

3.2 Connétable P.J. Rondel of St. John of the Assistant Chief Minister regarding the number of applications for registration cards under the Control of Housing and Work Law:

Would the Chief Minister state how many residents have applied for a registration card under the Control of Housing and Work Law and would he clarify whether long-standing residents who may have been qualified to live in Jersey for over 30 years are being required to produce 3 different proofs of residency which then need to be checked with the author before a registration card is issued?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

This matter is also delegated to my Assistant Minister but I am aware that the Connétable has a standing instruction with regard to the Economic Development Department. I am not sure whether he has with regard to my department.

The Connétable of St. John:

When the Chief Minister is in the House I would expect him to answer the question.

The Bailiff:

You have notified this outstanding instruction to the Greffier. You will make do with the Assistant Minister?

The Connétable of St. John:

No, the Minister is in the House. I would like him to answer the question.

The Bailiff:

I am afraid it is for the Assistant Minister. You have to do it when you submit the question.

The Connétable of St. John:

The Minister is in the House. The question was put to the Minister. It is up to the Minister to answer the question. You put it to him, Sir.

The Bailiff:

Please do not speak at the same time as me. The Assistant Minister will answer this.

The Connétable of St. John:

I must object.

The Bailiff:

You can deal with your objection by writing a standing instruction now, so that all questions are to be answered by the Chief Minister and then we will not have this problem again.

Senator P.F. Routier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):

Has the question been asked? **[Laughter]** I will do my best to answer the question. There have been 25,115 registration cards issued between 1st July 2013 and the end of May this year. Nearly 11,000 of those were for permanently “Entitled” people. Before issuing “Entitled” cards the department must be sure of a person’s residential status as an “Entitled” card provides open access to work and housing. This is usually straightforward as the relevant records are held by the Population Office. Where this is not the case an applicant may be required to confirm length of residence by 3 personal references which are then verified by the Population Office.

3.2.1 The Connétable of St. John:

Can the Minister please explain to the many residents out there who are being given the run around? I am aware of people who have been to Social Security, sent from Social Security to the Population Office, who require - they are told when they go down there - a letter of residency. Go down there with a letter of residency and then they are told they need at least 3 letters. All the persons who have signed it must have known them for at least 20 years-plus and one of those letters must be or should be from a neighbour who has known the person for an extended period of time. Can the Minister please explain why in some cases these people are given the run around and other persons, like myself for instance, walk into the Social Security office and get my card within 1½, 2 minutes?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Yes, I can recall a year ago - 1st July - the Connétable went to the department and got his card and was very pleased with the service he had. [Laughter]

The Connétable of St. John:

It has deteriorated since.

Senator P.F. Routier:

He remarked upon it to me but certainly everybody's circumstances are different. I am sure the Connétable would not want the department to be giving out cards to people who are not qualified. The department needs to carry out proper checks to ensure that the person is qualified especially if they are looking for a permanent card. We know when people have just arrived on the Island they go and get a card and it is very straightforward. They show their identification and because they are not getting any benefit from it they are just having a registered card. It is not entitling them to housing or anything like that. The Connétable will be aware no doubt, when he has looked at the States of Jersey website, that there is a very clear explanation of the information that people need to give because it gives a list of what your circumstances are and the type of information that people need to present at the department.

The Connétable of St. John:

Supplementary off that one.

The Bailiff:

I will come back to you, Connétable.

The Connétable of St. John:

It is my question after all. I am not even allowed to ask the Chief Minister by a ruling from yourself, and now I cannot even put a supplementary on what the Assistant Minister has said to challenge him.

The Bailiff:

Connétable, you know the rules. You know the practice. You have asked one supplementary already. I shall come back to you at the end in accordance with the way that everyone is treated. Deputy Southern.

3.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

Does the Assistant Minister have any idea when we will have a completed population register showing who and where all 100,000 of us are? Is it one year, 3 years, 4 years, 20 years down the line before we will have an accurate register?

Senator P.F. Routier:

As the Deputy will be aware, the need for a registration card is only required when people are changing jobs or changing accommodation and when people come to the Island. The names and address register is building. The Statistics Unit has advised us that for them to be comfortable with a complete record it may take 3 or 4 years quite easily so that we already know that there are about 50,000 people who are already on the system - within the social security system and tax system - but there are other people that would need to be added to the list as it goes by.

3.2.3 Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade:

As fairly shortly we will be coming up for the long summer holidays, can the Assistant Minister give us an assurance that we will not see a repeat of last year's problem regarding school leavers not being able to get the required letters and so on required to be able to get their registration card, so they can take jobs if they are fortunate to have a job offer?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I asked that particular question of the department and they assure me that they are working very closely with the Education Department to try and resolve those matters from last year. There are new abilities within the Social Security Department to have direct contact with Education but there is still ... Education's recordkeeping system is not the same. It does not easily merge in but certainly we are very aware of the problem and the departments are working together.

3.2.4 The Connétable of St. John:

Is the Assistant Minister aware that local people - Jersey-born people, who have never left this Island other than for the odd holiday - can go to Social Security to get their card and they are given an hour and a half of grief to have to prove that they are Jersey people, *et cetera*? When they are told that they have got all the person's records on file the answer that a person gets: "Our computers only go back 20 years." They also have all the files on microfiche. Why are they not using them instead of putting the public to all sorts of additional bother because the officers are too lazy to use the files they have? Please answer that question.

Senator P.F. Routier:

Firstly may I address the issue with regard to the officers being too lazy? They are doing the job that they are being asked to do and they are doing it to the best of their ability and I hope that the Connétable will withdraw that comment about the officers being lazy. **[Approbation]** The particular issue with regard to people who are needing to look at records from ... well, it is prior to 1991 when records were kept on microfiche. The officers have to literally go and check... and do not have it available to them at the desk where the customer is going in so they have to go to another place to look at that, and they do that. But unfortunately, even when they do look at the microfiche, because of the way the records were kept in those days, they do not distinguish between Class 1 and Class 2 contributors so it does not confirm whether somebody is resident in the Island just by looking at the microfiche details, so that is why there needs to be additional information provided for those people.

3.2.5 The Connétable of St. John:

Firstly, I will withdraw the comment about the officers being lazy. That was my fault for using that expression.

[10:00]

But it is very frustrating for the public that these things are happening. I would like to know what the Minister is putting in place for a review now that this has been in place for some 15 to 18 months. What review is going to take place, please?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The operation of the system came in on 1st July last year, so it has been in operation for just over 11 months. There has been a commitment right from day one to have a review after a year. When we debated the topic months and months ago a commitment was given to have a review of registration cards and the whole of the system, and that will be taking place as soon as we have completed one year.