

2.1 Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary of the Chief Minister regarding the optimum population level for the Island:

In the light of the forthcoming debate on the Island Plan, can the Chief Minister advise the Assembly what the Council of Ministers considers to be the optimum population level for the Island and outline how this target is to be achieved?

Senator P.F. Routier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):

The Council of Ministers is tied to the decision of this Assembly that was debated and agreed in the 2009 Strategic Plan. Those targets will be reviewed in 2012 when the figure from the census will be available. The targets are currently being managed through the Regulation of Undertakings and Development and Housing Laws. However, Members will be debating the new mechanism, the Control of Housing and Work Legislation, in July.

2.1.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

I noticed the masterful evasion of the question. I did ask whether the Council of Ministers had any idea what the optimum population level for the Island might be. I would have thought that is of some relevance to the Island Plan which we are about to debate. Could you answer the question, please, or that part of the question?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The answer to the question is fairly obvious. The Council of Ministers are tied to what the States Assembly has decided. It is not a Council of Ministers decision. It is the House that has made the decision in the last Strategic Plan to set those figures and they are publicly known figures that everybody has signed up to within this House. So it is not the Council of Ministers' view that is important in this; it is the Assembly's view.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I have to ...

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, Deputy; you have had 2. I will come back to you at the end.

2.1.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

Could the Assistant Minister not confirm that the Council of Ministers have no idea about what an optimum population level will be and they have got no policy to enforce it; it really is just a "hit and hope"?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I cannot agree with that. Members know what the population decisions of this House were in the Strategic Plan and I can assure Members that at the end of the Strategic Plan, the period that was planned for, we will be on target.

[14:45]

2.1.3 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

Does the Minister accept that, with the current 150 heads of household as the marker, population eventually will peak at around 100,000 before declining? But can he particularly state whether this 150 is being kept to when in 2010 there were 178 work

permits granted to heads of household coming to the Island in addition to any (j) categories?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The 100,000 figure which was in the Strategic Plan when we last debated it is ... what is stated in that Strategic Plan is: "We will ensure that the total population does not exceed 100,000." I believe that from the work that is going on, with the way the Housing Regulations and the Regulation of Undertakings and Development Laws are being administered currently, we will be within that. I do not believe that will be an issue. With regard to the work permits that have been issued, of course one has to remember that people do leave the Island as well as come into the Island. So in the manpower returns that we have been receiving there has been a peak in recent years; but what we have to look at is the medium-term figures. I believe over the medium-term period and the length of the Strategic Plan the targets will have been met.

Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin:

Deputy Southern has asked a question very related to what I was going to ask. So I will not need to ask, Sir.

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

Would the Assistant Minister advise the House why the policy was called Immigration Control Policy and now it is called Draft Control of Housing and Work? Is it not a fact that we cannot control immigration?

Senator P.F. Routier:

No. The reason for the change of the name of the legislation is very clear. The new legislation is titled the way it is because it does what it says on the tin. It will control housing and it will control work. The issue with regard to immigration is a bigger issue outside of the legislation because it is a States strategic aim to decide on what level of population we want. So the new legislation that is coming forward will enable us to achieve whatever the whole Assembly decides is an appropriate level.

2.1.5 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry, a supplementary. He said it is for this House to find a control on immigration. Has he any idea how we think we are going to do this outside of this control on housing and work? You can have 150 heads of household bringing in 4 or 5 extra people, all needing schools, health and eventually jobs.

Senator P.F. Routier:

With regard to the number of people that come into the Island - for instance, if we allow 150 heads of household per annum in - the average, we do know, would mean that there would be 325 people in total and that is what was within the plan. I know some families might have a larger amount, perhaps might have 4 people, but others may have none. It might be just the head of household that comes in. We know from statistical evidence that 150 heads of household will, in general, bring 325 people to the Island.

2.1.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

Again, the Assistant Minister did not answer the question. Can he tell us, are there any controls whatsoever that can be imposed on immigration or is the Island also

bound by the terms of Protocol 3: free movement of labour to and from the Island; so that means anyone from the European Union can come to the Island?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Yes, certainly we are bound by the free movement of people within the E.U. (European Union) but our controls are the availability of jobs and the access to housing. That is the way we do try and control the number of people within the Island. I think that is sufficient.

2.1.7 The Deputy of St. Mary:

We seem to have established that there is no optimum target figure in the minds of the Council of Ministers. So I am going to change tack and ask how we achieve what we are trying to do. I would just point out to the Assistant Minister, and then ask for his reply, that in the previous Strategic Plan the target was an increase in the workforce of 1 per cent a year. The increase between June 2006 and June 2009, over those 3 years, was in fact 2 per cent; double the target. Can the Minister give us any confidence at all that any of his methods of controlling net inward migration can work?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Yes, I am aware that the previous Strategic Plan, which was for a period from 2006 to 2011, set the target at 1 per cent. Just picking, as we identified earlier, a short period, there will be peaks and troughs for that but I think what we need to judge it on is on the full length of the plan. Certainly from 2006 to 2010 the Statistics Unit has worked out it was 1.22 per cent that came into the Island, which is slightly above. But we do believe that over the full length of the plan we will be back to 1 per cent because in recent times, during this last year, we have been withdrawing licences from businesses to take on staff and we have been reviewing the licences for unqualified people within the community. So we have been tightening up and, as I said earlier, I believe we will, at the end of the period, have reached the target.