

2015.06.16

5.5 Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding telecoms network access:

Will the Minister, as shareholder representative, advise whether J.T. (Jersey Telecom) is resisting wholesale access for competitors to its single-line network by restricting customer transfers to 20 a day, and if so, will the Minister raise this with the J.T. board, together with the failure of J.T. to allow wholesale rental on multiple lines and broadband and fixed-number portability so that these matters of public interest are dealt with urgently?

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

Transferring customers from one telephone network to another is not just a matter of flicking a switch. For that reason, there has been significant system and inter-operator process development over the last few months. J.T. has confirmed that in the very short period since launching wholesale line rental on 1st June, it has limited the number of ports to 20 per day for an initial period only. The reason for limiting the number of ports a day to 20 has been clearly communicated to C.I.C.R.A. (Channel Islands Competition and Regulatory Authorities). Once J.T. has at least one month billing run under their belt to confirm that everything works efficiently then it is expected that switching will speed-up. The approach to applying a limit of this nature is tried and tested. For example, when mobile number portability was introduced in the mobile market there were a limited number of 20 ports per day for the initial period post launch. J.T. has provided a clear undertaking to C.I.C.R.A. that it will be reviewing the appropriateness of a cap on 1st July. In terms of the other products listed C.I.C.R.A. have consulted extensively on these matters and wholesale line rental was listed as a priority. Once this is fully embedded I am sure that C.I.C.R.A. will be assessing the most appropriate next steps.

[10:15]

5.5.1 Deputy R. Labey:

Could the Minister perhaps expand on his last point of this being listed as a priority? What is the timescale here? There seems to have been a protracted period of prevarication on this issue despite very clear recommendations in 2009 by Regulate with their report, which cost over £100,000. Very little was done on this issue. Nothing was done on this issue by the Department of Economic Development over 6 years. I wonder now he is at Treasury will he consider taking the nuclear option and instructing the board of J.T. to get a move on with this or replace them?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

That certainly is a nuclear option the Deputy referred to. I just remind Members - and I am sure I do not need to - that matters relating to C.I.C.R.A. are matters, as the Deputy has alluded to, for the Minister for Economic Development and I am sure that the Assistant Minister, who has delegated responsibility, will be dealing with this. I know it is a matter that is a high priority from his point of view. I cannot give a timescale. Clearly that is not within my remit. I can say that the Deputy asked about whether I would raise this matter with the board. I will at the next meeting raise it with the board and I also suggest the Deputy will have an opportunity to do so himself in a week's time. Next Monday is the launch of the J.T. accounts. I would encourage the Deputy and all Members to come along and have their chance to speak to the board and executive about matters they feel are important. It is a really important annual event.

5.5.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister accept that progress towards a truly open and competitive market in telecoms is painfully, inordinately slow and will he consider giving increased powers to C.I.C.R.A. in order that it should have some clout to speed-up competition, which he says is going to bring down costs?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

As I pointed out, C.I.C.R.A. is the responsibility of the Minister for Economic Development. The Assistant Minister, Senator Ozouf, I know is looking at this matter. I have discussed it with him and he has plans with C.I.C.R.A. to try to speed-up access and the point specifically raised in the Deputy's question about other products are on the list to be progressed as a matter of priority. I cannot at this stage, because it is not my direct responsibility, give numbers, a clear line or timing, but it is a matter that is important. I agree with both the Deputies in that regard.