

2014.12.09

8.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Chief Minister regarding long-term population policy and inward migration of graduates:

When will the Chief Minister bring a sustainable long-term population policy to the Assembly for consideration and will this include the need for inward migration of up to 150 graduates annually as indicated by representatives in the finance sector?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

The Council of Ministers is working to establish a long-term direction for Jersey providing the confidence and certainty which is important for all our industries in enabling us to plan for a successful future. This will include population, skills, education, housing and our environment. We will also review how we can support our existing industries, ensuring enough graduates for financial services while also developing our emerging industries. I would like us to debate these issues as an Assembly next year.

8.4.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Could he just indicate when around next year? Does he think it will be early next year or likely to be in the later half?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I am not sure. We are in the process of making those decisions and they will be made over the next few weeks.

8.4.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister not accept that a lot of decisions hinge on the fundamental levels at which we permit inward migration, and does he not accept that if we carry on with the interim policy as it is, that by 2023 we will require something like 4,000 additional homes to be built which, I remind him, is the equivalent of 1.2 Maufant estates or around 60 Le Marais high rise, and if so, if he wishes to continue with these sort of numbers, where does he intend to put those houses?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I do not accept that those issues hinge upon it. I accept that the issues are inter-related and we cannot simply have a debate about population with all the other important issues about what sort of Jersey do we want to have in the future.

8.4.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

How does the Chief Minister plan to balance the 2 competing and conflicting interests, on the one hand some elements of the business community which favour a complete open door liberal policy with the, I believe, the majority of Islanders who believe that Jersey, in terms of population, is already at saturation point?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

People are concerned about inward migration; we absolutely accept that and that is why we brought forward the Interim Population Policy which is working well. Recently, Skills Jersey have produced the report which has led to this question which says that financial services, while in some areas is continuing to consolidate, in other areas is growing and has a continued need and a greater need for graduates coming to work in their industry. There are a number of ways that we need to deal with that, not least of which and the most important one, is the work that the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture will be doing and is currently doing in tracking Jersey graduates and encouraging them to come back. It is not an either or, we have got to pull all the levers available to us.

8.4.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Chief Minister clarify when he says it is not an either or? So we can reduce the population, which is what I believe the majority of the population want, at the same time as increasing the population to give success to the business community, which is what they are asking? We can do both of those things, can we?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

The Deputy and the previous Deputy who asked the question would like it to be a simple straightforward question. For the first time they seem to be mentioning reducing the population. When we look at countries around the world that are suffering reducing population I do not believe that we would want to be in that position. What we want to do is allow appropriate and managed immigration into our community to deliver economic growth, to deliver jobs, to deliver a good standard of living and not simply talk about one single issue. There are lots of things that we are going to have to do to address the concerns of the community and one of those is encouraging graduates to come back into our successful industry.

8.4.5 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

How does the Chief Minister reconcile his determination to grow the population with the fact we have decreasing revenues? Is it not the case that, particularly with there being a focus on graduates coming into the Island, they are inevitably going to be paid less than people who have been in the job for 20 years, and with this higher demand for public services it is just going to make this Island's expenditure even more squeezed than it already is at the moment. So how does he reconcile this, particularly in the short-term?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I have been on record before saying that I do not accept or support the economic and tax policies of the Reform Party and I think we have just seen this morning why that is the case. We want sensible, managed inward migration which is what the Interim Population Policy does. **[Approbation]** We want to see economic growth and we want to support important income-generating sections of our economy, of which we know that financial services is one of them. There is a lot of work to be done. The Deputy would try to simply say it is a matter of one thing or the other; that is not the case. The Education Department is already pioneering - which inward investment companies are impressed with - a programme that follows Jersey graduates when they go off the Island to do their degrees and other work and then encourage them to come back. We have got to do more of that. We have got to accept that the industries in our community now require a high-skilled workforce and we have a responsibility to help to deliver that.

[10:15]

APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS, COMMITTEES AND PANELS - resumption

Election of an Associate Member to represent the States of Jersey on the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly – result of ballot

The Bailiff:

Very well. Before we move to the next question I can inform Members of the result of the ballot for the associate member of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly. The votes cast were as follows: Deputy Truscott, 15 votes, Deputy Kevin Lewis, 28 votes. There was one spoilt paper. I therefore declare that Deputy Kevin Lewis is appointed as an associate member. **[Approbation]**

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

May I thank everyone who voted, Sir? Thank you.