3.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding arrangements for the prescription of certain medicinal cannabis products: [1(649)]

Further to the Minister's comments to the Assembly on 26th September 2017 that he hoped that arrangements to prescribe certain medicinal cannabis products would be in place "by the end of the year", will the Minister provide an update on this matter?

Senator A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I thank the Deputy for his question. I have to say that I am very disappointed that I am not in a position to yet action this but I can assure Members that we are keen to move this forward with plans to recategorise specific named medical cannabis products. I have to say I am somewhat frustrated that this is proving far more difficult than originally envisaged and I apologise for that. Work on identifying specific quality controlled products is taking longer than we thought. I can assure Members that I remain committed to moving this forward as soon as I possibly can.

3.2.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I am grateful for the Minister's answer. Is he able to indicate any sort of new timetable by which he thinks he will be in a position to move forward with this, as he indicated earlier this year?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I am not in a positon to do that other than to say that I want to do this as quickly as possible. Part of the problem is identifying clinically produced, consistently to the right standard, products; that is one thing. They are there, they exist. I have had some help from what I might call patient experts in identifying that. The second thing is: finding organisations that are prepared to deliver here; not only deliver here but other third party countries allowing the product through where it is illegal in their country to do so. I do not think any of those are insurmountable. They are just taking a little bit longer.

3.2.2 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Could the Minister clarify who is responsible for ultimately identifying the clinical products that can be signed off by himself?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The advice will come from M.D.A.C. (Misuse of Drugs Advisory Council) but specifically the individual concerned would be the Chief Pharmacist.

3.2.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister for Health and Social Services not think it is strange that we are reinventing the wheel? There are clearly countries out there who, long before Jersey, have legalised certain medicinal products for use in their own countries who are much bigger than Jersey is in terms of its population. So why are we trying to reinvent the wheel on this particular issue?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

We are not trying to reinvent the wheel. We have to have an approved supplier and that approved supplier has to be prepared to deliver to Jersey. The countries through which that must travel has to be in agreement to allow it to travel through those countries. We are not trying to reinvent the wheel. We are not designing our own drugs. They are there, as the Deputy says, but we need to make sure that we can access them and have a good supply service that is always of the right consistent quality.

3.2.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

We are obviously not talking about an individual product here but many products. Is the Minister able to indicate whether there would be any likelihood of perhaps some products being made available earlier than others rather than waiting to do as many as possible in one batch? Does he foresee this as a process that may go on for some time with more and more products being added to it rather than simply waiting?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Exactly that. I am hoping that there may be products that are easier to source and get online, and then that makes it much easier to follow on with the others. So we are not waiting until we have got the perfectness. We are waiting until we have got a list that we can deliver.