

4.13 Deputy S. Power of the Chief Minister regarding Ministerial responsibility for Population and Migration regulation and social housing and housing trusts.

The Chief Minister will note my consistency in this area of interest that I have. Does the Chief Minister agree that more Ministerial responsibility must be allocated to population and migration control and the regulation and supply of social and affordable housing? If so, would he consider again the creation of a Minister with specific and direct responsibility for population and migration control and also control for the provision, supply and regulation of all social housing and housing trusts?

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

Population, immigration and housing are strategic priorities as agreed by this Assembly and the Chief Minister and I will provide a clear and forceful lead on these central issues. I therefore do not believe we need a new Minister and department. However, these are ultimately matters for the Assembly, which has already directed that the Chief Minister be accountable for the Control of Housing and Work Law, and next year we will consider new Strategic Housing Units. In the meantime, work on the areas of population, immigration and housing will advance significantly in line with this Assembly's approved Strategic Plan.

4.13.1 Deputy S. Power:

Sorry, I am going to come back on this one. Does the Assistant Minister of the Chief Minister's Department agree with me that there is a perception that the control of population and migration needs a higher profile and that this would be achieved by the establishment of a Ministerial department that has control of migration, population and social and affordable housing?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I agree with the Deputy insofar as the priority needs a lot higher profile. Certainly that is a commitment which the Chief Minister and I are prepared to give and want to ensure with the new Control of Housing and Work legislation which is coming into place. We will then have the tools to be able to ensure that the priorities of this House and the desires of this House are implemented because previously with the existing Housing Law and the Regulation of Undertaking legislation, it has been very difficult to achieve what the House has wanted. But with this new legislation in place and with the forthcoming White Paper on the Strategic Housing Unit, we do feel that we will be able to achieve the priorities of this Assembly.

4.13.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Assistant Minister talked about giving a forceful lead. Will he outline for Members what additional powers he has to meet any population targets that are set?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I think the Deputy will be aware - and hopefully is aware - of the additional powers which come under the Control of Housing and Work legislation. We have passed this legislation which will come into place very soon. With that, just briefly, there is certainly the names and address register which will give the information, which will enable - when decisions are required with regards to a new business establishing and the number of employees they want to employ... we will be able to have a lot better information to make those decisions. We will also be able to call-in licences to readjust them. There are so many new different aspects within the new legislation which will help us to achieve that.

4.13.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Would the Assistant Chief Minister not acknowledge that the issue is not necessarily that a more senior political person be in charge but that we have proper monitoring in place? As the situation ran totally out of control in the 2000s, as it did in Britain, and we have now found ourselves with

a legacy, which was totally unanticipated, that has put enormous pressure on the Island's infrastructure.

Senator P.F. Routier:

Certainly the information which the Statistics Unit has recently provided with regard to the immigration which has happened over recent years does show that there was a peak in 2008-2009 and also that in the last couple of years there has been a halving of the amount of people who have had licences to establish businesses to employ people. So there does need to be more impetus put on controlling the population and the new legislation will help us achieve that.

4.13.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Would the Assistant Chief Minister not acknowledge that he is being slightly disingenuous? The whole issue was that by the introduction of the 5-year transition to the open labour market and the fact that people were using industries as a transition to that labour market as opposed to working in the industries and that was it, would he not acknowledge we were totally out of control? We could not control that situation and we chose not to.

Senator P.F. Routier:

I think it is very evident, and I think everybody has agreed, because they have agreed for the new legislation to come into place, that the older legislation that we had was failing. There is no doubt about it and that is why we have the new legislation.

4.13.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

On behalf of the Chief Minister, would the Assistant Chief Minister state quite categorically that he has no truck with those members of society who seek to make xenophobic or racist comments about immigrants who come here to work? Nonetheless would he undertake that part of the responsibility of this – and there is a serious underlying political issue here – is that there are serious issues that need to be addressed. Will he and the Chief Minister undertake to provide first of all a clear direction for the future? Secondly, to provide actual statistical and factual information about the amount of people who claim different services, benefits and the amount of people there are working in different sections and for different companies, where appropriate? So that we as States Members can give hard evidence to those that we talk to who may be tending towards these unsavoury views and give them factual evidence rather than just hearsay?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The Deputy asked quite a few questions there in the detail of the information that is required. Firstly, certainly on behalf of the Chief Minister and myself and I am sure most Members, any comments which are made with regard to immigration policy are not intended to give any indication of xenophobic remarks or comments and we obviously recognise that a diverse community is a structure which we endorse and welcome within our community. But obviously this issue with regard to immigration is something which is of major concern to everybody at the present time because of the high unemployment of people who have been here for some time and that is something we need to address. With regard to the work that is being carried out on access to services, that piece of work is going on at the present time and as soon as we have that information available we will be sharing that so that all Members can be aware of the difficulties that each department is having in providing services to the community but hopefully we will be able to have that information and share it with everybody.

4.13.6 Deputy S. Power:

I want to pick up on what the Assistant Chief Minister said. My tenet is that independent authority and corporate sole needs to be underlined in the control of migration and population and, indeed, social and affordable housing because they are becoming more and more important and bigger issues. Does the Assistant Chief Minister not agree with me that because of the size

of the Chief Minister's Department now it would be better to break out population and migration control and, indeed, link that to social and affordable housing so that this can be under the direction of one Minister with corporate sole?

Senator P.F. Routier:

We have considered that and the States have considered obviously the structure of the Control of Housing and Work legislation and have agreed that the Chief Minister will be accountable for that legislation. This Assembly will also look at the detail of the Strategic Housing Units in the future and make that decision. I have to say that we have considered this and we feel that the Chief Minister's Department is able to control those pieces of legislation and that policy area and we maintain that position.