

Seaford

St. Martin

JE3 6BR

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Dear Panel,

Although it is somewhat unusual for a politician to submit written evidence for Scrutiny review, I felt that I needed to send you my views as I feel very strongly about this crucially important subject.

While I am in no way advocating an “open door” policy for immigration, I fundamentally disagree with the proposed limits contained in the interim population policy that is proposed by the Council Ministers (P.10/2014). There is much I would agree with in the report to the proposition, but setting a cap on the level of immigration in the short term is exactly what we should NOT be doing at the moment. There are just too many unknowns that we will have to cope with in the next two years we need to be fast moving and flexible, not setting parameters that may potentially constrict us in our decision making as we try to make things better for Islanders.

The economy is the backbone of everything we aspire to here in Jersey. Regardless of what we wish to achieve, we need an economy that can stimulate the provision of jobs. Those jobs are needed to provide income for the Treasury via ITIS, GST, 0/10 etc.... The Treasury requires that income to provide the public services that Islanders expect, and deserve. Without a sustainable economy our future is bleak indeed. Those all important jobs rely on existing businesses, and new businesses, being allowed to flourish.....but we cannot fill the potential demand using local resources alone, especially in the short term, and especially as regards Digital Jersey and Financial Services. We have always in the past, and will continue to in the future, be completely dependant on a certain level of “imports” to help us achieve our goals. Regardless of what sector they represent, at some stage in the future

employers will need a specialism that they cannot find locally. We cannot tie our own hands by potentially denying certain employers, or employees, the ability to help us fill these essential jobs that need to be undertaken. Notwithstanding the above, the setting of immigration limits is completely contrary to the “Jersey, Open for Business” strap line that is currently being used by the Economic Development Department and specifically Locate Jersey in their quest to find new businesses and high net worth individuals to diversify our local economy.

As an example of why we mustn't limit our growth at the moment I would just look at the construction industry.....not part of diversification, but still hugely important. There has been a massive downturn in the level of building over the last few years. (I could at this point also mention the inability of government to release States building work in a co-ordinated fashion, rather than boom and bust, but won't.) There has been a movement of specialist construction labour out of the Island recently, but we have (in the last few months) agreed a massive States building programme. Two new hospitals, a new liquid waste plant, housing schemes, Police Stations....a Waterfront Development.....the list goes on. Irrespective of the potential large scale privately funded construction projects that will also be taking place in the next few years, it is not difficult to imagine how many building specialists we are going to need in the short term. Are we going to agree to (literally) build for the future, but NOT allow the specialist workers needed to come to the Island? Where is the joined up thinking?

The economic downturn that we have experienced in recent years has been hugely challenging. During that time we have brought, on average, at least an additional 600 people annually into the Island to fill necessary and essential job vacancies. I find it impossible to imagine how we now feel we can cope without, at the very least, that continued level of immigration. Proposing that we actually halve the number seems irrational.....where is the information to show this will work? Where is the policy and thinking that underpins this new target? Where indeed is the written policy that shows who does, and who doesn't, get a licence? As regards the local economy, we have in my opinion only recently started to turn the corner, and then only hesitantly. We therefore just cannot start to limit who we bring in to help sustain that new growth. It

will be disastrous to find that the proposed “cap” is reached just when we really need to find another, say, 10 licences for that one business that will potentially transform any specific sector of the Jersey economy.

I also find that the proposition is confusing in what it is trying to say. However, on closer inspection one thing that is clear is that the limit will “averaged” over the two years of 2014 and 2015, so that actually what we are being asked to agree is 300 households, which will equate to 650 people over the two years. It seems to me that there is a good chance that we will “run out” of licences early in year 2015. What do we do then? Are we to put up a big sign that says, “Sorry, Jersey is full Up, please take your extremely valuable and useful business to one of our competitors..... please commit your specialism, one that Jersey really needs, somewhere else”.

One very unclear part of the proposition is whether we are being asked to agree a limit of 300 households OR 650 people. Maybe the proposition means whichever total we reach first.....but it doesn't make this clear. This in itself, if true, would be very unhelpful, as we could find that, if every “head of household” we licence arrives with a partner and four children, that we will reach our 650 total with only 108 households. Similarly, we could find that every new licenced person is single, in which case we would need potentially 650 properties to accommodate them in. What exactly is the proposition putting forward?

Finally I would wish to just pass a few comments on the composition of the population in the coming years. The chart on page 13 of the report to the proposition demonstrates to me quite clearly the difficulties we now face. Regardless of which immigration policy we adopt, by the time we reach 2035 the number of over sixty fives will be double today's total. There is nothing we can do about this projection....it is now fixed....the issue is how we afford to cope with the challenges that the 100% increase in the numbers of retired people presents. If we adopt a “nil immigration” approach then our working age population decreases by 12% between 2010 and 2035....even the +325 approach that is being proposed gives a 1.5% lower working population in future years. The absolute minimum level that is being proposed by the Council of Ministers should be one that at the very least maintains the working population at current levels, and to my calculations that means at least +400

annually. Doubling the numbers of the retired population means double the pensions, double the health costs of dealing with the ageing population....and the majority of these costs have to be borne by those in employment. What will the level of social security be if the same (or less) number of workers have to “fund” double the number of old age pensions? Where will the level of Income taxes have to be in order to fund the health care of an additional 14,000 over sixty fives?

In the next few years we need to diversify our economy. That means new ideas, new companies, new jobs.....if we need, for example, two new people to come to the Island who will in turn create ten jobs for locals, then we need to be able to say yes.....regardless of any quotas. As I said at the beginning, I am NOT advocating an open door policy for immigration, but we should absolutely not be setting limits.

Unlike the rest of this submission, this following (last) paragraph is written after attending this afternoon at your Panel’s public hearing with Senator Routier. There are two points that stood out to me as I listened to your questions. First, it seems quite clear (as I mentioned previously) that there is no policy to decide who gets a licence and who doesn’t. The Assistant Minister seemed to indicate that it is “one rule for one and another rule for someone else”. This cannot be good...or right. Secondly, it was also made clear by Senator Routier that the “limit” was not a limit at all, and that in the right circumstances there would be a justification for exceeding the numbers that are set out in the proposition. That has to beg the question; why have a number at all? Why bring this to the Assembly if the numbers are meaningless? I will wait with interest for the transcript, your review findings and, of course, the debate. Reducing the level of immigration is a theme that is currently being played out everywhere....Jersey, England, Britain....Switzerland recently voted to limit their levels. It sounds great, and will very likely be music to the ears of the electorate.....but will it work?