulations we passed were that it was per household and that is what we approved at the time.