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14 Deputy K.F. Morel of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding main business sectors affected by Coviv 19: (OQ.204/2020)

What does the Minister assess as being the main business sectors adversely affected by the COVID-19 crisis and what are the key aims he has identified as being the reasons to provide help to these sectors, whether via fiscal stimulus or other means?

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

All sectors of our economy have been disrupted by COVID-19 to either a greater or lesser extent. We have seen a very resilient financial and professional services sector through the early adoption and readiness for home working and our valued agricultural sector has been able to continue largely unabated but not without challenges. I assess the most affected sectors, based on impact and length of disruption, would be hotels, the hospitality sector, visitor attractions, wholesale and retail businesses, health, beauty and fitness. That is perhaps not a completely full list but those, in answer to the Deputy's question, are what are assessed to have been the worst affected, largely through the restriction of trade. Some other sectors, such as construction, saw an immediate impact but then following that progressive release back to business through the construction permit scheme. Our key aims throughout the pandemic were to protect jobs and support business sectors and their employees where we had forced a cessation or restriction of trade upon them through the public health protection strategy and guidelines.

3.14.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:

This question was written before we had knowledge of the fiscal stimulus package that was announced last week, but I would like to ask the Minister how he sees the fiscal stimulus as announced will meet those aims that he has just stated?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

If we look at the second phase of fiscal stimulus announced last Friday, that will provide, I think, welcome support to a number of sectors across the economy, in addition to the support that Members will already know about. That, of course, is the payroll scheme, the bank loan guarantee scheme, the deferral of G.S.T. and social security and other fiscal support. There are various aspects of the scheme. The £100 voucher smart card scheme is untested. This is new. It is an innovative idea to try to help our economy and it is a way of putting money directly into the tills of businesses through Islanders, through the consumer. I am particularly pleased that that scheme will support technology using a smart card and that could be a pilot for something in the future, because from the digital technology available from the use of a smart card we will be able to have information provided on how and where the money is spent. I think that could be a significant benefit as we plan further fiscal support moving forward. I am part of a team of Ministers that work on this and the ministerial team are continuing to monitor the position and stand ready to receive officer advice and stand ready to continue to evolve the package of support that is in place.