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4.8 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Minister for Treasury and Resources as shareholder representative regarding an apparent dispute with workers on the Gigabit project:

What progress has been made by Jersey Telecom to resolve the apparent dispute with workers on the Gigabit project and what role has the Minister played, as shareholder representative, in trying to ensure that all workers are paid for the work they have done?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

I think I have largely answered this question. I have invited the chief executive and senior officers from J.T. to my office for an up-to-date explanation of the situation. J.T. and CH2M HILL have been holding helpful meetings or, as they have described it, surgeries with workers over the last 2 weeks where all concerns and requirements have been worked through. They have assured me - that is J.T. - that good progress is now being made in what has clearly been a very unsatisfactory situation for all concerned. I have asked for a further update next week.

4.8.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

If this update turns out to be unsatisfactory, and if it looks like the employers are not making progress to resolving this dispute, what powers does the Minister have to get involved to help sort it out and would he be willing to use them if it came to it?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Ultimately the effective running of a business and indeed ensuring that that business operates under its obligations, both legal and contractual, is a matter for that business and for its board of directors. Clearly in this circumstance, I have the responsibility, as Minister for Treasury and Resources, as the shareholder, and as such I will apply whatever pressure I can to encourage J.T. where appropriate to undertake obligations that they have to ensure that employees are properly looked after. I am reassured from the meeting that I had recently that they are doing all in their power to do that and, indeed, most workers appear to be now reasonably satisfied with the progress being made and the discussions that are being undertaken, so I hope we will not need to take any further action.

4.8.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

When push comes to shove surely the net impact of what has been going on at CH2M is that they have failed to reach their targets by some 2,000 connections. They are 6 per cent behind on their target for the end of this year. What actions will the Minister take to ensure that this major arm of I.T. (information technology) developments on the Island is completed on time and to budget by CH2M?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think there is a great deal of misinformation. In fact there was a very good letter in the *Jersey Evening Post* last night which covered part of this issue. First of all, I should point out with regard to the Gigabit Jersey project, 98 per cent of houses have now been passed. More than 1,000 kilometres of fibre have been laid, 12,000 properties have been connected already and no country in Europe has more fibre connected - 34 per cent - than we have in Jersey. We are leading the world and, as an Island that is aspiring to be a digital sector of excellence, that is something, in my opinion, which should be applauded. The issues here are issues relating to largely 2 things and that is the job specs and the timesheets of workers. Unfortunately when workers go out to connect a property they have to fill in a job sheet and a timesheet. Those have not been properly completed in some circumstances and that has caused J.T. to have to return repeatedly to premises 7 or 8 times in some circumstances where a job sheet has said that the connection, for example, has been through the cellar whereas it has been through the attic. So they have wasted time and therefore

cost and costs have been run up but those are contained within the contractual arrangements with the supplier, who is taking the hit on those additional costs.

4.8.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The question was about targets. If I may, with his own answer earlier in the day, question 12 in written answers, it indicates that there is a mark for premises passed at 100 per cent. There is also a category "Premises actually connected" and that target is 2,000 under what the target is. The actual achievement is 2,000 connections not made on the target. What measures is the Minister going to take to make sure that the connections ... that houses and businesses are connected, not just passed?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

This is not for the Minister to make any adjustment. Quite frankly there is a board of directors. There is an executive of the J.T. They have a specialist contractor, as I pointed out, who is a multi-billion dollar business that is a specialist in this particular field. More than 12,000 properties have been connected. Yes, there have been problems with the project, which is clear. Yes, at times it has fallen behind schedule and the company is working in order to address that. But we should applaud where they have got to. I think the project is a fantastic project for the Island. I am very hopeful, certainly from what I have been told by J.T., that they will finish the project on time and on budget, and they are going to update me later next year with further progress.

4.8.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I was not particularly satisfied with his answer to my last question where I asked what powers does he have to specifically get involved and he did not give any specifics, so I would like some specifics. He has spoken about the problems there about workers not filling in timesheets properly. I have sat with some of these workers who have shown me printed out emails going back months and months of their timesheets. They have the date they were sent. I cannot see any problem there whatsoever and it is a problem that they have not had in the past. It seems to have just started all of a sudden and started when it looks like the company is not meeting its target. So does he believe there is a connection between those 2 things?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think where the connection is, is that the company providing the services has undergone a change of management at the top and they have been reviewing the way in which the project has been running. The project, quite frankly, has not been managed as well as it could have been by CH2M HILL and in relation to that they have quite simply, in relation to the contractual arrangements they have, made certain that they have met all those terms that are in the contracts and the timesheets are properly filled in and the job specs are properly filled in because it is quite appropriate under contractual arrangements that should be done. They have been enforcing the terms of the contract. What J.T. have done, getting together with all parties, have helped to ensure that employees or workers, more to the point, are properly appraised of what their requirements are and obligations are in this regard. So all parties are clear and I think, as I have already stated, progress is being made. With regard to the other part of the question the Deputy asked and powers; the powers quite simply are to ensure that the company under the Memorandum of Understanding, which is published and available as Deputy Southern has already referred to, that companies operate in a way that is fair to staff under their obligations. I can insist that the board undertake that but it ultimately is the decision of the board how they carry out those duties.