

2018.10.09

**1 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier of the Minister for Children and Housing regarding a meeting with the lawyer representing children who had been sent to Les Chênes children's home: [OQ.152/2018]**

Given the commitment of the Council of Ministers to put children at the centre of everything we do in the States, why did Ministers or officers not agree earlier to a meeting with the lawyer representing children who had been sent to Les Chênes children's home?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec (The Minister for Children and Housing):**

Lacey Advocates, which is the law firm appointed by the Council of Ministers to manage the historic abuse redress scheme, has been in regular and ongoing contact with the lawyer in question. But subsequent to this, a meeting between officers, Lacey Advocates and the claimant's lawyer is scheduled to take place later this month.

**3.1.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Can the Minister elaborate on those meetings because effectively he appears to be saying that the lawyer is not telling us the truth?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

No, I do not think that is necessarily the case. We know that this news story that has provoked this question is one that did come up, I think around about a month ago as well, when this lawyer publicly raised concerns about this. At the time we said that we were looking at the options that there are for providing some sort of redress scheme that may not necessarily be equivalent to the one that had previously existed. So that information was put in the public domain. I think where there is a difference here is that, I think quite understandably, the lawyer and those who he represents, are keen for a decision to be made, and rightly want to push us on getting that decision made. But we have said that we are not in a position to make that decision right now, however it will be made in the next few months as to what road we go down in providing some sort of redress scheme. I think there is just a difference of emphasis there rather than one side having it right or wrong.

**3.1.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Can the Minister tell me what his involvement has been in these negotiations, as the Minister for Children? Secondly, can he also say whether there are any other claims to be made against the States for child abuse that has not been covered by the existing scheme?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

In terms of my involvement, I have been speaking to the officers who are doing the work in putting together options, which will be presented to the Council of Ministers later this year. That is being led by officers in the Chief Minister's Department. In terms of any other potential claims that may be made; we will not know about what potential claims there could be before they come out and say that they would like to make a claim. But I am not aware of any other immediately pending claims, apart from the one that this lawyer has made clear about.