

3.10 The Connétable of Grouville of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding work undertaken by his Department on assessing the impact of the proposed liquid waste and solid waste charges on businesses: [1(233)]

Has the Minister's Department done any work to assess the impact that the proposed liquid and solid waste charges will have on businesses, in particular the tourism and agricultural industries; and, if not, why not?

Senator L.J. Farnham (The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture):

A proposition concerning liquid waste charges will be ready for lodging following the current period of consultation. To that end I am advised that the Department for Infrastructure has commissioned work to establish the economic impact of the proposed liquid and solid waste charges and that a distributional analysis is being completed by the Economics Unit. My understanding and expectation therefore is that the accompanying report will include a full economic impact assessment showing the impact on businesses across all sectors of the economy. In the meantime, I and several of my officers, have met with representatives of the Jersey Chamber of Commerce and the Jersey Hospitality Association and many individual business owners to receive feedback on the proposals and on the industry briefings being given by the Department for Infrastructure within the last month.

[11:00]

3.10.1 The Connétable of Grouville:

Is the Minister confident that we will have the information in front of us that will tell us what effect this will have on businesses when we come to discuss these charges in the near future?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am confident and I am confident because in my opinion, and the opinion of businesses, the proposition really cannot be debated properly without that information it is going to be a crucial part of the debate. Members will need to know and understand the impact on the economy of such a charge and the Minister for Infrastructure recognises that, which is why he has instructed the work to be carried out. I think the timetable might be a little tight but we shall wait and see.

3.10.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister support the principle of solid waste charges for liquid and solid waste that are being put forward by his fellow Minister?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes, I do support the principle. The Assembly supported the principle, which is why we are where we are now. But I am also, as my record states, going to work hard... I do represent a business in commerce, together with my Assistant Minister, so I am going to work hard in partnership with the Minister for Infrastructure to ensure that we have all the information necessary for the States to make a proper decision when the proposition is lodged and to make sure the charge is as fair, equitable and realistic as possible.

3.10.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am glad that the Minister put his support for this proposition on record. I cannot remember and I should have asked whether he was present for that particular vote when it came through. But it is good to know that, irrespective of that, his colleague has his support. Does the Minister share my concern, given the previous answer and given the fact that the Minister has said that

at least in part one of the reasons for bringing this policy forward is to effect behavioural change that will improve environmental outcomes? But it is particularly concerning when he says: “Well, irrespective of whether or not people change their behaviour and consume or produce less waste, I still want to collect exactly the same amount of money, one way or the other.” Does that not underlie the fact that this is not a policy to reduce people’s waste because if that were the case surely there would be a financial incentive for them to reduce their waste and this is not the case? Does the Minister share my concerns with that, especially in the context of how this might affect businesses in the Island?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am concerned about the impact this charge will have on businesses. I think every Member should be concerned and should consider it very carefully. I think in some instances it will affect the behaviour, some businesses will think twice about the resources they use and will make reductions. But I am particularly concerned about industries in the hospitality and the agricultural sectors who have no choice. They have no choice but to use a liquid resource and many of them are utilising very best practices now. They simply will not be able to reduce their charges significantly when the charge comes into play. Also, I am minded to think about, as we have just been talking about it, health providers and care homes, our other very large users of liquid waste products, so they are going to be hit particularly hard, which is why we must have this economic impact study before the States make a decision.

3.10.4 The Connétable of Grouville:

Does the Minister not think it should be his department taking the lead on this? His job, it seems to me, is to look after businesses and rather than the person who is trying to generate the money doing the report, it really should be his department and he should be proactive in providing us with the information we will need when we come to make the final decision.

Senator L.J. Farnham:

The fact of the matter is that it is the Department for Infrastructure that is leading on this, so that it would just be a duplication of work if my department was to do the same thing. Having said that, if the impact assessment on the liquid waste charge is deemed to be insufficient then I do retain the right to do some extra work on that and I will do that working in partnership with my fellow Ministers.