

2020.04.21

7 The Connétable of St. Lawrence of the Chief Minister regarding the assistance provided to people wishing to make a will during the Coronavirus pandemic but who could not afford a lawyer: (OQ.103/2020)

What assistance, if any, is being given by the Government during the coronavirus pandemic to those people who want to make a will but who cannot afford to go to a lawyer?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (The Chief Minister):

The Government recognises it is important particularly at this time of uncertainty for people to be able to execute wills. If approved by the Assembly the Draft COVID-19 (Signing of instruments) Regulations 2020 would permit wills to be witnessed over an audio-visual link. This will allow individuals, especially those who are most at risk from COVID-19, to execute a will while maintaining a safe social distance. In terms of financial assistance, the Government does not provide direct financial assistance to individuals for the purposes of making a will, however Jersey's Citizens' Advice can provide information and support to those who cannot afford the usual costs associated with making a will. Citizens' Advice also propose individuals for free consultations lasting either for 30 minutes or one hour with legal professionals. Depending on their means and circumstances they can also link up some clients with legal practices which will provide simple wills for a reduced flat fee.

3.7.1 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I am pleased that the Chief Minister used the word "uncertainty" in his response to me because it is clear that there is so much uncertainty and there is a lot of worry by many older people in the Island. I would like to ask the Chief Minister please to make all of the information that he has just given me available on the States website. So my question is: will the Minister please ensure that there is more information on the States website regarding how people can make wills and the assistance that is available to them?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Absolutely, I will arrange for that to be in place. I have not looked recently at the C.A.B. (Citizens' Advice Bureau) website either but I would imagine there is something on there. If there is not I will also ask them to update that side as well.

3.7.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

The Chief Minister mentioned about simple wills but Jersey wills are not that simple compared to, for example, the United Kingdom where in the United Kingdom both movable and immovable property can be in the same will. In Jersey they are 2 separate documents and lawyers have to be involved certainly with immovable property, and it is not cheap. Will the Chief Minister look at this further because I am not convinced that the assistance he has mentioned through the Citizens' Advice Bureau is adequate and if he could please, as the Constable has said, publish the information so we can see how cheap or how expensive it is?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

I have absolutely got no problem of publishing it. As I said, I do understand that a number of lawyers do offer a simple consultation in which certain instances will be free for the first hour or half hour to enable simple circumstances to be addressed.

[10:45]

But I will arrange for the items that both the Connétable and the Deputy refer to, to be on not only the gov website but I will check on the Citizens' Advice Bureau side as well.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I do not have a supplementary, just thank the Chief Minister for agreeing to publicise this information.