

2.10 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the potential impact of the loss of the Reciprocal Health Agreement with the U.K. on tourism:

What measures, if any, has the Minister considered introducing in order to ensure that potential visitors from the U.K. do not choose to holiday elsewhere due to the end of the Reciprocal Health Agreement? What estimated loss, if any, does the Minister envisage will occur to our economy as a result of this increase in the cost of visiting the Island?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

My department has taken steps to ensure that as far as possible all visitors to Jersey are advised that it is strongly recommended that they purchase medical insurance in advance of their visit. This advice will also be given throughout the industry by hoteliers and tour operators and the information is kept up to date on a dedicated section of Jersey.com. In addition the States insurers are endeavouring to provide a special policy to also be made available shortly online from Jersey.com. This will hopefully provide easy access to a suitable policy for visitors to Jersey and be available for all age groups including people staying with friends and relations. We believe that the broad availability of insurance will minimise any risk of losing visitors to the Island.

2.10.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour:

In the not too distant past when Jersey had a thriving tourist industry it was beneficial for the U.K. Government to have a Reciprocal Health Agreement. Now that tourism has declined somewhat in the U.K. the balance has gone the other way. Could it not be worked out what the deficit is to the U.K. National Health Service and possibly a cheque being written to the U.K. National Health Service and the U.K. Government and the Agreement reinstated?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think that is really a question for the Minister for Health and Social Services. It relates to the Reciprocal Health Agreement as opposed to any effect it might have on tourism. I think unfortunately my department is in a position where we have to deal with a situation we find ourselves in. We do believe that with appropriate insurances any potential loss will be mitigated. We will continue to support the tourism industry as we have in the past. Indeed our ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think you said that already, Senator.

2.10.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Did the Minister see or was it shown to him the *Saturday Independent* travel supplement which contained as its warning of the week advice to travellers to the Channel Islands that the reciprocal health arrangements had come to an end? Does he not think it would have been a good idea for his department to have proactively contacted all of the major players in the media, particularly the travel supplement writers, to ensure the message gets across that A.&E. (Accident and Emergency) services are still available for tourists?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I am aware of the particular article that the Constable is referring to. My department has worked tirelessly in efforts to ensure that as many of the tour operators and others involved in bringing visitors to the Island are informed of the current position with the Reciprocal Health Agreement or the loss thereof. Sadly we cannot always have complete and utter control on what areas the media are going to report. But we will continue to work hard to ensure that the information is imparted on potential visitors to the Island.

2.10.3 The Deputy of Grouville:

As the written responses that I received this morning from the Health Department seem to be abdicating any form of help with reciprocal health agreements collective insurance, would the Minister like to comment on who he intends working with to progress this matter?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Sorry, can I ask the Deputy to clarify her question?

The Deputy of Grouville:

Yes. The Minister for Health and Social Services is stating that their primary concern is healthcare not insurance or anything of that nature. The Minister alluded to the fact that it was not really his domain to work on this. It was the Minister for Health and Social Services'. So between the 2 Ministers could we have some assurance that there might be some progress in this area?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes. It is a question or a matter for the Minister for Health and Social Services to deal with, the Reciprocal Health Agreement issue. It is a matter for the Economic Development Minister to deal with the results of the loss of this particular Agreement. That is indeed what my department has been doing to ensure that all those parties that are involved and affected are properly notified and that we put in place appropriate insurances to ensure that any potential loss of visitors is mitigated. That is exactly what we are doing and will continue to do.