

5.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the loss of local trade to non-resident labour:

What active steps, if any, is the Minister taking to prevent companies and individuals who do not pay any Jersey tax or employ any Jersey workers coming to the Island to trade thereby taking business and work away from Jersey residents?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

Before granting a Regulation of Undertakings and Development licence that results in immigration into the Island, it needs to be proven that compelling benefits to Jersey will arise. This decision is taken after due consideration by the Population Office and the Migration Advisory Group and only after financial and local employment benefits as well as the interest of consumers are fully considered. These policies are designed to support the best interests of the Island as a whole. For example, many new businesses bring local employment and new choice to consumers and, of course, this is to be welcomed.

5.6.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

The Minister did not really answer the question. I would like to know what active steps he is taking to deal with certain types of people who are coming to the Island, whether it be white-van men coming in on Condor at the beginning of the week and going at the end of the week who are doing construction work in the Island and taking business away from local construction people, or even professional advisers who are coming in, operating from hotel rooms and giving consultations for the weekend.

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

Specifically on those points we have put additional resource to check on vans coming off the ferries from the U.K. to ensure that those arriving in the Island are or do have appropriate licensing in place in order to allow them to come here. With regard to a certain number of small businesses that provide services over a weekend - for example, smoking cessation is one that springs to mind and there has been a recent jewellery case - those businesses will find it a lot more difficult under the new law, which will be shortly lodged, which will help to improve... adding charges and other mechanisms to make sure that these types of activities are minimized.

5.6.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can I just follow up on that? Has the Minister's department given any licences to some of these consultants coming in giving these weekend services?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

No, indeed if somebody is coming and is outside of immigration, if indeed someone is coming in for a weekend there is very little under the current law that we can do to prevent them from so doing. Under the new law however there will be more provisions which will give more protection. I think that hopefully will answer the Deputy's question. That law should be lodged within a matter of weeks for debate before the summer recess.

5.6.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister said he had already put in additional resource to check on incoming white vans, can he state exactly what that resource was in the light of the fact that customs and immigration are currently running 3 staff undermanned?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

In the form of an individual, so that individual could check periodically vans, vehicles approaching and coming into the Island to ensure that the activities they are going to undertake were indeed legitimate.

5.6.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can the Minister supply Members with details of how many shifts he has done down at the docks in order to check on those white vans please?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I can certainly supply details to the Deputy and circulate them very happily to Members to give them an indication as to the level - or in many cases not - of abuse of the system.

5.6.5 The Deputy of St. John:

Given that certain criteria has to be complied with within the Island, could the Minister confirm that when they are checking these vehicles that the employees have social security cards or are registered with social security, and also that these vehicles, if they are trading on the Island or working within the Island, should be carrying Jersey number plates? Are those things checked out?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

If an individual comes for a limited period of time neither social security nor the other item the Deputy mentions is relevant. Somebody can indeed come and provide a service over a weekend and is not subject to the issues that the Deputy is referring to.

5.6.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I do wonder how many firms are going to go out of business. Can the Minister tell us whether he has law drafting time allocated and the likely time frame? Are we talking about one year or 2 years before this happens and, again, does he have any estimate of how many businesses are threatened by this and could go out of business?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I think the Deputy is seeking to sensationalise the issue. There are not large numbers that he is referring to but with regard to the other part of his question, the law is almost ready for lodging. I would anticipate it would be lodged in a matter of weeks for debate, certainly before the summer as I understand it.