

2. Annual Business Plan 2008 (P.93/2007): Amendment (P.93/2007 Amd.)

The next is an amendment from the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, the first amendment. I will ask the Greffier to read the amendment.

The Greffier of the States:

Paragraph (a): In paragraph (b), after the words “set out in Summary Table C, page 45”, insert the words; “except that the figure for total States net expenditure in 2008 shall be increased by £600,000; in 2009 by £1,519,000; in 2010 by £1,489,000; and in 2011 by £1,447,000 to extend opportunities for children aged 3 and 4 years to access free education, 20 hours per week, during term time, with this education being available to children after they reach their third birthday.”

2.1 Senator M.E. Vibert:

I am pleased that the previous debate has come to an end and I believe that the withdrawal of the amendment to cut budget demonstrates the majority of States' Members understand the need to maintain and enhance our public services for the benefit of the Island. We could have gone for a vote, Sir, and we did not and I am glad that the PAC agreed to withdraw the amendment and I would be very sad if any States' Member did not believe that we should maintain and enhance the services we provide to the public of the Island. That is why government is here. In proposing this amendment to the Business Plan I wish to make absolutely clear that what I have proposed all along is extra funding being made available to extend free nursery education to all 3 to 4 year-olds. I have not, and never have, proposed taking the funding away from overseas aid, or anywhere else. My amendment calls for the States to accept that providing early years' education for all is something we should do and should vote the extra funding needed to do it. What this debate should be about, and what for me it is about, is whether extending the opportunity for early years' education to all our 3 and 4 year-olds is the right thing to do in the Island's best interests. If it is, as I believe, the right thing to do we should do it. I know the argument is stick to the cash limit proposed, but that cash limit, as we have just been debating, is not magically fixed. It is up to States' Members to fix it. In that cash limit it has already been proposed that there is growth in it for health, the prison and social security for new and enhanced services and I support this. What I am also saying is extending the opportunity for early years' to all 3 to 4 year-olds is of an equal priority and we should include it as well. There are funds available. It means putting less into reserves but supporting early years' will also mean spending less overall in the long run. As I said, the States is facing a budget, that we have just withdrawn the amendment from, that agreed to 2.2 per cent growth; that is if you take out the other things that the Chief Minister mentioned. Growth, well below RPI (Retail Price Index), growth in health services, prison, and social security and, as I said, I support all these that are needed but so is extending our current free early years' education opportunities, and for just adding a relatively small percentage to spending we can achieve this social good. Sir, I would also like to make clear now that there is no possibility of finding the funding required for extending early years' education from the existing ESC budget. We, like other departments, have been making major efficiency savings for some years now and there is simply not the capacity to find the £1.5 million a year required from 2009 onwards. Education, Sport and Culture has already had to cut back on school budgets to part-fund this year's pay deal and that hurt. I have the letters from the head teachers telling me how much it hurt and there is simply no scope for further major savings of the magnitude required. If there were I would not be coming to the States today with this amendment to the Business Plan. I am also not arrogant enough to think I know where it could come from in other departments' budgets. I know they have been making savings as well. This is why my amendment asks the States to increase the overall amount to allow this essential expansion of the opportunity for all to access early years' education. The increase amounts to a 0.11 per cent increase in 2008 and a 0.26 per cent increase in 2009 and 2010 in overall States' revenue. Balanced against the gain of offering 20 hours per week term time free early years' education to the half of 3 to 4 year-olds who are currently denied this opportunity. The money is there to pay for it. We currently have an excess

of income over expenditure budgeted. It simply means putting less in the consolidated reserve and instead investing in the future of the Island. There is no question of the demand for this service. Education, Sport and Culture had to turn down over 170 applications for nursery class places this September which is why I am asking the States to provide funding so as not to be in the same situation of disappointing so many families next year as well. Also, Members will have received quite a number of emails from parents supporting the amendment. To turn to say why we should be funding this extension to our early years' provision, extensive research has proved that high quality early education and care is beneficial for the growth and development of children. If it had not, and was not, we would have been getting it wrong in Jersey for the past 23 years. The States agreed to start providing free nursery education back in the early 1980s and the first nursery class at a State primary school opened at Grainville School in 1983/1984. But we have not been getting it wrong. The benefits of high quality nursery education has been demonstrated time and time again locally by the children who have received the benefit of such education entering their reception class ready for school. The then Education, Sport and Culture Committee, under my presidency, set out its vision for early years' education in July 2005. A key element of that policy was that all 3 to 4 year-olds should have access to affordable, high quality education and care. This commitment to provide access to early years' education for all was also driven by the inequity and fairness which was developed under the early years' policy. That policy has been, and still is, unless the States change it, to establish nursery classes at all our States' primary schools. This policy, although well-intentioned has led to the present inequity whereby about half of those children aged 3 to 4 have access to free early years' education and half do not. Many parents call it a lottery. If we continue to follow this policy we face a number of issues; (1) the length of time it will take before there are enough places for every child whose parents wish them to access one - over 15 years, best timescale. So, the inequity, the unfairness and the lack of opportunity for all to benefit from high quality early years' education will continue for all that time; (2) the capital costs involved in providing all these extra new nursery classes, approximately £7 million at today's prices, and the revenue costs will be higher than if my amendment is agreed and we have a partnership with the private sector; (3) the adverse impact on private sector providers if we continue to provide nursery classes in schools that will cause problems with the availability of all child care; and (4) the fact that nursery classes attached to primary schools alone will not meet the full needs of many working parents. By agreeing the funding I am requesting all of these issues can be overcome; (1) all children whose parents wish it would have accessed the 20 hours free early years' education from the start of the new school year next September. Getting rid at a stroke the lack of opportunity and that unfairness that so bedevils our existing provision; (2) there will be saving of the £7 million capital costs as a proposal is for a partnership with private and voluntary providers who already have the premises to provide the extra early years' education places needed; (3) it will have a positive impact on private sector providers, encouraging them to offer more and improved childcare for other age groups; and (4) it will provide for the needs of many working parents who wish their child to have both high quality education and care in the same setting. It will, in essence, raise the quality of all nursery provision and to ensure our youngest children all get the opportunity of the best possible educational start in life. It will mean regardless of parental circumstances all children will have the opportunity to receive the same nursery entitlement, whether in a public or private setting, doing away with the current unfairness. A 500 signature petition in support of the amendment was handed to the Chief Minister - I am not sure which day; we have been here so long now - I think 3 days ago. Tuesday, thank you Chief Minister. A petition was handed to the Chief Minister on Tuesday - 500 signatures - just about as many signatures as the number of 3 to 4 year-olds we currently deny access to free early years' education. A number of nurseries and parents also gathered in the Royal Square to show their support. Of course many could not attend because they are working parents and Members will have received, as I said, a considerable number of emails on the subject. The Council of Ministers has given its approval in principle for my proposals for early years' provision. They support them. Unfortunately they do not believe, or the majority did not believe at the time, that the funding could be made available so soon. I am asking Members today, Sir, not only to give their approval to my proposals in principle but in fact by voting the extra funds required to this much needed extension of our early years' provision can be introduced from next September. I am also mindful of the Treasury and Resources Minister's exaltation not to spend more but the Treasury and Resources Minister also said

we need to take a longer term view. My argument is that we cannot not afford to do it now. Not only in the best interests of young children and their parents, but in the best interests of the Island as a whole. Extensive research demonstrates that high quality early education and care is beneficial for the growth and development of children. This in turn brings significant benefit for society as a whole. A wealth of research, including an extensive study undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers, not known particularly as bleeding heart liberals, illustrates that the economic and social benefits far outweigh the costs. The longer term view as advocated by the Treasury Minister. There was a review of all, or many, of the research things done to high quality childcare the benefits and costs of high quality childcare by Martin Sheffer(?) and Associates, September 2005. If I may quote a little, Sir; this is the executive summary: "The purpose of this report is to review the methodology and findings of existing benefit cost analysis and related studies of high quality childcare programmes. Studies of childcare programmes targeted at disadvantaged or otherwise high risk children have determined, based on statistical comparisons of participant and control group outcomes, that they have a wide range of positive educational, social and economic impacts. The value of these positive impacts, measured by reduced special education and grave repetition costs reduce criminal justice and related costs due to crime, reduce social services costs, increased participant earnings and parental benefits, time savings or increased earnings have been estimated at 2 to 9 times the costs of the programmes. The general consensus is that targeted childcare programmes can provide very attractive returns and a far more efficient then later remedial effects required when early intention is not undertaken." They go on to say: "Universal high quality childcare programmes will capture the child development benefits for the disadvantaged or otherwise high risk children that enrol and increase maternal earnings or other parental benefits for all participants. Improved quality of care will also benefit less disadvantaged children, though not possibly to the same extent as disadvantaged children. Studies have been undertaken in Canada, the UK and the US that estimate the benefits and cost of universal, high quality childcare programmes. The studies all suggest the benefits of universal, high quality childcare programmes exceed the costs." It makes good economic sense. So, why is high quality early years' education and care so important, so valuable? Another one of the most respected research bodies on the subject, EPPE (Effective Provision of Pre-School Education) Research, at London University School of Early Childhood Education, outlined the benefit of such provision in terms of socialisation, health and learning. Their research has shown in socialisation that children by the age of 3 need to socialise with their peers to develop good communication skills, social awareness and the ability to resolve conflicts. I will add, Sir, that Jersey's Physical Speech Therapy Department is promoting early intervention because of the growing number of school age referrals. Health; children over 3 who enjoy good preschool education enjoy better health and mental wellbeing. Do we not want that for all our children? Remember in Jersey we now have a higher percentage of obese children than in the UK. Learning; children over 3 who attend good preschool education enjoy better sustained thinking, have a greater ability to solve problems and to be independent learners. Exactly what we need to provide a well-educated and skilled workforce for the future. Good quality early years' education is also proven to lead to fewer social delinquency problems in later years and importantly, again in terms of cost, EPPE Research confirms the saving of £8 in the longer term for every £1 spent on high quality preschool education. The extension of free universal nursery education will support the many families in Jersey who struggle to reconcile work and family life. It will reduce the use of unregistered childcare and ensure all have access to high quality educational experience, critical for their intellectual, social and emotional growth and development. It will also help support the social integration of families from outside the Island who come to settle here and it will make the Island a more attractive place for local young families to stay in or return to. Young families who might otherwise be put off by the high cost of childcare on top of the high cost of living and the high cost of housing. Young families we so desperately need and are critical to our future, given Jersey's aging population. These are some of the reasons, Sir, why I say we cannot afford not to do it now. Putting this provision off will be to the detriment of the future of our Island. Do not just take my word for it, also listen to what the Jersey Childcare Trust, headed by the States' former economic advisor, Colin Powell, has to say about it. Colin Powell, Sir, who I do not think would be supporting anything if he did not think it was also in the best economic interests of the Island. The Jersey Childcare Trust issued a press release on early years' care and they came out in strong support of the

Education Minister's call for more State support, for free pre-school places. The Trust is so supportive and it raises a number of key issues in its press release saying there is demonstrable academic and social benefits in the formative years as adolescents and in later life which can be derived from investment in children in their earliest year. Lack of adequate investment and support from the earliest years can be the root of problems surrounding the activities of young people as research clearly shows. Investment in children can pay long term dividends for a community at large which more than justifies the investment called for. They go on to say Jersey childcare is of particular economic significance as both parents and young families have to work, additionally costs of providing early years' education and childcare are also increasing which also has an impact on availability and choice. While the childcare facilities they say provided by both the public and private sectors are of a high standard the free service provided by the public sector does not meet the Island's total needs. So, many parents rely on the childcare service made available by private providers. The Trust childcare should be affordable to all and there is a need to recognise the difficulties in accessing childcare faced by those on relatively low income when they are unable to obtain a place at a free public sector nursery. There is a need for public private sector partnership in childcare provision and equality of treatment for parents and children. That was in the Jersey Childcare Trust's press release supporting wholeheartedly what has been proposed today. Sir, Scrutiny are also starting to look at early years'. I am pleased the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel are now looking at early years', but without wanting to criticise in any way I wish it had been done sooner. The original report I brought and put before the States has been around since July 2005 and at every meeting I have had with the panel and their predecessors I have urged them to undertake such a review. I will, Sir, of course take seriously into account whatever findings Scrutiny come up with but believe it would be wrong to deny half of next year's 3 to 4 year-olds the opportunity of benefiting from high quality early years' education because we should have to wait for a Scrutiny review to report; not when it has been there to scrutinise for the past 2 years. We, Education, Sport and Culture, have consulted and scrutinised the early years' proposals ourselves over the past 2 years and have come forward with proposals that are backed by all the involved groups and parents. I know that Members had many emails on the subject. I picked one out that came recently. I will not use the name of the person concerned, but it reads: "I urge you to support the proposals for free nursery places for all 3 to 4 year-olds. I am a middle income earner, working for health and struggling to support my family. I have had to pay for childcare from when my child was 4 months old to this August. We failed to get a nursery place allocated and as my son was only 4 on 11th September we now have to pay for a 4th year of childcare. I pay my taxes and social security, but yet again I am penalised and fork out for others to benefit. Please rectify this inequality and ensure that every child has an equal opportunity in Jersey." So, while I accept that Scrutiny will be looking at it, I say please do not wait and I have been informed by the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Chairman, Deputy Mezbourian, that her panel, the Deputy of St. Mary, Deputy Pitman, and herself will not participate in the debate and will also abstain from voting on the amendment and I respect their decision. The PAC in their comment also want to put off making a decision because the Comptroller and Auditor General, with my wholehearted agreement and support, is currently carrying out a review of financial management and control in my department. I was the first to offer my department up and I welcome it. I welcome this review. I will act on any recommendations but because this review is going on it is no reason to deny early years' education to another 500 young children next year. Come back, say the PAC, after the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General) has reported, whenever that is, and ask for the money then. Well, there are a few problems with that; (1) the CAG's report is totally separate to the need for identified funding for nursery education and if funds are not voted now the timescale for introducing the new system will be very short to get into place for 2008 and I am not sure how I could come back and ask for more money if the States have just agreed this budget for next year. So, I do not think that is a practical way forward. No, Sir, I would like the States to make the commitment to extending early years' education now. It would be a false economy not to do so, saving a relatively small amount of money not knowing how much more will have to be spent in the future because of a failure to act now, but knowing it will be a lot more. Free universal nursery education makes sense on all levels. It does not discriminate against any sector and it will be relatively simple to promote and administer. If this funding is approved today we can provide free universal early years' education for 20 hours per

week, 38 weeks per year, which research tells us delivers the optimum educational benefits and that would come in from next September. Providing nursery education is a long term economic and social good, just like schooling. There are about 1,000 children in each nursery cohort and they only get one chance. At present we can only offer half those children that chance. Every year we put this off more children miss out. Let us end the current nursery education lottery. Let us take a long term view and invest in our, and our children's future - the Island's future, now. It will be one of the best investments the States will have ever made and the return will be so much more than worth it. Sir, I urge Members to support the amendment.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Is the amendment seconded? **[Seconded]**

Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier:

Under Standing Orders 106 a Member is required, at the earliest opportunity, to declare an interest, if one has one. Albeit under that Standing Order, Sir, my interest as I have a child who is 2 years old and will be turning 3 at that time. It is only general in its principle, but I am declaring that interest and will remain in the debate, Sir, and I will be voting.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

If I may also declare an interest; the interest that the Senator has referred to in his introductory speech, although I am the only Member of the Education and Home Affairs Panel within the Chamber this afternoon, Sir, the panel have decided to declare an interest in this as we are conducting a review and I would therefore like to withdraw from the Chamber, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, a matter entirely for you, Deputy.

2.1.1 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

The Minister said earlier he was in favour of efficiencies and then in his opening words he effectively says he will ignore this House. Not exactly the frame of mind promised us by the Chief Minister.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I do not remember saying I would ignore the House at all. I would never say such a thing.

Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

He no longer has to pay £1.3 million for teachers' pensions. If we remember that was taken to the centre, so why is he not using that? I certainly cannot find a commensurate reduction in his budget for that £1.3 million and I have gone back a couple of years. I too have had a lot of emails. One thing I did notice though, most of the addresses were from banks and businesses in the financial sector. I replied with a question; where are we going to find the funds? Would it be just as equitable to charge everybody? What are your ideas? I got back most of the emails saying, if it is going to be an equal level charge across the board, so be it, as long as it is equitable. So, I do question the Minister's comments. I would remind the Minister and the House, as I have been doing over the last couple of days, that there is no such thing as a free lunch. If we give free childcare to everyone then it will be paid for in increased taxes, probably by those people who have no children. Now, is that equitable? I am wondering if the report that the Minister quoted from was the one by Durham University, because Durham University have also done a lot of work on early years' childcare and their report effectively concluded -- it questioned the efficacy of this education. They found no evidence of improvement in education and said that further work needed to be done. I can give Members the reference afterwards, if they like. On 8th September 2006 the Comptroller and Auditor General issued a report on the Childcare Trust. It commented the 1996 working party came to the view that there were unlikely to be sufficient resources for the States to provide all childcare facilities and support. That there would always be a need for a variety of provision to meet people's differing needs and that a focal point was needed --

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy, sorry, I am going to have to interrupt you, Deputy, the Assembly is not quorate.

Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

Can we ring the bell, Sir, please?

The Deputy Bailiff:

I know you are keen to ring the bell.

Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

Can I amend Standing Orders, Sir?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well, we are now quorate again. Please carry on.

Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

The working party in 1996 came to the view that there were unlikely to be sufficient resources for the States to provide all childcare facilities and support; that there would always be a need for a variety of provision to meet people's differing needs and that a focal point was needed to stimulate and facilitate new developments and co-ordinate action overall as well as attract more funding. The main theme of the Auditor General's report was that the Education Department - of which the Minister has been the Minister for some 5, 6, 7 years - the Education Department had not made up its mind what it was funding the Trust for and should get on with making up its mind. In fact they have still not done this and they have simply said to the Trust that they ought to get on with raising more money from the private sector. To their credit the Trust has done this but the department's funding has continued without any greater clarity. What have they been doing? One of the topics, the PAC will be discussing with the Chief Officer of Education is the actions to be taken by Education, Sport and Culture since the Auditor General issued his report. The Minister mentioned the report on financial management and control and at the same time the Scrutiny Panel is conducting a review. Really, if we do not know the results of these it would be absolutely crass for this House to vote money which is over the budget for this project without the benefit of these reports. We are voting in the dark, Sir. We really cannot vote money for something, and as the Minister said this morning, we must have business plans as he is planning for the national gallery. Well, we really do not have the plans and the cost effectiveness in order to assess this project if we vote now and quite honestly, Sir, if we defeat this we just throw it out. So, if the Minister would like to withdraw it and the Treasury Minister may bring it back in due course. But if we defeat it, it is gone and it is into oblivion. So, I ask the Minister to think extremely carefully about that.

2.1.2 The Deputy of St. Clement:

It disappoints me to have to say this, but I fear that some of the sentiments that Senator Vibert displayed in his speech were exactly the reason that the PAC brought their amendment to the Business Plan this morning. I hope that we can deal with this amendment relatively quickly, because I do not for one minute believe that it is about preschool education. It is in actual fact about failing educational policy. Every single aim and benefit that the Minister has outlined for extending preschool education could quite simply be met by his department means testing a current provision. The Minister said that there was greater demand than there are places. The Minister said that the current system was a postcode lottery. He is absolutely right, but I ask you, Sir, and I ask Members who, what or which department has caused this problem and I believe that it is in fact the Education Department. The Education Department has been responsible by its policy for the decline in private provision of nursery care across the Island. I have firsthand experience in this in St. Clement. We have a situation, Sir, where the current policy allows wealthy parents to put their children into a free place provided by Education and then when the time comes they take them out and they enrol them and they pay for them at St. Michaels. On the other hand we have a situation where parents of low income, because they live outside of the catchment area, are struggling, Sir, to find provision to care for their own children when they are trying to work as well and it is, to my mind, unacceptable.

Therefore, Sir, this debate is not at all about preschool education, it is purely about the way the department is running its affairs and, as I said earlier, the department could simply means test its current provision. One other point that occurs to me, Sir, and I know that me being an accountant I can be a little bit nerdy about numbers and I apologise for that in advance. However, in the Minister's amendment he is asking us to approve, I believe, about £600,000 for next year, rising to £1.4 million and £1.4 million in the following years. The current amount budgeted in the Business Plan as before for 2008 is just short of £2 million for preschool education. In an answer earlier this week the Minister replying to a question from the Connétable of St. Helier said that currently we are providing places for about half of those children that will require them and we are providing 30 - this is important, Sir - hours a week. I like fiddling with numbers and if I fiddled with them correctly, Sir, we can take 10 of those hours to provide some of the funding for the other half of the children which means, if we are not going to means test, we only need to find money for another 10 hours. So, that on my calculator means that our provision only needs to be about £700,000 per annum anyway, not the £1.4 million that the Minister is requesting. So, I hope Members are in no doubt where I stand this afternoon. I urge them to reject this proposition because the Minister could simply deal with the issue and even if they did approve it my belief is that the numbers are flawed.

2.1.3 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

I did listen to the Minister's speech and I listened very hard because he told me he had quite a lot to say about early years and I kept listening and he kept on about the research and I have no doubt that his research is probably right, and I was on Education when this proposal was first mooted and we saw the bare bones. What I have is the same problem as Deputy Ferguson, in the Senator's proposition on page 4 he says: "In March this year I brought proposals to the Council of Ministers to provide the opportunity for free universal nursery education 20 hours per week term time beginning in September 2008. Although the Council of Ministers supported the proposals in principle it was unable to find the funding." I have also now checked with the Education Scrutiny Panel and apparently they have seen the proposals, albeit in confidence, and they have seen the minute the Council of Ministers approved. The problem is, Sir - and I think that adds up to about possibly 13 people without the 2 Assistant Ministers - it may be 15 States' Members who have seen these proposals. Yet the Education Minister, Sir, comes to this House and blindly asks us to give him, as it says in here, £600,000 and then £1.5 million for the next 4 years when I have no idea - he has not had the courtesy to tell me - how this will work. I do know when I was on Education, Sir, there was a very grave concern that it did not turn into a subsidy like rent rebate or rent abatement. Who is going to get the money? Is it the parent? Is it the private provider? Are we paying for childcare or are we paying for education? These were the biggest questions that were asked, and I know there was a scheme up to 3 or 4 years ago that was worked on. I am sure that is near fruition, Sir. Unless the Minister in his summing up completely gives me a lot more information about this scheme, I, and I hope others, as Deputy Ferguson has already said, withdraw and have a Members' briefing so we can all ask questions that he might not want in the public arena but I cannot see, Sir, why not. It is a basic scheme. It is how it is going to be provided and where do these figures come from? I also look and ask for them to turn to the annex on page 185. It does say: "Means testing to be introduced." This is in legislation that Education will need for early years: "Means testing will be introduced" - which is likely. How will it be done? I mean, some people in this House will agree that everybody needs means testing. Some people do not. I want to see the scheme. I want to know who it will be, how it will operate. I, Sir, do not think that that is too much to ask when we have an Education Minister who is telling us he wants X, X and X for the next 4 years to introduce this scheme. Really, Sir, I will listen and I hope - I do not know - the procedure may be for reference back or if the Minister will not withdraw, maybe somebody else. If they do not get the information, because I am telling you now there are some serious problems with this, we are blindly agreeing to money if we do not know how the proposed scheme would work. Sorry, Sir, while I am on my feet, I just cannot let the Minister get away with the remarks on his opening speech about the withdrawal of the amendment. I am sure, and I do not think it was that long ago, that this Minister or States' Member, Sir, could have been described as one of the angry men who were going to cut States' spending. He may not have been that young [Laughter], but my point, Sir, is he did not do himself any favours because he easily showed everyone in this House how an angry man of whatever age

can easily turn into a sarcastic, smug and a sniping Minister. That is exactly what I thought his remarks were. **[Members: Oh!]**

2.1.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I fully support early years' education, Sir. It dispenses with the current nursery lottery and not only is it good for young children but it allows mothers to return to work if they so wish, something at present which is often economically unviable. It is good for children, it is good for mothers and it will be good for Jersey. Local people in local jobs. Sir, this amendment has my full support. While I am on my feet, Sir, may I make reference to Amendment 2 and congratulate all concerned in its withdrawal. Anyone who has watched the evening news of late cannot help but be moved by the pictures of suffering of people overseas. In Africa alone --

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy, I am sure that is interesting but we must stick to the debate.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Very good, Sir. I will just make the point: 18 countries affected by floods. I will be supporting early years' nursery education, Sir, and I urge fellow Members to do likewise. Thank you.

2.1.4 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

I have a pretty fundamental problem with this amendment. I think it is in breach of the Strategic Plan which we adopted last year. Last year I brought an amendment to the Strategic Plan and I asked that the word "equitable" be inserted in the objective tabled by the Council of Ministers to providing affordable early years' care. Clearly, as Deputy Gorst has eloquently pointed out, this is not equitable. It seems to me that the Minister was charged by the end of the year to bring forward the proposal for equitable nursery care and he simply has not done it. It seems to me that that is a pretty fundamental problem. I was disappointed that I had to tease out the truth from the Minister in a question this week because nowhere in his report does he admit that his proposals are not equitable. People currently enjoy 30 hours. He said 5 of them are being looked after while they eat their snack lunch. Children currently, on the good side, enjoy 30 hours' free education from his department, and his proposal is only offering 20. You may argue, and some of the people who supported the Minister in the Royal Square earlier this week have said to me: "Well, it is better than nothing. At least it is a start." But it is not equitable and the Minister was charged to bring forward proposals by the end of this year for equitable nursery care and he has not done it. I think that is a very serious problem. Another problem which has been alluded to, I think, and again I wrote this last year and I quote from the amendment: "It is a matter of concern that in February this year [that is 2006], the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture has signed off the creation of another States subsidised nursery unit in spite of the responses to the Minister's own consultation process on Early Years R.C.54/2005 to which he has not responded despite assurances that he would do so before the end of 2005." This, by the way, is from a Minister who has just castigated Scrutiny for delaying and scrutinising his proposals. I continue in my amendment, together with many representations made to the department about the adverse impacts this outdated policy is having on private sector provision of nursery care. The issue of funding of early years' education and care has been the subject of numerous States questions, but this has not deterred the Minister from pressing ahead with the creation of another free day nursery. That, of course, opens in the autumn. Who can blame the parents in St. Peter and the Constable of St. Peter for welcoming a new nursery at the primary school? Of course we do welcome it, but as has been pointed out so ably by Deputy Gorst, take off those extra 10 hours that people are currently enjoying in his nursery schools and at least make those 10 hours charged for, and you have halved the bill to provide the funding which you need to extend the provision. If the Minister really wants a mauling and he does not withdraw this - and I think he is going to get a mauling - I would like to ask whether we will be able to vote on the 2 parts of the amendment separately. It does seem to me that while I am loathe to say that his department cannot make the savings and reorganise their financing of early school care, it does seem to me that if they are going to get that extra money from the Council of Ministers by no means should the overall revenue expenditure of the States increase to allow that. So I would be prepared, if I have to and he does not

withdraw this proposition, to support part (b) but not the first part (a) because that would break the revenue limits of the States.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think, Connétable, (b) is consequential on (a).

The Connétable of St. Helier:

I thought so.

The Deputy Bailiff:

(a) is the matter now before the Assembly, and the Minister was very clear in his speech. He wants -
-

The Connétable of St. Helier:

The extra money. Thank you, Sir.

2.1.5 The Deputy of Trinity:

What a difficult proposition, especially on the back of what has happened over the last couple of days. On one hand we are being asked to provide free education for 3 to 4 year-olds, but on the other hand are being told time and time again by the public to cut spending. We have heard that, and we have endured the last 3 days and we need to hear the message that has been said. Nobody can deny that the present system is unfair and unjust. It is just not a level playing field, but is this the way to make it so? After the debate these last 3 days, I think the answer is no. Looking at the Childcare Trust survey, they looked at the parent/household income within States-funded nurseries. A third had an income of less than £26,000, half had an income of between £26,000 and £60,000 and 17 per cent of them had an income of over £60,000. Those are receiving free education. We, as a body, are encouraging working parents to go back to work, to work longer hours, through the holidays. You may ask is that right. Are there any incentives for a parent to stay at home? Is there any encouragement or incentive for businesses to become more family friendly? If so, what are they? Perhaps some sort of partnerships with their staff. Has the Minister looked into the provision of being means tested? If not, why not? The most important issues are the needs of our 1,500 preschool children. Under-5 year-olds deserve high quality care in education. They are the core of this proposition. At this age, their minds are like blotting paper and must have access to good quality provision and, importantly, continuity of care so that the children who require longer hours are given this in a setting where the adults and environment remain the same. Is that achieved in 20 hours of free education? To me, it should be 37 hours if you are looking at all-round care. I really appreciate how difficult it is for parents to juggle provision of expensive childcare and working hours. I have said before it is the middle earners who have to pick up the cost as they are the ones who need all-day care, year round. These parents are the backbone of our working force. Our children are important and they should come first, and they need access to high quality care, but my great concern is the cost and whether this proposition will achieve it. I would like to know from the Minister that he has looked into partnerships with businesses to help provide this important resource, a climate of trust and mutual respect so that everyone is working to the same aim. Similar partnerships, perhaps, to what is done with the youth service. As I say, like in a school report, I think the Minister for Education could do better.

2.1.6 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I probably feel like one of the most unprepared Members there could possibly be for this debate. I thought that I was coming in understanding the issues and I have listened to some of the speeches already today and I have been thrown off my rocking horse. I believe in the entire ethos that the Minister is speaking about. I would like to just cover a couple of those things if I can and put them into a Jersey context because I do not think it is right to draw upon a parallel in another university that has conducted a study somewhere else. Jersey has a very unique society with a large number of mothers having to work. We have a very unique industry in the finance industry, in the way that it has settled into Jersey. We are endeavouring to spend economic development money in making sure

that people are prepared for lifelong learning and are put into jobs that will enable them to fulfil their functions for a lot longer and a lot less interrupted period than we have historically been used to. Although there are parental issues in respect of paternity leave and maternity leave, predominantly these issues are that the mothers and the fathers will probably have less time and influence upon their children on a daily basis than they did in the past. We may argue about whether or not we think that is a good thing for the children or a good thing for the family, but one thing that we cannot get away from is that we think that we need that to hold back the tide of immigration. We are re-skilling and we are re-training and we are endeavouring, as was made quite evident in the speech of the Assistant Minister for Economic Development, that our economy is not bringing in new resources where we do not need them. So it seems to make perfect sense to me that we would be able to provide childcare. It is not the first time and certainly will not be the last time that I make a speech that is all over the place. I cannot help that today, I am afraid, because I am a little bit all over the place and I feel that the proposition has left me there. One of the statements the Minister made was: "Childcare should be affordable to all." I absolutely agree with him. I think childcare should be affordable to all, but then when you start to listen to the 30 hours and the 20 hours and the means testing and the use, or the abuse in my view, of the nursery places for people who are going to just hike their kids into St. Michael's when they are able to, I think that is absolutely appalling. I watch mothers of children, very young children, taking their children into the workplace, and some questionable workplaces: laundrettes, cafeterias. Some of the people who come to Jersey from outside of Jersey, who have chosen to bring up a family, are paying such extortionate rents on their rooms that paying for childcare, especially as it is not something that they would do back in their own lands anyway, is just out of the question. There is no way they would consider that expenditure. Yet, when one looks at the child, one feels that although the mother and father are trying their best, that child perhaps should not be in that workplace. What does one do, report it, sympathise, empathise, or try to implement a policy that would enable them to move forwards? I have a couple of things to say, but the bottom line, I guess I am getting to, Sir, is that I do not want the Minister to be guessing as to where I am coming from. I hope he is going to be listening though. I am going to support him because I think that the ethos to what he is speaking about and everything that he has spoken of in his preamble is absolutely right. Health and well-being, better able to solve problems, fewer social delinquency problems in future years, £8 saved for every £1 spent. It will reduce the use of unregistered childcare or, in some cases, inappropriate childcare. As I have mentioned, some children are being in a workplace, for example, or in with dad in the van while he goes off and does his job or sitting in the back of the car while mum goes and cleans. This is not appropriate. Some children get sent back to their grandparents until they are full school-year age so that they live without their parents. It has been a trend for many people who have come to Jersey to make their children go home and be brought up under the care of their grandparents. Then for them to come into the schools' mainstream education and have the impact of not understanding the language I think has been detrimental, not only for the obvious detriments to the family and the child and the mother and father while they have been away and absent from each other, but also from the fact that the child is behind when the child comes to Jersey to enter school. They have not been used to the language. They have not been used to the customs. They find themselves in that same old chestnut with a door without a number on or, in some cases, with a room with a number on, not an address, and finding themselves in an environment that is totally alien to them, having come from the care of their grandparents' quite comfortable quarters into a new society. I know this speech is a bit all over the place, but I do not make apologies for that because I think it is a situation that our society is in. How is it possible, how has it been possible for all these years that these wealthy parents have been able to access free childcare while these poorer parents have not been able to? I want to support the Minister because I want him to go away with the knowledge that at least one States' Member is fully supportive of the ethos. He may have a harder job with some other Members in the Chamber today. I am sure he is able to answer their speeches individually but, from my point, I think there is more to it than just pounds and pence. There are some social issues here. There are public/private partnership issues. People have spoken about those. Probably there will be evidence given or real examples given as to how the competing attentions of childcare facilities and childcare professionals are at odds with such a scheme. Not only that; parishes provide services as well. Interestingly, my son began voluntary childcare this week. He attends a nursery school twice a week for 3 hours a

week and we pay. We have considered the value that that is giving him and we have considered the hours that he is attending and we are considering, if it is available, to have him in there for longer. However, he is not yet 2 and there are children in there who are a lot younger. These are the questions I have for the Minister because it would seem that Scrutiny is going to play a function in this. There are staff-to-pupil ratios that are required in any modern nursery and you cannot just go in there and demand the hours that you would like, even if you can pay. I cannot go in there and say: "I want my child looked after from 9.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. and I am prepared to pay" because they will say: "Well, we do not have space right now." It may be available at another location, but in the location we want and the school that we want him to go to, we have to wait until somebody moves up and gravitates up into the system or go somewhere else. These are the questions I am asking. Has it been factored in that if you do this rather strange, complicated mathematical question of the £1.4 million into the 30 hours minus the 20 hours means tested and everything else, what impact is that going to have upon the staff/pupil ratio and how is that going to impact upon the people who are willing to have their children in school at a younger age of 3, who are prepared to pay right now? Will they find that there is no longer a place for them because the people who are getting free education have taken up all of the services that have been provided and it is sponsored by the State, in which case where do they go? A little bit complicated; I do not have my head around it. My wife and I wanted to increase our son's childcare so he will be attending 3 times a week. He is only just about to turn 2, so we have a full year to go before we would get into the position where there would be any kind of free provision. I will say this, Sir. I am not going to be swayed by other Members' speeches, although I see some merit in what they are saying. I am going to support the Minister because I believe in the ethos, but what I would like to know is has all of this been thought through because one thing is for certain, and I can witness it and testify to that, that our child, even within the 2 days that he has been going and the 2 days that he went just to get a flavour of the place, has come along in leaps and bounds in areas where he was struggling. One in particular was probably taking after his father's speech. He has come along in leaps and bounds and he has a greater use of words and expressing himself which has removed a lot of frustration from his daily needs. We are seeing a real benefit. The States of Jersey provide excellent childcare facilities either in partnership with or on their own stand-alone facilities. The health and safety executive in the schools and everything else and the facilities in Jersey, I have not seen anywhere else. I think we have some of the best schools in the world. I really do. I think we are seeing that in the exams. I would go on record to say that I do not think that was necessarily the case when I was in school, but I certainly do think that we are going in the right direction in every other aspect. Some of the schools and some of the things we are doing in schools across the board are absolutely fantastic. Maybe the Minister needs to go and look at the means-testing system, but seriously, I think we need to be able to offer the opportunity for parents, at whatever age they need to put their children into care. Some of them are as young, I think, as 6 months in this school that I am going to. They are real babies. If the parents have to do that to pay the rent, then we should be able to afford them the opportunity because sometimes it comes down to that. Sometimes the parents are working not because they want to be away from their baby but because they need to pay the rent and their jobs require them to be at work at that time. So we need to guarantee the rights of the individual to purchase the hours in the future for their children under the States' provision without compromising that by over-providing and robbing the staff-to-pupil ratio in the private sector that it might do. I think we need to get behind the Minister in going forward with the scheme because, as he said - one of the best sentences in his speech: "Childcare should be affordable to all." I would tack on the end of that: "It should also be available to all." The benefits to the young are immeasurable. One only has to look at some of the incidents - I am not saying all but some - we are seeing in our society at the moment with the younger people who just seem to have no handle at all on respect whatsoever. One has to question whether or not we invested enough in the past. The analogy that £1 spent today saves £8 tomorrow, I think, will only be compounded in the future as younger people seem to and tend to have less general rigour in their upbringing. The sooner and the quicker we can get them into a structured method of learning, especially if they cannot afford it, the better. I hope that not only the Minister but some of the other Members who are looking at this issue or thinking about this issue have taken on board what I have been saying because it is not just about whether or not little Johnny goes to school. It is about whether his mother goes to work and whether or not that achieves something for

the GDP. As I said, it is not just about those who get free childcare. It is about whether or not those who want to pay, like me, can pay, whether or not there is somebody I can go to and say: "Do you have a facility? Do you have the time? Can my wife go to work? Combined income is adequate that I can pay. I want to pay. Do you have the time?" The reality is we could not get the hours or the times we wanted. Overall we are very happy, but staff-to-pupil ratios play a part. I apologise for my speech being all over the place. Members have had to put up with it before in the past. I am sure they are going to have to put up with it again in the future. Well, groan if you want to. Other people will make that decision; not you. The decision today is I support the Minister to back the ethos that parents who cannot afford the education want to see it happen. He may not have the enjoyment of the rest of the House's support, but surely they can get behind the ethos if not the actual amendment.

2.1.7 Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I believe I also have to declare a general interest similar to that of Deputy Le Claire. I like the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, Sir, and I note his comments and those of one or 2 other speakers as well. Indeed, the amendment is extremely laudable, as they say, but I have to disagree with him entirely on this matter, I am afraid. Let us face it. In my view, the present situation is, putting it mildly, a bit of a mess. It is inequitable and it has ultimately been created by Education. In fact, I think the Minister himself stated in his speech that this position is a result of an educational policy that has created the problem. There is no control over who has access to this free education, and basically it has put the public sector into direct subsidised competition with the private sector. I understand it had been one of the main factors in the closure of several private nurseries. In the ideal world, we would be supporting this, but we are not in that ideal world. As we have identified already, we do not have the money to do this and I have to say I think the Minister has completely missed the point of the last day in God knows what of the debates that we have had. We cannot afford what will be another £1.5 million a year on the bottom line. That has been the whole point of today. That is what has been the whole point of yesterday morning, and I am sure these debates will come up again. It is that simple and I think we should reject the proposition, Sir. Thank you.

2.1.8 Deputy J.J. Huet:

Well, have times changed or not, and if they have, is it for the better? Many years ago, I was a working mother. I can remember going to work and coming home with my salary at the end of the week. We used to get paid weekly in those days. Half went to the childcare lady and half went to pay the mortgage. I can remember telling the childcare lady, and maybe I should not say this: "Do not declare it because I have already paid tax on it and you will have to pay again." [Laughter] But it was a long time ago. I think there is a limitation on that, Sir. [Laughter]

The Deputy Bailiff:

Good thing the Attorney General is not in the Chamber today. [Laughter]

Deputy J.J. Huet:

I have to say, are we any better off? In those days, one used friends for childcare. You would not be allowed to do that nowadays because they are unregistered. I mean, normally these friends have brought up their own families, so they knew more about children, I would have said. I said: "Have them." Long before I went into business or banking, we had a newspaper round because, in those days, where there was muck there was money. If you did not have the money for your childcare, into the carry cot they went and into the back of the car they went, and they came with you. Well, okay, I know that is not allowed now, but I have to say I have 2 children and I am extremely proud of them. I do not think they were any worse off for being lugged around in the back of the carry cot. I find they have done well, they are well educated and they are well adjusted. I think it comes down to quite simply if you can afford to pay for it, do pay for the childcare and the nursery. If you cannot, we should help that. We should help because if you cannot, it is good; if you can, you pay. It is quite simple. Thank you very much, Sir.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to speak? Very well, I call upon the Minister to reply.

2.1.9 Senator M.E. Vibert:

I was just making some notes. I regret not many people have spoken. I do not mind people having a go at the Minister. He is big enough and ugly enough, as I am sure everybody will agree, to look after himself. My concern is not about me. My concern is about the young children of the Island and ensuring they get a good and fair deal. I think what I found most depressing by some of the speeches is it is as if this was something new. Even for the newer Members of the House, there was a progress report issued in December 2006 which they all obviously had and, as new Members and keen Members, would have read conscientiously. I have not had one response from any of the new Members on this issue at all until today. I will address some of the questions asked, Sir. Deputy Ferguson talked about Ministers being in favour of efficiencies, correct? She mentioned £1.3 million for pensions. Well, I do not have that money. If I had that money, I would use it. It was taken back by the Treasury to pay for guess what ... pensions. The Treasury now operates teachers' pensions, not ESC. The Deputy referred to a Durham report which I am quite prepared to look at. One of my sons went to Durham University so I hold that institution in great esteem. Certainly there is concern that no high quality early years' education cannot be as beneficial as high quality early years' education. My proposal is very much of a high quality early years' education because that is what all the research has shown delivers the benefits. I understand the wish that the CAG's and the Scrutiny Panel's reviews had come out already. I absolutely concur with that wish. I wish they had, particularly the Scrutiny Panel, but I feel it is only right that I should try to obtain for half the children who will miss out next year to make sure that they do not miss out. States' Members and those who spoke against it did not seem to really have a lot of concern about the inequality, about the inequity, about the fact that we can only offer half the children what we do not offer the other half but that is for them to work with. Deputy Gorst, again someone who has never spoken to me about this issue despite having backed our progress report, talked about failing education policy. Well, I cannot see failing education policies. I can see an education system that is producing the best results. It is comparable with anywhere in the world. I do not see how that education policy is failing. Means testing came up. Sir, I know Members have had a lot to read, but I had hoped they may have read this amendment and the paperwork with it that was presented to them because I lodged it on 1st August to give a lot of time for Members to read it, to talk with me if they so wished, to try to understand it. I deliberately, in producing this amendment, attached to it as an appendix the R.C.54/2005: "Investing in our Future: a vision for early childhood education and care for children in Jersey." On page 20 of the amendment as part of this appendix I put in, is a section on funding the committee's vision because it was a committee with a very valid member of the committee in Deputy Martin on it who was fully supportive of this proposal then. I will go on to that later if I may, but just to say about means testing. We looked at means testing and it is there on page 20 that all Members have had. Now, if they had any doubts or queries, why did they not come and ask me? Why are they now bringing this up as a way of putting off what we should be doing? It says there, and I quote if I may, Sir: "A third solution would be to introduce graduated fees and means testing for all provision including nursery classes. This would offer a pragmatic and cost-effective way to address the inequality of the current 2-tier system, but it might also prove complex and costly to administer. Again, derived revenue may be used as subsidised provision thereby reducing the overall cost to parents and the States. Inevitably it would mean the withdrawal of free provision for the nursery class cohort which could be regarded as a backward step. In any case, the real argument against means testing is it would make early years provision less attractive to some parents and lead to the use of unregistered childcare." So please do not tell me that we have not addressed the view of means testing and, of course, I would have been able to expand on that had any Member come to me having read that and being concerned. No, Sir, I will not give way.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

The Minister will not give way. Okay, fine.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Deputy Gorst as well, and I had some sympathy for him because I must say I cannot see how he can have read these papers given the speech he made. I cannot. I had some sympathy because he fell into the oh-so-obvious traps. Yes, I refer to it as a lottery at present and, of course, he went for the

easy option, rich people dropping their children at school and then the children later going on, and he mentioned the name of a preparatory school. Well, we have criteria for admissions to our nursery classes which provide about 500 places for the 1,000-strong cohort. We have those criteria based on very, very sound and tested educational principles and social principles. We try, wherever possible, to make sure that those in greatest social and educational need have first choice and first access to a class. We also, because it is the right thing to do, make sure that there are places for children in the catchment area. We also make sure that we have, as far as possible, a social spectrum in the nursery classes because I can assure you it is not good practice, educational, social or otherwise, to try to create ghettos - that is the sort of word that would have to be used - of children from just one social strata, the lowest economic social strata in an educational establishment. You need that balance of children from each social strata - and I am not giving way, I am afraid, Deputy, because I had to listen to these things being said. Appreciate this: it is from a lack of understanding of the educational system. I am not prepared to let it go because I think it is very, very sad, some of the speeches that did not address the area I wanted addressed which was about the inequality in the current system and the value of early years' education. So that is why, and it is in there and anybody could have come and asked me, we did not go for the means testing route. I will mention Deputy Martin briefly. I was most surprised at Deputy Martin's speech. I was not surprised that she criticised me. That was no surprise. However, I was surprised that she seemed to know nothing about this. I know that a week is a long time in politics. Obviously 2 years is an incredibly long time because Deputy Martin was a member of the Education, Sport and Culture Committee that approved these proposals and that brought forward what we did, R.C.54/2005 Investing in our Future, outlining exactly what we wanted to do and how it should be funded and about the means testing, funding the committee's vision, why we are doing it this way. I will mention one of the disappointments, and this does not apply to the new States' Members, I am sure they will be pleased to know, who joined at the last election. We lodged, as a committee including Deputy Martin, this project on 5th July 2005 and we left a good period for consultation and we consulted with the providers and parents and everybody else, and I asked States' Members to respond. The response I received, Sir, one States' Member responded. I took from that that nobody was objecting. The one States' Member who responded was very supportive. So we carried on. I issued, as I said, so all States' Members would be up-to-date, a progress report December 2006. I have been working on trying to find a way forward that would end the iniquity of our current system which I inherited and would provide all the 4 year-olds with the base of early years' education as fairly as possible. I believe and the providers and the parents whom we have consulted believe we have come up with a way forward. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, some States' Members seem to believe that it is not a way forward. Constable Crowcroft totally confused me. Constable Crowcroft seemed to be saying --

The Deputy Bailiff:

The Constable of St. Helier.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

The Constable of St. Helier; I beg your pardon, Sir. The Constable of St. Helier totally confused me. He seemed to be saying that I had not met the terms of what he wanted about equity because I was only asking for 20 hours' free nursery education, not 30 hours. I find that very odd because what I would like to say is, yes, I would like to move towards that, but I was trying to find a way forward that would be acceptable. I am sorry he does not seem to welcome being able to offer at least 20 hours to all and 30 hours to some, but that is his own decision and I hope he can explain it to his own nursery staff in his own 2 nurseries that are fully behind this proposal. That is for him to sort out. On that point, can I remind Members that it may seem a long time ago now but I think it was Tuesday - which again obviously is a long time in politics, 2 days ago - that the States approved Objective 3 of the Education, Sport and Culture Minister. Maximum benefit from the department's investment in early years' education and care and the performance/success criteria of the States also approved was (1) increased numbers of 3 to 5 year-olds receiving early years' programmes and to all high priority cases offered a place at nursery which is what I am seeking to achieve through this amendment. The Deputy of Trinity, Sir, felt it was a difficult proposition. I agree it is a difficult

proposition. The present system she said is unfair and unjust. Yes, which is why I am trying to change it, Deputy. Yes, some comparatively well-off people do access free nursery class places and, as I explained, the reason is that our nursery classes need to reflect the other classes and need to reflect the whole spectrum of our society, not concentrate solely on one part even though we give great emphasis and criteria for those in need, but we need to balance it. Yes, we have been looking into encouraging businesses and so on and the JCCT (Jersey Child Care Trust) have been working on that. I mentioned the means testing and we have looked at that and that was in the report attached to the proposition. Children are important; they should come first. I could not agree more. I think we should recognise that providing this provision would be in the best interest of the Island and the children and everybody else. I thank Deputy Le Claire for his speech. He did wander a bit, if he does not mind me saying so, but certainly his heart was very much in the right place and he understood some of it and had some experience of some of it and he was concerned about the staff/people ratio and the provision. I think the concern was if we offered this would it mean less places for below 3 year-olds. Well, the providers have told us that if we have this scheme it will enable them to offer more places for younger children because they will have a better base to work from. Deputy Le Fondré; we cannot afford it. I hope I explained in my speech that this is very, very short term thinking that we cannot afford it. All the research shows, and I mean all the research shows, that you get between twice and 8 times the payback in the longer term from reduced costs in policing, prison, from higher earnings and so on by the provision of early years' education because you get everybody, all our society, a much better start in life. So I am afraid cannot afford it is short term, can afford it is long term and in the best interests of the Island. I told Deputy Huet this morning that we had taken slates out of the classes. You are not allowed just to have a carry cot in the back of the corner any more either, Deputy Huet, I am sorry. Things have moved on. One of the ways things have moved on is that a lot of people these days, to survive in Jersey, both parents have to go out to work. I think that what I am proposing would go a long way to creating a much more level playing field for those parents with the better off. I am sorry that some people cannot see it. Sir, there was a report I asked to be produced because I wanted to be sure that what we were going ahead with was correct, and it was produced in January this year, on the options we were putting forward for providing the childhood educational care for children in Jersey and it was a report done for me by the National Daycare Trust. I would just like to quote from a couple of their findings. It is an internal report to myself for the department, and the report states: "Providing a free universal service has the clear advantage that it does not discriminate against any sector of the population and is simple to promote and administer." It goes on to say, and this goes back to some of the questions that were asked: "Introducing charging and means testing for nursery education would have a disproportionate impact on low income and migrant families and may encourage other parents to seek sessions rather than a continuous educational experience. It is possible that the children who would most benefit from quality nursery education would be denied it." The report concludes: "The situation that currently exists whereby the States of Jersey is providing free quality nursery education places it at the forefront of other countries wishing to achieve such a position. For a relatively limited amount of further investment this could be extended to all children who wish to access it. Introducing charging and means testing is fraught with difficulties and would have a negative impact on the principles of securing equity, accessibility and affordability." The very things the Constable of St. Helier said he wanted to achieve. That report goes on to say: "The case has been proven that investment in the early years helps to secure the future wellbeing of children and provides long term economic and social benefits for society. The issue that remains is how best to achieve the complete solution and this could be achieved by building an effective partnership between the private and voluntary sectors, parents and the States of Jersey." That is what I am proposing today, Sir. We have an opportunity here today for a relatively limited amount of further investment to make a real difference for the good of all young children in the Island, their families and the Island as a whole. It makes economic sense. The sooner we invest, the sooner we will benefit from the savings this investment will bring. What I am asking for is an investment in the future. I hope some Members will consider I have to bring this forward today to get it in the budget for next year so we can start in September 2008 and I hope, perhaps a vain hope, that States' Members put aside any thoughts they have about what I have done, how I have presented it, what information I have provided and I hope in voting they will search their consciences and think: "Is this the right thing to do for the young

people of Jersey?" and vote accordingly. I am asking for an investment in the future and I would like to conclude by quoting a poem sent to me by our early years' advisor. It is by the Nobel Prize winning poet from Chile, Gabriella Mistral. Its title is His Name is Today: "We are guilty of many errors and many faults but the worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait, a child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer tomorrow, his name is today. His name is today." Today the States has an opportunity to show their commitment to that child and every child in Jersey. Sir, I move the amendment and ask for the appel.

The Deputy of St. Clement:

While I enjoyed the Minister's verbal abuse and perhaps it was his lecturing style that put me off listening to him, but I am not sure that he did address my question that his figures were fundamentally flawed.

The Connétable of St. Helier:

Before the Minister answers I have a question that did go unanswered. Could the Minister say whether the system is equitable that he is proposing?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I have no wish to get into further political debate. I think it is beyond that. I do not believe my figures are flawed and I believe that what I am proposing is far more equitable than what we have now.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well. The appel is called for. I invite Members to return to their seats and the matter before the Assembly is for or against the amendment of the Minister. I will ask the Greffier to open the voting. All Members had an opportunity of voting? The Greffier will close the voting. The amendment is lost, 10 votes for, 25 votes against. The Greffier will read out the 10 who voted for.

The Greffier of the States:

The following Members voted for: Senators Syvret, Kinnard and Vibert and Deputies Breckon, Fox, Martin, The Deputy of Grouville, Deputies Hilton, Le Claire and Lewis. [INSERT VOTE TABLE]