

3. Oral Questions

3.1 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade of the Chief Minister regarding the levels of births over deaths in Jersey since 2010:

I rise with a slight degree of trepidation having just voted against Deputy Tadier's proposition. Given that R.77, which is the births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships statistics for 2013, shows the excess of births over deaths in Jersey has been 269, 366, 361 and 298 for the past 4 years, 2010 through to 2013, showing a potential growth in population in the 4 years of 1,294 persons before net inward migration, does the Minister intend to factor in and use this information in controlling population and migration on the aspirational limit set and, if so, how?

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

Could I ask my Assistant Minister to act as rapporteur?

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

The Interim Population Policy, which runs until the end of 2015, supports a planning assumption of 325 individuals per year. It was developed using the population model produced by the Statistics Unit, which includes trends in births and deaths as well as figures for inward migration. This Assembly's longer-term population policies should be based on the same sound statistical analysis. In this way, this Assembly can plan for changes in our overall population, whether through births, deaths or immigration.

3.1.1 Deputy S. Power:

If I might be allowed to respond to that: the birth rate is staying at a much higher level than has been for some time. We have had previous years where it has been less than 200 per year and in the halcyon days of 1997 and 1998 it did exceed 300. Is the Minister taking into account the spike in birth rates and has he discussed this in any population modelling that will need to be done with the Statistics Office to arrive at a proper and long-term population policy for the foreseeable future?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I am assured by the Statistics Unit that they are monitoring the excess of births over deaths and they are including that within their forecasts for the future.

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

When will the Assistant Minister be coming to this House with an estimate of what our actual population is now and where they have gone in the workforce?

Senator P.F. Routier:

As the Deputy is aware, the Statistics Unit is an independent organisation which will be publishing their figures when they are ready. We know that they are working on them to bring them forward as soon as possible.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

That was not an answer. It was: "As soon as possible." Is that the best the Assistant Minister can do?

Senator P.F. Routier:

At the present time, yes.

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

In his supplementary, the Assistant Minister said: “We are using this figure for planning assumptions.” Can he tell me which figure and what are we planning for? Is every department involved in it?

Senator P.F. Routier:

During the Interim Population Policy debate, it was very clear that the assumption of 325 - which is what the Housing Advisory and Work Group are working to for new licences - does include the births and deaths figures within the ... well, that is what the Statistics Unit is including within their assumptions.

3.1.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier of St. Saviour:

Can the Assistant Minister confirm that in these assumptions the predicted upsurge in construction activity is not going to affect the figures; that he is going to handle it very happily within the 325 limit?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I am not quite sure how that fits in with the original question, but certainly we are very conscious that the construction industry will be looking to have capacity to cope with the upsurge in building which is going to happen in the Island and we will be working with them and with other industries to ensure that we do try and meet our target of 325.

3.1.5 Deputy S. Power:

Would the Minister accept that if he factors-in an increase of 150 households per annum plus the natural excess of births over deaths that within 10 years the population of the Island will be between 115,000 and 120,000?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I would need to take advice from the Statistics Unit to verify those figures, but obviously there will be an increase in our population during that time.