

2018.09.11

11 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of the Minister for Social Security regarding the introduction of breastfeeding rights: [OQ.108/2018]

Further to the then Minister's indication in the report accompanying P.27 of this year that changes to the Employment Law to introduce breastfeeding rights, such as breaks and workplace facilities, would be debated by the States "later in 2018 to come into force in September 2019", can the Minister please confirm the timescale for lodging the proposed amendments?

Deputy J.A. Martin (The Minister for Social Security):

I am pleased to confirm for Members that breastfeeding breaks and facilities in the workplace will be included in the next batch of changes that we propose to make to the Employment Law. Law drafting is already underway to prepare the necessary amendment. I intend to lodge a proposition later this year for States debates in early 2019. If these changes are supported by the new Assembly the enforced date for breastfeeding rights will still be 1st September 2019, as planned. Thank you.

4.11.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Given that the breastfeeding initiation rates in Jersey are nearly 80 per cent upon leaving hospital, but on 20 per cent at 9 months, could the Minister be persuaded to perhaps bring this section on breastfeeding rights forward by a few months to allow the hundreds of babies who may otherwise not receive mother's milk to have that opportunity to receive those health benefits, also for work places to have the benefits of mothers perhaps being retained in the workplace rather than leaving and staying home to continue the breastfeeding relationship?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

When this recommendation came about, a lot of work had been done with employers. This may be a way forward, which the Deputy is seeking. Unfortunately, this is a completely new part of the Employment Law, it needs primary legislation, which is quite complicated, and is going through. The date now, if everything sails through properly, as I say, is still 1st September 2019. We can urge and talk to employers and hopefully they know this is coming in law, they may start providing places sooner, so the mothers can express their milk or feed their babies, whichever suits their premises better. I am fully behind this and I hope when it comes to the Assembly the Assembly will get behind it. I see where the Deputy is trying to get to and if we can get there earlier I will try and make this happen. Thank you.

4.11.2 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Along with Deputy Doublet, I will welcome the law when it comes in. Could the Minister tell the Assembly whether any work will also be done in terms of changing cultures and promoting and educating about the benefits of breastfeeding among employees and the population in general in order to support the law when it does come in?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I thank the Deputy for his question. I think the answer is in the question from Deputy Doublet. We literally have a very, very high percentage at the moment of mothers who leave hospital breastfeeding and unfortunately, be it that they either decide that is enough or that they cannot carry on, the baby is then changed to bottle. Absolutely, I want to be able to have this conversation, which I think gives the employer this extra time to make this facility that is something quite natural. We have done it at the Town Hall. We have a breastfeeding place now for mothers. We need to get this culture across the workplace, into shops and into society. I am totally behind this. Both the

Deputies have asked the questions to get this out there and get it promoted as much as it needs to be for mothers who want to do this and for as long as they want to do it. Thank you.

4.11.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I can see the Minister is supportive and I thank her for that. Would the Minister agree to a meeting perhaps with the law draftsmen who are working on this and myself and possibly members of the Breastfeeding Working Group, just to discuss if there is any way we could bring this section of the law forward?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Absolutely. As I say, it is a complicated law for the law draftsmen to do and if there is anything that the Deputy and the association think should be in it that we are not doing at an earlier stage, I think it would be very, very helpful for this meeting. We will have a chat and set this up as soon as possible. Thank you.