

2018.11.06

**10 Deputy K.G. Pamplin of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding the viability of Fort Regent in its current form: [OQ.172/2018]**

Given figures from the Treasury show that Fort Regent has seen net expenditure over income of more than £800,000 in the last 3 years, will the Minister advise for how many years the Fort can remain functioning safely and economically on that basis in its current form?

**Senator S.W. Pallett (Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture - rapporteur):**

The Minister is currently out of the Chamber. I think he was going to delegate this question to myself.

**The Bailiff:**

He was. I am so sorry; I was a bit slow on the uptake, he has asked that you deal with it.

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

I thank the Deputy for the question, but before answering the question I need to acknowledge that the Minister for Infrastructure is effectively the landlord for Fort Regent and carries the building maintenance responsibilities with the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture through a delegation to myself providing facilities within the Fort as a tenant. Taking the financial element of the question first, neither the facilities within Fort Regent nor at our other sports centres are expected to return a profit. Sports centres right across the British Isles are operated as a public service. The challenge is to provide good sporting facilities while minimising the burden to the taxpayer. In that regard, we need to face the fact that the age and complexity of Fort Regent makes it extremely expensive to maintain. Premises and maintenance expenditure on the complex have exceeded £500,000 per annum in each of the last 3 years, and this is under a policy of carrying out only the necessary maintenance to keep it operational while the future use of the site is determined. The question of how many years the Fort can house the existing uses safely is really for the Minister for Infrastructure to answer as a landlord. What I can say is I will ensure the right actions are taken the moment the Minister for Infrastructure or his officials notify me that the complex is no longer safe or beyond economical use. I wish to stress that the Assembly really must have agreed a sustainable use for the Fort Regent site before that date arrives. I know that the Chief Minister is keen to move the process forward and I am committed to helping determine the future of Fort Regent in any way I can.

**4.10.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

I welcome the Senator's comments. I want to refer, if I can, to some comments he made to the media recently where he said that he felt that time is running out to revive the Fort and Ministers need to back someone to take on what will be a difficult and long-overdue task. In fact going on to say we are at a crossroads with the Fort, it is getting to the stage where we do not have much time left to take action. Given his comments and what he has just said, will he be urging that, as we go on, giving this money to continue the maintenance, which is clearly going on, and increasing, that crossroads has been passed and we have to take action now?

**Senator S.W. Pallett:**

I could not agree with the Deputy more. Those comments were made because I believe that is where we are. I think the severity of the current situation is accepted by the Chief Minister. I have

spoken to him very recently about putting together what will be a working party that will move forward with this. The steering group was doing good work prior to the elections; I would like to see that work carried on, but I think we are at a crossroads; I think the amount of money we currently spend on the building is not sustainable moving forward and we do need a long-term future. But all of us in here want a long-term sustainable future and a successful Fort Regent. But if I asked everybody in here they would all say something different as to what that future use would be, and there is the conundrum. We need to find out and we need to work out what that future use will be and I think it does need to be sustainable and it needs to be viable.

#### **4.10.2 Deputy R. Labey:**

Is part of the problem this dual nature of the responsibility in that one department, Infrastructure, holds the purse strings and yet the policy initiative is coming from the Sport Department or the Economic Development Department, and is there a danger that these properties fall between 2 stools in that regard? I am thinking of the Havre des Pas Lido, which seems to have suffered from the same syndrome.

#### **Senator S.W. Pallett:**

The Deputy picks on what I think has been one of the potential issues and a problem. I agree with him. One of the things I will be asking both the Chief Minister and the Minister for Infrastructure for is that whoever takes over the responsibility for moving this project forward has a delegated responsibility for those buildings. In terms of the sports division, I think it would be more sensible if the Minister or Assistant Minister that has responsibility for developing sport has delegated responsibility for the sports facilities and their future. We are currently looking at a sports facility strategy moving forward. Some of that work has been completed but there is more work to do. It would be easier if it came under the roof of one Minister or one Assistant Minister, so I agree with him.

#### **4.10.3 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Can I just ask the Senator that, given his comments and his passion for this, will he be seeking the role of the champion for moving Fort Regent going forward, just so I get that clarification from the Chief Minister?

#### **Senator S.W. Pallett:**

I have made my feelings known to the Chief Minister and other Ministers as well that, he is right, I do have a passion for sport and I do have a passion for Fort Regent, as many of us do, because many of us have a long history with the building and I want to see it used for public use and retained for public use. So the answer is yes, I would like to lead that piece of work, but that is not in my control. I have made it clear that I think it does need to have a political champion. If it is me, great, if it is not me then I will put pressure on the political champion to make sure it moves forward. But the answer is yes, I would love to be involved with it and I would love to be the person that gets some momentum with this project.