

2020.06.02

11 Deputy C.S. Alves of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding P.C.R. tests and negative results in order to fly (OQ.141/2020):

As some countries start to accept incoming flights will the Minister advise whether there is capacity in the Island for people wishing to return to their country of origin to have a polymerase chain reaction, P.C.R., test and to receive their results within the period of 72 hours before travelling, if that is required by the destination?

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

Last Friday the COVID-19 border testing trial commenced to test passengers arriving at Jersey Airport who choose in advance to opt in to the trial. The trial will be reviewed on a regular basis. Before committing testing for outward bound travellers we would want to make sure that such a provision would not have a material impact on the availability of testing for Islanders for diagnosis or screening. It is hoped that in time a definitive global standard for testing travellers will be established with broad international agreement on what is required at the border to keep countries' citizens safe from the spread of virus. That, we expect, would be grounded in evidence-based guidance and recommendations. We agree that travel to and from the Island is of importance to the Island and its economy and we recognise the need to establish an appropriate testing regime at our border as part of our long-term response to the pandemic.

3.11.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:

My question was quite specific referring to people wishing to return to their country of origin. I am not sure if the Minister is aware but we do have numerous members of the public who are currently stuck on the Island or wishing to return because their current circumstances are making it very difficult to live here. Can the Minister clarify whether these people, who basically require repatriation, would be able to have these tests if it is a requirement of their destination?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

This is an evolving situation because different jurisdictions are considering how to open up their borders and what arrangements need to be made at borders. So we are doing the same and we are going to need to receive information as to what might be required by countries that people are travelling to. Most of our flights will be through the U.K. I would have thought so we are particularly looking at the requirements that the U.K. may put in place for persons arriving there. Even those wishing to return further afield will probably have to return via the U.K. so therefore we have first to look at that initial step of what is the U.K. requirement. There is nothing preventing us doing what the Deputy is suggesting but just at the moment we are not able to say there are positive plans to do that because all of this has not yet been settled internationally, how airlines will start their routes once again and what measures will be in place at the airport. There is a lot of work going on both in Jersey and elsewhere to work out all these kinds of issues and I believe that the answer will come about probably within the next few weeks for the Deputy.