

STATES OF JERSEY



POPULATION POLICY: PROVISION OF INFORMATION AND ALTERNATIVES

**Lodged au Greffe on 15th April 2003
by Senator S. Syvret**

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Policy and Resources Committee to prepare and present to the States –

- (a) a report detailing the different population policy options considered by both the previous and present Policy and Resources Committees, setting out the advantages and disadvantages of each, the factual data and expert advice used throughout and the Committees' reasons for rejecting the different policy options;
- (b) a detailed response to the report entitled 'Jersey into the Millennium: a Sustainable Future';
- (c) a report detailing the impact upon that section of the housing market presently described as 'qualified' of enabling participation in the housing market of all people resident in the Island from a given date;
- (d) a report detailing the environmental and sustainability implications of the population policies considered by both the previous and present Policy and Resources Committee.

SENATOR S. SYVRET

REPORT

The purpose of this proposition is self-explanatory. Whatever one's views of the population issue, there can be no doubt of its significance to the community. It is of such importance that the States has to get it right and to get it right requires full information. This proposition is similar to one which I put before the previous States Assembly. On that occasion the Assembly was persuaded by the then Policy and Resources Committee to reject the proposition. Shortly afterwards the Assembly debated the Population Policy brought forward by the Committee. As is well known, the vote was tied and the proposition lost. Most members accepted the need for a new policy, and indeed supported many parts of the Policy and Resources Committee's proposition, but could not vote for it for a number of reasons. Amongst these were a lack of information concerning the impact of the proposals upon the 'qualified' housing market, and the environmental impact of a policy that advocated population growth.

Notwithstanding the then Committee's insistence that there was no need for more information, the policy debate descended into chaos, in part because of a lack of information of the type I was requesting. I do not believe we should run that risk again. If we are to make fundamental changes to the Island's Population Policy we must do so whilst in possession of all relevant information.

As I said in the previous report, there must be a variety of responses to the population issue, advantages and disadvantages to each and a range of consequences. Before the community and its politicians can remotely begin to make informed choices on this very important subject we must have all of the facts and possibilities before us.

Before taking a decision to allow every person in the Island to participate in the Island's housing market, we must surely know what impact that will have upon the already expensive qualified market – a market so inflated, many local people are leaving the Island because of housing costs? What additional amount of new homes will be required to be built, when we don't have sufficient for people who are already 'qualified'? There may well be many good reasons for supporting such a policy change, but we must go into it with our eyes open and fully aware of the consequences.

It is also vital that the States are informed of the environmental and sustainability implications of the population policy options that it may be asked to approve. In asking for this analysis I believe we should seek the professional expertise of the former Environmental Adviser to the Committee, Dr. Michael Romeril.

Financial/manpower statement

The preparation of these reports will obviously require staff time. However, the subject is of sufficient importance to justify such work.