

2020.09.08

**24 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Chief Minister regarding income inequality: (OQ.218/2020)**

Will the Chief Minister provide his assessment of which measures reported in the 6-month progress review of the Government Plan have contributed most to the objective arising from the Common Strategic Policy to reduce income inequality? Will he state what further measures, to achieve this objective, are under consideration for the new Government Plan?

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

The 6-month progress review of the Government Plan, which was the first time that has ever been done, includes a dedicated section of the C.S.P. commitment to reduce income inequality and improve the standard of living by improving the quality and affordability of housing, improving social inclusion by removing barriers to work. Obviously we have had the, and continue to have the, extraordinary situation of COVID-19 and the Government, during that period of time and continuing, have paid particular attention to those members of society who may have struggled more as normal life was disrupted. To give 5 of the areas that have been covered; extended community network set up to support vulnerable Islanders, which was Connect Me, which helped with emergency food distribution and access to benefits, as well as keeping in touch with people living alone during the lockdown. A fast track income support process was introduced to minimise the labour of dealing with the large number of new applications. An emergency housing team was set up to identify additional housing resources, while the normal housing market was unable to function. Do not forget the rent freeze and ban on evictions kept existing tenants safe in their accommodation. The co-funding payroll scheme has supported the wage costs of over 16,000 jobs. A new emergency support called C.R.E.S.S. (COVID-19 Related Emergency Support Scheme) provided financial assistance for people out of work with less than 5 years' residence. Despite COVID-19, additional employment rights were introduced on time to provide better support for working parents. Just to address this last part of the question: as Members will be aware, the new Government Plan is currently under development and we have agreed a timetable to share an early draft with the Scrutiny Panel before the end of the month. Subsequently then Members will be briefed accordingly.

**4.24.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

In that long litany of actions which appear to have been taken, how many of those would lead to permanent change, permanent reduction in income inequality, rather than just temporary stop-gap measures?

**Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

Of the list I gave, obviously many of them are, when I say temporary, although sometimes the fast-tracking of the income support process I would hope would be made a permanent or certainly an improvement, in terms of speed of transactions. The Deputy is right, a number of those were stop-gap measures to deal with and to continue to deal with the COVID-19 crisis. Obviously there are more items, for example the food cost bonus and things like that, which are permanent and which are detailed in the Plan.