

2.9 The Deputy of St. John of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the reduction of barriers to investment and growth:

Would the Minister advise whether he is supportive of the need to remove unnecessary barriers to investment and growth and if so what measures, if any, does he propose to implement to help reduce the red tape?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

Absolutely. The Deputy will probably recall a red tape review that was carried out from December 2004 to March 2005. The result of that review was that little evidence was found to support the belief that the Island is unnecessarily over-regulated. Interestingly the most telling outcome of the review concerned public perception. People believed that they were bound by red tape. There is certainly no room for complacency especially in current economic environment which is why I announced recently that my department will look again at the issue from a business perspective. The specific emphasis will be on identifying whether there is clear evidence of excessive red tape and bureaucracy and whether it is creating a barrier to investment and economic growth. We will be asking some business leaders from across different sectors of the economy to form a small group to help us understand the issues and, if necessary, propose workable solutions.

[10:45]

2.9.1 The Deputy of St. John:

Given that the Minister is keen on removing red tape has he already done so at the Harbours Department as recently the £400,000 spent on refurbishing the Elizabeth Terminal, at a time when we are trying to save funds within the Island... Yet in doing so the roof has not been repaired. Has the lack of controls, by having eased his ability for his staff to go ahead and do certain works, put the cart before the horse in not having repaired the roof prior to putting all the soft furnishings within the building?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think the Deputy is a little confused. I cannot see the link between refurbishment of the Elizabeth Terminal and red tape and bureaucracy, even with the wildest of imaginations there is no link at all, but seeing as he has raised the point I will answer it for him. £400,000 has been spent improving the arrivals facilities at Elizabeth Terminal. I think it is a good investment. It is essential that that gateway to the Island is in good condition for tourists when they arrive in Jersey. It is absolutely right and as far as the roof is concerned, yes, there is a minor leak that was discovered and that is one of those things. Two years ago £55,000 was spent on repairing another area of the roof and it has suitable life span to be able to make the investment of £400,000 perfectly workable. I am satisfied and I think it was money well spent.

2.9.2 The Deputy of St. John:

Given that in a newspaper article recently the Minister was quoted, in fact, of saying that: "Government must stand aside to remove unnecessary barriers in investment and growth." Those comments in the local paper made by the Minister. Will the Minister tell us what he has cut in the 16 months he has been in office as Minister of his department, E.D.D. (Economic Development Department) and show us the red tape he has removed?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

That is exactly why I have just proposed, and I announced this at the Jersey Enterprise Awards evening, that we were going to look into the detail of red tape and bureaucracy and indeed if it is, in fact, hindering investment and economic growth. I have some concerns. I think there are areas where there is room for improvement and I think it is important that we engage, in particular, members from the private sector from the business community to assist us with this review. It is an important thing to do. I know that the Deputy has asked for specific examples of red tape and bureaucracy that has been dealt with over the last 16 months: I am not going to give details at this particular point. We have to have facts, we have to have evidence, and he will be aware that in 2005 when the last review was undertaken there was in fact very little evidence actually produced.

2.9.3 The Deputy of St. John:

Final supplementary; can the Minister please confirm that when he made those comments on that evening they were throwaway comments, no more than that?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Absolutely not. They were not throwaway comments. I am deadly serious. I think there is the potential that red tape and unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy could limit investment in economic growth. We cannot allow that to happen. We have to get away from a tick box society, which is always the risk. We have to reintroduce more common sense and I believe that this particular review will prove, without any shadow of doubt, with the help of the private sector, whether indeed there is a problem or not, and we will address it if there is.

2.9.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister confirm whether or not he is going to approach the Minister for Planning and Environment about the totally laborious system of changing signs on buildings by businesses? Secondly, will he be taking the sympathetic view when bike hire operators complain about proposals made in this Assembly for the establishment of numbers upon bicycles and other such totally unnecessary attributes?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I will and do continually engage with the Minister for Planning and Environment on issues of concern, and will continue to do so. I think it is important that departments and Ministers work closely together for a common aim. As far as other matters, I do hope that the Deputy will feed into the review that we are undertaking despite the fact that it is not directly relevant to business. It does not matter, I would be interested in his views, as always. I am sure it will add value to the process.

2.9.5 Deputy T.A. Vallois of St. Saviour:

Could the Minister confirm that he will be looking at the possible communication breakdown between government and public with regards to red tape and the increase of legislation and regulations that have been introduced since December 2004 when that report was established?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, I mean the Deputy is correct. There has been quite a bit of additional regulation and legislation introduced since the end of that period. What concerns me slightly is that that particular review did not come up with very much evidence but clearly the public at that time were concerned. I have the impression there is still an element of

concern. What I want to do is try and bottom this out on an evidence-based process and put together a review that is going to be meaningful.