

2.9 Deputy P.N. Troy of St. Brelade of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding toxic emissions from the Bellozanne chimney:

Given the Medical Officer of Health's concerns regarding Bellozanne emissions, would the Minister explain why he has not requested the Law Officers to consider prosecuting Transport and Technical Services under existing Health Laws, why directives have not been issued to curb the input of metals and other toxic materials into the incinerator to reduce toxic emissions from the chimney and what action, if any, the Minister proposes to take?

Senator B.E. Shenton (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The Deputy will no doubt appreciate the fact that the Bellozanne facility has not been fit for purpose for a number of years. In this context Health Protection Officers from my department have been working closely with their colleagues in Transport and Technical Services Department to manage both the failing incinerator and the incessant levels of waste which Islanders require to be disposed there. The cornerstone of this joint working has been the use of best practice and this has been achieved through both departments working together through the Waste Steering Group. The philosophy which underpins the work of the Waste Steering Group is that of least harm. There are 2 streams of waste that are deposited at Bellozanne and the recycling centre. The first is waste from the public community - waste deposited at Bellozanne by Islanders themselves - and this waste has removed from it components which can then be sent to the mainland for recycling. Televisions and fridges are examples of this. Wood products are also removed and recycled. The second is waste collected from the Parishes and public services more generally. This waste is not separated nor can it be safely separated with the current processes. What the Deputy implies in this question is that Jersey needs a new incinerator and a new recycling regime which of course the States voted for last week.

2.9.1 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren:

Does the Minister and his department have any concern that the slightly higher rates of cancer in Jersey could be directly linked to the current continuing incinerator emissions?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

The department has concerns about a number of issues in Jersey and, of course, Jersey is an Island largely built on granite which in itself has certain cancerous implications. The department is very keen to close down the incinerator as early as possible and obviously they were delighted that the States voted to build a new incinerator so that we can do that within the next few years.

2.9.2 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

While it might seem logical for both departments to be working together, Sir, nevertheless I am concerned because it does seem to me that if there is a solution to the problem arrived at between the 2 parties then they both have ownership of it and that would preclude his officers being able to prosecute under the law. Would the Minister comment on that?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

I realise that working together is not something that the Deputy is familiar with. It is obviously better if you do have a problem if everyone works together to provide a solution that causes the least harm until a better solution can be found.

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

When he has time, Sir, I wonder if he would like to answer my question. I enjoyed his humour to start with but he forgot to answer the question.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

Was the question whether there is a conflict between the interests of the department?

Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

Yes, Sir, to put it simply, if 2 bodies are working together they have come to a common solution, how is it possible for one of those parties to then prosecute essentially themselves?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

I would assume that if that co-operation stopped... and obviously our department will be making recommendations to Transport and Technical Services for them to implement; if they refuse to implement those recommendations then you could get into a position where you could end up suing Transport and Technical Services. But I do not think it is in anyone's best interest to deliberately endanger the population of this Island and obviously we are trying to work towards best practice. The sooner we can close down the incinerator the better.

2.9.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The telltale word in the Minister's answer was the word "colleagues" I thought. Could the Minister explain why with the new plant at least 3 years away his Health Protection Unit is not asking the Constables, for example, to remove plastics from the waste stream that they collect which would make the emissions from the existing incinerator that much cleaner?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

I think as I said in my answer, there is a question mark over processes regarding the removal from general waste. I do notice that Deputy Troy has another question further down the order paper which asks the Minister for Transport and Technical Services specifically this type of question. It may be better for him to answer on that basis. Certainly from a health protection viewpoint what we do not want is to have no incinerator and waste dumped all over the Island with the vermin and the disease and other factors that we have to take into account.

2.9.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

This question is about toxic emissions, and obviously those are a consideration. What comment does the Minister for Health and Social Services have in regards to yesterday's incident which obviously has had an effect although it may not be known yet? Would he care to comment about yesterday's incident at this stage?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

Obviously I have not seen any of the pictures of yesterday's incident but I am aware that there was a lot of storage area of gas propane and a skip operation nearby. I think probably as an Assembly we have to have a look at our environmental laws to make sure they are tough enough to make sure that we are not storing liabilities in the countryside and other areas.

2.9.5 Deputy P.N. Troy:

Does the Minister accept that he, as the Minister responsible for health, is failing the people of Bellozanne in that his department is not objecting very strongly to metals and plastics being placed into the incinerator, and does he not feel that he has maybe got too cosy a relationship with T.T.S. at the moment and that if he does take his responsibility seriously - which is the health of the public - that he should be actively objecting to the materials being put into the incinerator?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

I can assure the Deputy wholeheartedly that I do not have a cosy relationship with Deputy de Faye. This is a case of working to best practice, working with what you have, trying to make the best of a bad job so to speak. If anything the failure was with previous politicians not putting into place contingency plans for an incinerator that is well past its sell by date. Perhaps if anyone should be sued it should be the politicians ourselves.