

5. Questions to Ministers Without Notice - The Chief Minister

The Bailiff:

The 15 minute period has now expired. We come next to questions of the Chief Minister. The Deputy of St. Martin.

5.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

The States recently approved the States Employment Board amendment regarding the composition of the States Employment Board. Can the Minister inform Members whether in actual fact the drafting instructions have now been submitted to the Law Draftsman?

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

Yes, I can confirm that the instructions have been submitted to the Law Draftsman who sees no particular problems in instigating the arrangements agreed by the States as a result of that debate. I do not have a timescale from her as yet, merely that it seems to be straightforward enough to do.

5.2 The Deputy of St. John:

On 5th December the Minister went off-Island to attend a function in Paris. Could Members be told the nature of the transport he took to that function, who attended the function with him and in what capacity and also what knowledge the Minister has on that particular subject?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I attended in Paris at the weekend the Paris Boat Show at the invitation of the President of the Conseil général de la Manche with whom we are building excellent relations and furthering the ties between Jersey and France. He invited me to the Boat Show to instigate the start of the boat race, the Tour des Ports de la Manche which goes every year around various ports in Normandy, but this year will be starting for the first time from Jersey. This was a special honour for Jersey and as a result, I accepted his invitation even though it meant having to take a private plane to get there on the day and back again. As a result of that visit, we will be hosting a boat race which will have 100 boats and 700 competitors staying in the Island for a week, which I think will substantially benefit the Island's tourism industry and reputation and I have no hesitation in saying that it was a good investment and a trip well spent.

5.2.1 The Deputy of St. John:

The Minister did not tell us who attended with him. Therefore, will he please tell us who attended with him, and also of the Ministers that attended with him or Assistant Ministers did any of the Ministers have the experience as the Constable of St. Brelade would have had and did the Constable of St. Brelade attend?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

This was not a technical visit. This was a visit to promote the Island of Jersey and I believe I am quite competent to do that myself but, in addition, on the stand which is part of the La Manche stand, there is an area set aside for the Channel Islands and Members present were the Harbourmaster, Mr. Howard Le Cornu and other members of the Harbours Department staff who will be there throughout the duration of the boat show.

The Deputy of St. John:

The Minister still has not answered us, which other Minister or Assistant Minister attended?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No other Minister or Assistant Minister attended. I attended together with my wife, the officer from the International Services Department and a representative Bureau de Normandie.

5.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

What steps will be the Chief Minister take to ensure that his guarantee of no rise in G.S.T. (Goods and Services Tax) for 3 years will be maintained by his successor at Treasury and Resources and will he suggest when that 3 years is up, and will he further insist that his Minister for Treasury and Resources Minister the potential for progressive tax changes rather than regressive tax changes in the measures he proposes in 2010?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The guarantee of G.S.T. remaining at 3 per cent for the first 3 years was not one given by me unilaterally. It was adopted by the States as part of the law when goods and services tax was introduced and that can only be changed by a decision of the States. As to the second part of the question, the Minister for Treasury and Resources as we know is leading a review of fiscal strategy. I am quite confident that that review is intended, because I have been part of the discussions, to continue to provide an overall progressive tax system for Jersey and I am sure when the outcome of the strategy and review is completed, if the Deputy has concerns about whether that is being delivered in practice, he will raise it at the time.

5.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Chief Minister further support the words of his Treasury and Resources Minister when he replied in the House that he would consider putting advocates of progressive taxation on his fiscal review board?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I have total confidence that the Minister for Treasury and Resources will appoint the most suitable people to do that review from a broad and wide ranging set of different views.

5.4 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Does the Chief Minister value the work of the Scrutiny Panels and if so, can he give us all an assurance that the Council of Ministers will abide by the guidelines agreed between them and the Chairmen's Committee in the beginning of October, namely that all Scrutiny Report findings and recommendations are formally responded to by Ministers within a specified timeframe? I think it is 6 weeks, it might be 8 weeks, but the key question is the commitment to the work of Scrutiny and will those responses be forthcoming?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I did not think there was any doubt that I have said and I have committed to Ministers that any responses to Scrutiny Panels will follow the agreed procedures set out and agreed with the Chairmen's Committee. As to whether I value the work of Scrutiny Panels, I have an excellent relationship and I can certainly comment that I do value the work of my own Scrutiny Panel. The information I get in respect of others which comes second-hand is also very supportive and I believe that it is important that the work of Scrutiny Panels is understood and appreciated and equally the responses that Ministers make are timely and also followed through.

5.4.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Supplementary. I thank the Minister for that reply. Does the Minister agree that it would be helpful if the long awaited report on the La Collette and the construction of the incinerator that there were full replies to the recommendations and full consideration before any future determination of similar applications?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

That is a very broad ranging question. The Scrutiny Panel Report, I think, focused on one aspect of the matter and I think we are in danger of confusing different aspects, whether it be planning, financial or others. Any response from a Minister will reflect his response to that particular

aspect of a complicated situation like that. I think, in general terms, I would accept the views of the Deputy of St. Mary, but I think it is such a broad question that it would be difficult to give an absolute commitment.

5.4.2 The Deputy of St. Mary:

With respect, the report is going to be focused entirely on planning processes and how they are worked out in practice so the relevance to a future determination of an exactly similar planning application is one to one and I just want the Chief Minister to confirm that Scrutiny will not be brushed aside in this matter.

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Scrutiny Panel Reports on planning matters, it would be a matter for the Minister for Planning and Environment in his response, but I believe the Minister for Planning and Environment will follow similar good practice and deal with it in a timely and complete manner.

5.5 Deputy S. Pitman:

I refer the Chief Minister to an email I sent to him last week in which I asked him, bearing in mind the comments by Edward Trevor last week on A.I.D.S. (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and A.C.E.T. (Aids Care and Education Trust) and the fact that he has now resigned from the Association of Jersey Charities, does it feel that it is appropriate that he is still serving on Reg's Skips review and also the Rent Control Tribunal?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I do not really believe it is appropriate for us to discuss the activities of a private individual in this House. He was appointed to various panels for particular skills that he has in those areas. Those skills remain in place. I believe he will contribute valuably to those activities, irrespective of his personal views and I have no reason to change those appointments.

5.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

In a sense following on from Deputy Southern's question, does the Chief Minister believe that the comprehensive fiscal policy review board instigated by the Minister for Treasury and Resources will be fully inclusive and include Members of the Assembly who are not normally considered to be supporters of the Council of Ministers and if he does believe it will be fully inclusive, why?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The fiscal review is not to be carried out simply by a board. It is to be carried out by every single member of the Island community. They all need to contribute to this if they are going to get a complete and balanced outcome to it. I would hope that those steering the discussions will come from a variety of views, but what is far more important is that individual members and individual members of the public express their views and ensure that a full and complete picture is presented so that Members of the States when they come to decide and agree that policy will have the full facts in front of them.

5.7 Deputy M. Tadier:

I hope to have had this information already supplied from the Minister for Treasury and Resources, but in the absence of that information, maybe the Chief Minister could assist. Would the Chief Minister advise the House whether any English will be present on the new bank notes which will be circulated? Moreover, will the amount, say £50, be written in English on the bank note?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

That would be a matter for the Minister for Treasury and Resources to respond to but, to the best of my knowledge, yes the English language will be shown on the bank notes as well.

5.7.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

A supplementary in that case, will Chief Minister as political head of the States give his say whether he thinks it is valid to have a moribund language on the notes and also another language which is not commonly used in Jersey on a daily basis taking priority and will he, therefore, confirm that in fact we are going to have 3 languages on the notes and whether in fact that is a sensible approach to take?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Again, to the best of my knowledge there will be 3 languages on these notes and that, I think, is a very positive move. Certainly the response that I have had subsequent to the meeting of the British-Irish Council at which there was a discussion on minority languages, the response has been that Jersey's initiative in having 3 different languages on its notes is a very positive one which they welcome and encourage.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well. We finish questions without notice to the Chief Minister.