

23.03.21

18 Deputy M.B. Andrews of the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture regarding negotiations with France (OQ.40/2023)

Will the Minister provide an update on the negotiations which have taken place with our French counterparts since he took office?

Deputy K.F. Morel (The Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture):

The Assembly will I hope be aware that I have committed to deepening our cultural and economic links with France, particularly with the *Départements* of Ille-et-Vilaine and La Manche, our most proximate neighbours. To that end, I have visited Brittany twice to explore greater connectivity with St. Malo and also Rennes Airport. I have also explored opportunities for local businesses and also to develop artistic and cultural links with the Brittany region. I will also be visiting Normandy next month to discuss air and sea connectivity. I would like to make particular note of the work of the TransManche Development Group, who have been very supportive of this engagement and they have supported officers from the Economy Department and also from Jersey business in establishing ties with French businesses and partners. I have also engaged directly with French counterparts on a number of occasions, including as recently as last week, when the Minister for Home Affairs and myself met virtually with the President of the Conseil de la Manche.

3.18.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister confirm whether he has engaged or there has been an engagement of more francophone civil servants either in his department or departments that he works with and will he also suggest whether he thinks it is beneficial and should be considered more of a norm to have bilingual French speakers working in relevant government departments?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

A very interesting question. I do consider it would be beneficial if there were more speakers of French in the Government of Jersey, particularly in areas which are likely to come in contact with France for government work. I am not sure how many French speakers there are in the Department of the Economy. I know of one whose French is okay, in my estimation, but outside of that I do not know any. So I could not say that I have been supported by French speakers from the department in any of my meetings. I have been supported by French speakers from places like Maison de la Normandie and also places like TransManche Development Group, but not so much from the department itself.

3.18.2 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

What consideration, if any, has the Minister given to subsidising Manche Iles Express?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Consideration has not been given yet. What I have done is signal my openness to consider that and so I hope that when I meet next month that will be a subject that I will be able to discuss with the President of la Manche.

3.18.3 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Is there support for that subsidy from the Council of Ministers?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I have not yet asked the Council of Ministers because I do not know. Basically these questions are too early. I have not even got to the point of asking the President of la Manche where we would like to go with Manche Iles Express. So once I understand that in a more concrete manner I would then be able to take any developments to the Council of Ministers. But, as such, it is just too early to even ask the Council of Ministers.

3.18.4 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Following on from Deputy Tadier's question, would the Minister consider that French speaking is an essential part of an officer's role in the States employ?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

Personally, yes, I do believe French speaking should. I mean not for every officer because not every officer will have any need to speak French. But I think there are some key roles within Government where French speaking should be an important part of the skills that certain officers bring to their roles. Yes, it should be, I believe, and I think it is a sign of Jersey having lost, or at least loosened, its relationship with France that the Government of Jersey does not have that many French speakers in the Government of Jersey.

3.18.5 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would the Minister be prepared to communicate with S.E.B. (States Employment Board) in this regard to ensure that, during interview processes for particular officers where it is important, that it forms part of the qualification requirement?

Deputy K.F. Morel:

I will of course be willing to speak to the chair of S.E.B. and the vice-chair of S.E.B. about that. I would also like to say that I think one area where we really do need to strengthen our French speaking is in the area of communications, the Communications Department. The reason I say that is because, if anyone seeks to look at *Ouest-France*, the regional French newspaper with 30 million readers, so it is effectively a national newspaper, they will see that there are many, many articles about Jersey and their genuine interest in Jersey. It is not negative about Jersey, they are not seeking to down Jersey, they are just reporting on things that happen in Jersey in a way that you do not get from the U.K. media, who tend to perhaps take a more negative view if they ever cover Jersey. So, in my view, if people in the Communications Department were able to engage with the French media, that would really help this Island in developing its identity, not just in France, but in Europe and also the U.K.