

2016.06.28

15 Deputy J.M. Maçon of the Chief Minister regarding the consistency of the migration figure with the government's migration policy: [9527]

How are the latest migration figures of 1,500 net inflow in 2015 consistent with the Government's migration policy, as outlined in the Interim Population Policy document, P.10/2014?

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

As I have said already, the policy is founded on a simple principle: targeting migration where it generates the most economic and social value. Of course, in doing this, we need to make sure there are enough school places, good jobs for Islanders, housing, sustainable infrastructure, protection for our green spaces, and that is what is being delivered. This is what we outlined in the interim policy in the Strategic Plan in the M.T.F.P. and, as recently as last November, in the guidance issued to businesses and presented to this Assembly.

[11:30]

3.15.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

As has been said, one of the key words within the Interim Population Policy document is "sustainability." Can the Chief Minister explain to me how carrying on with these particular figures at this level will create sustainability within the Island?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

By maintaining the working age population and the ratio to those in our community who - and I know we have been criticised for mentioning that this morning - are ageing. It is not a bad thing that people are ageing: it is a good thing that people are living longer, but it means that the working age population, which is contributing to services, needs to be maintained.

3.15.2 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

In answer to a lot of the questions around population growth this morning, the Chief Minister has spoken about an increase in population to feed economic growth. Can the Chief Minister reconcile the fact that, in G.V.A. (Gross Value Added) terms, since 1998 we have seen a continuous drop in G.V.A. through to 2014 while seeing the population grow between 2011 and 2014 by 2,500 people?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

The Deputy knows that our G.V.A. and the size of it is, to some extent, partly made up of changes in interest rates. The Deputy in front of her understands that as well. When you have got a change in interest rates and the effects that they have, that will depress the overall G.V.A. That does not mean to say that you are not seeing economic growth, but the total size, which is what G.V.A. is, you can see depressed.

3.15.3 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I was going to ask, the Assistant Chief Minister has been publicly quoted as stating that the actual decision-making process and the policy around making these decisions has been changed. Could the Chief Minister remind me when this change was approved by this Assembly, or even explicitly notified to this Assembly? If not, has the Assistant Chief Minister been misquoted on the front page of the media, given that it is in inverted commas?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

It pains me to say that I think he has been misquoted.

Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

So, he will be taking that up with the media then, will he?

3.15.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Assistant Minister being misquoted or not, the Chief Minister has just stated that the net migration figures, or the population figure that goes into that Addition to the M.T.F.P., has been changed. Does the Chief Minister know what that change has been and, if so, will he inform us?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As the Assistant Chief Minister said, all the details of the M.T.F.P. will be published on Friday and those figures going into the M.T.F.P. will be published as well but - I have forgotten now what I was going to say - the figures will be released on Thursday.

3.15.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

On page 8 of the Interim Population Policy it states that: "In advance of preparing our future, a planning assumption of net migration of plus 325 a year should be followed." Does the Minister agree that they have not met this figure and that they are no longer following that assumption?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

We have always said, of course, that that figure was a planning assumption, but in times when businesses are growing and the economy is growing, difficult decisions are made about giving businesses licences. I appreciate that there needs to be political discussion and argument across the Assembly, but I think we should be pleased that our economy is performing strongly, that we have made difficult decisions, in the past, to see that strong performance. Yes, we need to continue to manage migration, and the Housing and Work Group are doing that. Do not forget that half the applications put before them are rejected, so they are making cautious, careful decisions, but the economy is working in the interests of all members of our community.

The Bailiff:

Deputy Higgins, I am not going to call on you now, you will have first question in questions without notice. Deputy Maçon, final supplementary?

3.15.6 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Recalling back to the last election, the key issue raised with me on the doorstep by many of my parishioners was the issue of immigration and population within the Island. The Chief Minister has said that one of the key objectives of this current population policy is in order to maintain the working population. How does he square that with the fact that, with the rise in property prices and many younger people leaving the Island because of that reason, we know that 50 per cent of our graduates do not come back for those types of reasons? How does the Chief Minister feel that the pursuance of this particular population policy is a good thing for the young people, who want to have families and careers on this Island, who are unable to do so?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I am obviously very aware that population increases, net migration figure increases for some is a very controversial issue, but, as I said earlier, we have got to have an informed debate about the sort of Island that we want into the future. That is why we are undertaking, and want all members of the community to be involved in, creating a vision of the Jersey that they want into the future, recognising the challenges that are facing us down the line, making difficult decisions now, so that we are shaping that future by choice and not by chance. I am sorry that the Minister behind the

Deputy is not in her seat, because only last week she announced another creative plan, together with the States of Jersey Development Company, for first-time-buyer homes, and they are going to be created in perpetuity. She has got many more plans to do similar things to address some of the concerns that the Deputy's constituents raised with him, and rightly raised with him, but they have got to be delivered in balance for the benefit of all Islanders.