

2019.03.26

14 Deputy J.H. Perchard of the Chief Minister regarding the recruitment of Jersey-based women to boards: [OQ.77/2019]

Given that in evidence received by the Gender Pay Gap Review Panel it was stated that Jersey is losing approximate £8.5 million a year by not recruiting Jersey-based women to board positions; will the Chief Minister agree to develop a strategy and action plan, working with the private sector, as necessary, in order that more Jersey-based women are recruited to positions on boards?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (The Chief Minister):

I would be more than happy to take this matter forward for consideration. As I have previously stated, at 2 public hearings, in front of the Gender Pay Gap Review, it is an important matter which will need addressing, both through immediate actions, but also through long-term cultural and societal changes. Recruiting more Jersey-based women to boards is a challenge, which I recognise from my own time in the private sector, but just to show there has been some movement, as I stated to the Review Panel last week, I have written to all boards under Government of Jersey control, or ownership, asking for a review to be made in how a greater diversity in candidates could be reached. I have made the point that it should not be automatically assumed that all reappointments will be approved by default.

3.14.1 Deputy J.H. Perchard:

I welcome that letter from the Chief Minister. Does he not agree that a very easy second step would be to instruct all States boards to publish their statistics pertaining to board membership on a regular basis?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I think in the long-term yes, I do understand that there are a whole range of issues - as I think the Deputy has understood in some of the responses that have been given to her and in some of the questions she has been asking - about trying to get that data together immediately. As a long-term objective, I agree.

3.14.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

Given that a recent report from the Community Relations Trust found that the cost of childcare was a significant barrier to women's progression in the workplace, including up to board level, would the Chief Minister support increased investment in subsidising high-quality childcare from a much earlier age?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

As a principle that sounds very attractive. The reason I pause is I know that we do, I think, quite a lot in childcare already and my mind has gone slightly blank, because that was not the question I was thinking about when this question came up. I have no doubt that it will form part of the early years provisions, in other words, the works of the Minister for Education and the Minister for Children and Housing in progressing things moving forward. If it is not, it should be.

3.14.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Supplementary please. So, we only subsidise 20 free hours of term-time childcare of early education from the age of 3, so that is quite a lot less than other jurisdictions. Would the Chief Minister support the work of that policy board if they do seek to increase investment at an earlier age?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I have understood and am reminded by the Minister for Education that the Deputy sits on the board, so I shall no doubt be looking at the recommendations that come out of the board with interest. As with anything, we do need to know what the financial impact is, but as I said, as a principle it sounds very laudable.

3.14.4 Deputy K.F. Morel:

It was interesting to hear the Chief Minister describe this as a long-term issue. He is right, of course, but we know this because 30 years ago, as we heard in a public hearing of the Gender Pay Gap Review Panel, the States itself was trying to encourage more women into work; and yet here we are today, 30 years later, with the Chief Minister apparently still struggling to get things moving. Does the Chief Minister agree that Jersey needs to move quicker, the States of Jersey need to move faster and that this should be seen as a very short-term issue, because we need to deal with it quickly and not let the fact that women are not participating in the workplace, as much as they could be, continue to be an issue?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

There is a whole range of answers in that question. The one I would say is that the long-term bit was the difficulty of getting the data together because ... sorry, I will start again. The long-term issue, on a regular basis, was getting organisations to publish the data, which is what Deputy Perchard was referring to. The difficulty we have got in the short-term is trying to get the data, because they do not have it. Therefore, I could not insist on them publishing it tomorrow, because it will take them some time to get it together. What I am saying is, as a maybe medium-term, or long-term ambition they should be doing that, which is the point I was making. What we cannot do is do it on day one, tomorrow, because it takes time to compile that data and they have not got it. In terms of the ongoing principles, and that is part of the problem we are facing, this is why the societal changes coming through, if we only have a small pool of people, we are restricted to that pool. The job is to get more candidates, particularly women candidates in this instance, into that pool and how we do that is obviously in the discussions that we are waiting for the recommendations from the Review Panel.

3.14.5 Senator K.L. Moore:

Will the Council of Ministers commit to having regular action points on its agenda, in order to tackle and improve gender diversity in our community?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

As I said, once the welcome work of the Gender Pay Gap Review Panel is brought, I am sure there will be a number of action points that will come of it, that will fall on to the relevant Ministers and that will automatically come to the Council of Ministers.

3.14.6 Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Will the Chief Minister commit to the publishing of gender gaps, as they are referred to and ethnicity gaps on boards? So, gender gaps and ethnicity gaps being a statistical representation of gender and ethnicity for all States boards.

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I am very happy. As I said, I am waiting really for the holistic outcome from the board, so we can put everything together. But, again, as a principle I see no reason why we should not be doing that.