

2015.07.14

4.12 Deputy J.A. Hilton of the Chief Minister regarding the accuracy of the measurement and monitoring of the population:

What actions, if any, does the Minister intend taking to improve the accuracy of the measurement and monitoring of the population on an ongoing basis?

Senator P.F. Routier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):

As the Chief Statistician has said, the Social Security Department has successfully run the new manpower survey under the new Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law 2012 with names of every employee being reported. This can now be used to support the continuing development of a live register which will be very welcome. While this will take time, as we have always said, we have the right foundations in place. The expertise of the Statistics Unit and the Social Security Department, supported by the Register of Names and Addresses (Jersey) Law 2012 will help me to continue to prioritise this work. I know that the Statistics Unit are very keen to progress this as soon as possible.

4.12.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

A supplementary. The Assistant Minister just spoke about the time that it would take. He praised the Social Security Department and the Statistics Unit for their very good work that they have done. They are obviously capable of doing this piece of work, so how much time exactly is it going to take to prioritise this work?

Senator P.F. Routier:

It has obviously been a very gradual process. The Chief Statistician is wanting to be very comfortable with the formation of all the numbers that are in all the various databases. Because when we ran a manpower survey a year or so ago he was not satisfied that that was correct so he is being very, very careful in making sure that he is satisfied with the collation of the figures. I know he has said in the recent announcement of the population figures that he wants to move on to this live register as soon as he can. He did not commit himself to when he would be comfortable to provide that but I know we want it to happen as soon as possible and he wants it to happen as soon as possible. I would imagine it would be within the next year or so that it would be ready.

4.12.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Notwithstanding the good work of the Statistician and Social Security, surely if we rely too much on Social Security for our population figures that will simply tell us how many people are on the books at Social Security. I would have thought that the logical thing to do to get accurate figures would be to start at the ports - at the harbour and at the airport - so we know who is coming in, who is coming out and then collating that with other information to get a proper accurate figure for the future. Is that not the case?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The way that the Statistics Unit has been collating the figures has been through bringing together the information from various departments, not just Social Security. So we do not have access in the ports so that people sign in when they come through the ports. What they do is when they want to have access to work or access to living accommodation they need to have a registration card and at that stage that is when they are captured.

4.12.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

I think that is my point. We know how many people have gone to Social Security and applied for a registration card. We do not know how many people are living in the Island in whatever informal capacity or even working below the radar, *et cetera*, and that is presumably what a population is. It

includes those people, not simply those who are known to one particular department. Is that an issue which the department in which the Assistant Minister is working is trying to address?

Senator P.F. Routier:

We are relying on the need for people to, if they are going to be working within our community, or they are going to be living within our community - unless they are breaking the law and the people who are giving them work are breaking the law, or if the person they are renting accommodation from is breaking the law - we are relying on that provision that they will need to have a registration card. If anybody is aware of areas that they are not complying with the legislation, they need to report it and it will be dealt with.

4.12.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Does the Minister agree that in order to grow the economy in line with the expectations outlined in the M.T.F.P. we simply do not have enough of the right skills in the Island?

[11:00]

So what information can be derived to prove by employment sector that we have the right licences for the right companies? The current system of allocation of licences is simply not working. It needs to be reviewed with urgency.

Senator P.F. Routier:

We are doing a piece of work currently with the employers. Only yesterday I met with a major hotel owner who has a few hotels to discuss their needs. There is regular contact with the hospitality industry generally; with the construction industry. Jersey Business are doing a piece of work for us as well to help us to ascertain what the skills are required in the Island and we take advice from Jersey Business on the gaps that are happening. It covers the digital and finance industry as well. So we know it is something we need to be aware of and hopefully the information received from those industries will help inform our decision-making.

4.12.5 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

None of those sectors that the Assistant Minister mentioned are happy with the current situation, so what is he going to do about it?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Which part of the industry? Which sector?

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

All the sectors that he mentioned: hospitality, and a number of others, digital. None of them are happy with the current allocation of licences. It is affecting the growth of their business, the growth of the economy and the creation of jobs. What is he going to do about it?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I think that is the issue that we are challenged with. We are faced with a desire from our population who already live in the Island to control population. So there are value judgments that need to be made with regard to where licences are approved. The current Interim Population Policy talks about high social need or high value and there is a judgment call that is made for every application. We get criticised by some people for the number of people who are in the Island but we do get to a situation where we are refusing licences and it is a judgment call.

4.12.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Assistant Minister accept that it has taken far too long to accurately populate the Population Register and does he accept the words of the Statistics Chief that he can no longer swear by the population estimates that he is giving out and that he could, as Guernsey have done, have got

an accurate population register by outsourcing this particular move? Without outsourcing it will take up to 3 years to get an accurate Population Register. What consideration has the Assistant Minister given to additional funding to make sure that we get that accurate Population Register as soon as possible? I understand, for example, that the Health Department are desperate to get their hands on an accurate register in order to run their screening programmes. Will the Minister consider adding in the M.T.F.P. the required funds if it is deemed necessary to get that accurate register more quickly?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Interesting question. It is a question that I asked of the Chief Statistician about how he would progress the live register and he assured us that he could achieve that within his current budget. I challenged that when he issued the recent population figures and he gave us that assurance that it would be part of his work and he can do it within his budget.

4.12.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

But the Assistant Minister is avoiding the central key to that, which was he can do it within his budget in about 3 years. No, well, he has told me it will take about 3 years. If the Assistant Minister were to decide that he wants it quicker than that for all sorts of purposes and extra funding was required, would he be prepared to back that up?

Senator P.F. Routier:

My recollection of the discussion I had with the Chief Statistician was that he could do it a lot quicker than 3 years but I will have another discussion with him and find out what the current assessment is. But if it requires a further look at it we will certainly do that.

4.12.8 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

The total net inward immigration was 1,200 people for the 2 years: 400 licence employees and 800 registered. Does the Minister agree with me that while issuing registered permits for the years 2013 and 2014 ... for instance, in 2014 we are talking about 440 new registered licences, plus in addition to that a guesstimate for the number of people who are switching from registered each year to entitled to work is 600, is giving the capacity of an additional 1,000 registered licences per year. Can the Minister tell Members how he feels that is helping towards us trying to maintain our inward population level at 325 people per year which we are blatantly failing?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I agree it is a real challenge for us to make decisions with regard to the decisions that we are being asked to make by the business community to ensure that they have the right staff within the Island. Even within this Assembly we hear different views about what businesses require and what licences we are able to give. I would just like to address one issue with regard to registered people. It has been assumed that a registered licence is just for businesses which are in hospitality and retail and those sort of things. That is not the case because quite a proportion of them are now in the finance industry, in the legal profession. The reason they have been given registered licences is because it does not enable them to have access to housing. So coming to Jersey and having an entitled to work application only, they have not gone to what was the old (j)s, so there is that differentiation. Now we are using that a lot cleverer, I believe, to ensure that they do not have access to housing. But it is a challenge, I do not deny the fact. As we have seen from the numbers which have recently been published, the number is higher than what I would like it to be. But when we are faced with a business coming to us to say that they are going to create employment and they are going to pay tax to our Island, there is a judgment call that needs to be made. Whether the 325 was the figure we were aiming for, who knows? But we are faced on a daily basis of having to make real decisions about businesses.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

But does the Minister ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, sorry, that was the final supplementary. Question 14 falls away, we are on to question 15 that Deputy Tadier will ask of the Chief Minister. Deputy?