

2.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins of the Chief Minister regarding access to information:

Will the Chief Minister give an undertaking that if Senator Breckon's proposition on reforming Ministerial government, P.120 of 2010, is approved by the States that all Members on the respective boards will be given unrestricted access to all information that is available to the Minister of each department and to all civil servants in that department and if not, why not?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):

Not only is P.120 yet to be debated, but even if it is agreed there is a long road to implementation which I am sure will involve the development of more detailed arrangements and further consideration by the States Assembly. I therefore believe it would be presumptuous of me to set out how I think it is going to work, particularly as I will no longer be in office when any new arrangements are implemented. What is clear to me is that one aspect of the implementation work will be the development of the detailed rules and processes within which the new boards will operate, including access to information and interaction with civil servants. As a general observation, I would envisage that in discharging its key functions members of boards must have access to all information relevant to those functions or the specific policy issue under consideration. The same would apply to those board members who are asked to take on delegated responsibility within their departments.

2.4.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Will the Chief Minister confirm that he has had discussions with his Ministers and that all the Ministers have signed-up to giving full information to States Members on the boards?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I would repeat, the implementation procedures and all the details relating to this still have to be discussed by Ministers and by States Members. We have not yet agreed the principle of this.

2.4.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Chief Minister accept that his attempt to promote an inclusive government has most singularly and catastrophically failed?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No, but I do accept that there are areas, in that and other areas, in which improvement can be made. If that proposition assists in that way then I am sure that Members will recognise that in their voting.

2.4.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may have a supplementary, Sir. Apparently the Chief Minister and his Ministerial colleagues have re-defined the meaning of consultation to mean giving briefings to, particularly, members of representatives of employees.

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The Deputy is entitled to his opinion, which is all that is. I do not share it.

2.4.4 The Deputy of St. Mary:

I will stick to the point. Can the Chief Minister at least give an assurance in principle that he thinks it is a good idea that everyone on a Ministerial board should have all the relevant information available to them? It is not a matter of whether we vote for P.120 or not. It is not some complicated difficult thing. Can he give an in-principle assurance that he believes that free information to Ministerial board members is necessary?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

In principle and in general I would say yes. But I think when one gets down to specific issues there may be specific issues where there are certain contradictions in that. So I am very loath to give blanket assurances such as the Deputy seeks.

2.4.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

From the answer the Chief Minister has given I would like to know what the contradictions are. Would he please explain them?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

For example, there may well be employment related matters which a Minister may learn of in another role, say as a member of the States Employment Board, which would not be relevant to a Ministerial policy position. So there has to be some segregation of duties in that respect. That is one I can think of. There may well be others.