

2017.03.28

4 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier of the Chief Minister regarding the prospective holding of a debate by the States Assembly following the publication of the report of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry: [1(196)]

Will the Chief Minister inform Members what steps, if any, he plans to take to ensure the States Assembly can debate the report of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry as soon as possible after it has been published?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

As soon as the report is published I intend to make an official statement in the Assembly. I will also be requesting a special meeting of the Assembly for an in-committee debate during that week, providing the fullest opportunity for Members to debate the findings.

3.4.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Can the Chief Minister inform Members whether Frances Oldham will be invited to present her report to States Members? Has she been asked to do this and, if not, why not?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I am not aware that she has been asked to do so. If Members wish her to do so I can certainly make that request to her. **[Approbation]**

3.4.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Just a second request, I think that one would have expected that to be the norm anyway, one would have entirely expected that. But if it is not the case I think that we would be grateful for that; I certainly would.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I respond to that because it would not be the norm for a fully independent inquiry to present to the Parliament that perhaps a request is the norm is that the report would be presented with a short statement issued by such a chairman. The norm would be that even questions were not answered but I shall certainly relay the mood of the Assembly in respect of that request or I shall ask an officer to do so.

[10:15]

3.4.3 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I would request that States Members are given enough time to read and digest the report before we have the Committee of Inquiry and before Frances Oldham addresses States Members, if she does. I think it is imperative that States Members and the media are given a chance to ask questions when the report is published. I thank the Chief Minister; I can see him shaking his head there. But will he ensure that States Members are given time to read and digest the report before he arranges for the Committee of Inquiry?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Of course it is not my report, it is a fully independent report. My understanding, as I stand here before Assembly Members this morning, is that interested parties are officially recognised interested parties by the public inquiry, and previously registered as such, will receive the report slightly in advance of it being formally published. I assume that States Members will have it at that slight in advance. I think we are talking one or 2 hours in advance before it is made public. That would be

the normal process for an independent public inquiry. What I am proposing to do is make a statement in this Assembly as soon as we sit. I am also proposing, dependent on the timing of the release, that I ask this Assembly to convene for a special sitting for an in-committee debate as soon as practically possible after it has been published. That in-committee debate will, by its very nature, Members will not have had a great number of days and weeks to digest what will be a weighty tome, I expect, with many recommendations; that will be the first stage of our deliberations. I would then expect that Government come forward with a formal response to the recommendations and an action plan. I would expect that that formal response and action plan, which will be a number of weeks after that time, would then be debated again by this Assembly and this Assembly would give approval to the response to the recommendations and the action plan. But in the immediate aftermath of the publication, I think it is only right that the States have an initial ability to formally debate it, albeit in-committee.