

20.11.17

**9 Senator S.Y. Mézec of the Chief Minister regarding the publication of the Housing Policy Development Board's final report (OQ.337/2020):**

When will the Chief Minister publish the Housing Policy Development Board's final report and does he accept its recommendations?

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

The report was received by me, I believe, on Friday, 6th November. Members will recall that the vote of no confidence was on the following Tuesday. Basically, given the level of meetings over the past 10 days dealing with COVID-19, Brexit, border measures and also dealing with the vote of no confidence and the aftermath, there have been some fairly substantial time requirements, so I hope it will come as no surprise I have not yet read the report. I cannot, therefore, make an observation on the findings, although I am sure they will be very measured and balanced. But as soon as I have managed to get to reading the report, it is intended to publish that report in due course and obviously then the findings and recommendations will be then brought in and obviously be of great interest both to the Minister for Children and Housing and myself.

**4.9.1 Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

It will not come as a surprise to the Chief Minister that one of the recommendations will be to implement rent stabilisation and it will not be a surprise because I gave the Chief Minister advanced notice of that. Could the Chief Minister outline whether he supports rent stabilisation or whether he will be conflicted, as he said he would be, for another housing matter?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

The short answer is I will make that judgment when I have read the report and the recommendations.

**4.9.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

When the report is finally published and he does read it, if it contains mechanisms to reduce or to stop buy-to-lets by people who do not live here, would he support that?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

One word: absolutely. I was very clear from an election commitment and it is something that has been raised as well from around the Council of Ministers, I am just not entirely sure how tricky the legislation is, is that what I will refer to as external buy-to-lets, which is people coming in, people external to the Island buying a residential property for future rental is not something that instinctively feels right and when we have any issues around demand and supply.

**4.9.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Is he aware of what stance the new Minister for Children and Housing has taken on this issue?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

My understanding is it is similar to mine but I will also go and have a discussion with him on that matter.

**4.9.4 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Is the Minister likely to support any commitments to reduce rental stress for those in the private and States sector?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

Sorry, Sir, could the Deputy repeat the question?

**The Bailiff:**

Are you likely to support any measures taken to reduce rental stress, was the expression, I believe, Deputy Tadier?

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

That is right, Sir.

**The Bailiff:**

In the public and private sector.

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

I think it depends on what the Deputy means by rental stress. Because notionally, depending on the nature of the tenant, for example, in, shall we say, Andium-style accommodation, it depends on the proportion. But many tenants will be already receiving income support, therefore, provided those are at the right level, which I have always understood to be the case, then in theory those tenants should be protected from rental stress.

**4.9.5 Deputy M. Tadier:**

The standard definition of rental stress is when a household spends more than 30 per cent of their income on housing costs. Given that Jersey sees a vast excess for many people in private or social sector, what steps would the Minister like to see brought forward?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

We are getting very much into designing housing policy on the floor of the Assembly at no notice. What I have said is I will go away and read the recommendations of the Housing Policy Development Board and obviously we will be discussing with the Minister what the best way forward is on any of those recommendations that we believe are reasonable and implementable. I am not aware of any that are not but, as I said, I have not yet read the recommendations.

**4.9.6 Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

Given that the Chief Minister has endorsed the Government Plan which specifically says in it that there will be funding allocated to implement rent stabilisation next year, can we take it as read that the Chief Minister will wholeheartedly support this fundamental way of improving housing affordability for renters in the Island? Finally, would he like to perhaps give a better go than his newly-appointed Minister at offering what he thinks the definition for rent stabilisation is?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

Anything that is in the Government Plan, provided it is approved by the Assembly, will also remain a commitment that the Council of Ministers will be committed to implementing, bearing in mind the constraints of COVID. In terms of rent stabilisation, I am not going to attempt to do a definition on the floor of the Assembly. The Senator and I have had one or 2 conversations about his understanding of it and I am still alive to that issue.