

**Deputy M. Tadier of the Chief Minister regarding whether he would ask Ministers responsible for signing off loans from the Jersey Innovation fund to ‘step down’:  
[1(128)]**

Given that Senator Ozouf was not the only Minister to have signed off loans from the Jersey Innovation Fund, will the Chief Minister also be asking Senators Farnham and Maclean to ‘step aside’ from their ministerial duties until the relevant investigation has fully reported back?

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

The Assistant Minister with responsibility for Financial Services, Digital, Competition and Innovation stepped aside after the Comptroller and Auditor General report was published and is therefore sadly no longer an Assistant Chief Minister. This was an honourable action as he was the most recently delegated Minister for Innovation and he did this to allow a review into all actions without fear or favour. The 3 reviews that have been initiated will get to the facts into all aspects of the failings surrounding the Jersey Innovation Fund. The review looking into the political responsibility will be published, as I have indicated in a written answer this morning, and if the review’s findings show that further action is necessary I will consider it at that time.

**3.3.1 Deputy M. Tadier:**

It is not possible under the States of Jersey Law or under our protocols to suspend a Minister as a neutral act, which one might do to a public employee. But one might assume that what happened with Senator Ozouf is as close to that as we can get; him stepping aside while the investigation takes place. Given the fact that presumably Senators Farnham and Maclean are also honourable men should it not be appropriate given the fact that they have also signed off high level and failed innovation grants, and that they should also step aside from their ministerial duties so that the investigation can not only do its job but be seen to do its job without any of the incumbents who were present during those key moments being seen to be in office?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

Both Ministers that the Deputy referred to are indeed honourable men and they are getting on delivering on behalf of this community. As I said in my opening answer, Senator Ozouf was the person who most recently had political responsibility of being delegated and that is why he chose honourably to step aside. We should now let the reviews take their course and once those reviews are finalised and, in the case of the political one, published, then if further action is required that further action will be taken, as I indicated at the last States sitting.

**3.3.2 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour:**

I think the Chief Minister’s definition of honourable is very different to mine. Will the Chief Minister explain that in the reviews that he will be conducting these will include statements and commitments made to States Members in the States Assembly and if not, why not?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

They will look at all aspects surrounding the Innovation Fund. That will involve emails, that will involve matters on the public record in this Assembly recorded in Hansard, that will involve statements made externally as well. I would just say that it is easy for Members of this Assembly to criticise others who have responsibility for decisions but I would ask him to withdraw the implication in his statement that the stepping aside of Senator Ozouf was not an honourable action, because it was.

**3.3.3 Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier:**

Do we understand from the Chief Minister that 3 reviews are underway into the Innovation Fund, but only one will be made public?

[10:00]

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

There is one being undertaken by external accountants. That may, as I said in my written answer this morning, or may not be appropriate to be published, dependent on commercial sensitivity, so that will have to be decided when that work is undertaken. The review into actions by staff, it is most unlikely that that will be published because it will be involving individual staff and whether there is any disciplinary processes to be followed. But the political review, I have given the undertaking, as I did from day one, that it is appropriate that that is published and put into the public domain.

**3.3.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis of St. Helier:**

The Chief Minister will be aware that P.A.C. (Public Accounts Committee) are doing a review into this on the back of the C. and A.G.'s (Comptroller and Auditor General) report and the Council of Ministers' review. They have kindly shared the terms of reference with P.A.C. for which we are grateful. However, one of the items talks about identifying periods in which the different Ministers were responsible for elements of the Innovation Fund, setting it up, administering it and so on. I think Members are perhaps quite confused as to what the time periods were because legislation went through quite late in terms of delegating responsibility to the Assistant Minister. I wonder if the Chief Minister could either today or some other time outline very clearly as to what responsibilities were taken on by whom over what period. I think Members are somewhat confused as to who is responsible for what when.

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I thank the Deputy for his question; indeed, I think his analysis is correct as questions in this Assembly showed at the, not the last States sitting, but the one before that, I think it was. That is part of the work that needs to be undertaken so there is absolute clarity about who had responsibility for what at what point during the period, and it is providing that clarity that is going to help then answer some of the questions around accountability, about what was transferred, how it was transferred and to whom it was transferred. Those issues will, for any Member that is still not clear from the Comptroller and Auditor's report, be clarified through this other work, particularly through the review into political involvement.

**3.3.5 Deputy M. Tadier:**

In asking this question, I am responding to many members of the public who have spoken to me, and I am sure others, who cannot understand why one Assistant Minister has had to resign but 2 other current Ministers who are also involved in the Innovation Fund debacle have remained in post, so the final supplementary is simply to get more information on the record. Did at any point the current Minister for Treasury and Resources and the current Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture either offer their resignation or were they asked to resign following the publication of the C. and A.G.'s report?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

The former Assistant Minister offered to resign. That, to my mind, was an honourable action because he at that point was the person who was delegated responsibility for the Innovation Fund. It is not right, while the reviews are now being undertaken, to try and second-guess what the outcome of those reviews will be. Of course the 3 Ministers involved during the course of the Innovation Fund all signed loans agreeing that money should be distributed in a certain way

to certain projects. They did that under advice, they did that at the recommendation of the board but these are issues that need to be appropriately considered so that I and other Members can make appropriate decisions once those reports have been published. That is the appropriate way rather than any suggestion of a kangaroo court or a witch hunt which some feel was delivered against the former Assistant Minister inappropriately but he chose that honourable act.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Well, would the Minister answer my question, though? I did ask a specific question about whether the other 2 ...

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

I am sorry, Deputy, that was your final supplementary. The Minister has answered in the way that he has answered.