

2026.09.08

5.15 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central of the Minister for Social Security regarding Government policy on the minimum wage (OQ.70/2026).

Will the Minister advise whether it remains Government policy to continue the transition towards a minimum wage set at two-thirds of median earnings, and explain what assurances she can give to low-paid workers that the Government will not seek to reverse the work undertaken during the previous term to increase the minimum wage?

Senator M.E. Millar (The Minister for Social Security):

I thank the Deputy for her question. As a previous Minister for Social Security, she will know that the current minimum wage rate of £13.59 per hour achieved the target of a minimum wage set at two-thirds of median earnings in April this year. Members will also be aware that following a period where the previous Minister set the minimum wage rate, we have now returned to the normal statutory process whereby the Employment Forum will run a public consultation and make a recommendation as to what the minimum wage rate should be for next year. Following significant public interest in the matter, the Employment Forum has recently extended its consultation into the minimum wage for 2027 for a further 2 weeks into the middle of this month.

[11:30]

The Forum will present its report and recommendation to me towards the end of September. I would encourage any employer or employees who have a view to participate in this consultation so that the Forum are able to report with the benefit of a full range of views. The Forum will provide its report based on this established framework and I will carefully consider their recommendations when I receive them. No decision about the minimum wage will be made before receipt and review of the Forum's report. Thank you.

5.15.1 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

We were quite clearly on a pathway towards meeting a States Assembly decision but we had not quite met it. In order to make the rises more affordable for businesses in addition to the Better Business Support Package, we had indeed put in a year's lag which meant that we never met the two-thirds of median wage. Would the Minister consider taking that lag out so that we could meet two-thirds of the median wage and the commitment made by the Assembly?

Senator M.E. Millar:

As I say, much depends on the report and recommendation of the Employment Forum. However, for the benefit of new Members, I will quote the exact commitment made by the Assembly in 2021. This was: "To set the objective of raising the minimum wage to two-thirds of median earnings by the end of 2024 subject to consideration of economic conditions and the impact on competitiveness and employment of the low-paid in Jersey." The commitment was not quite as blunt as the Deputy suggests: "The C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy) will be published in the coming weeks setting out Government's priorities and Ministers have already made it clear that these priorities will include growing the economy to create a prosperous Island which will include a highly-skilled and well-paid workforce." Thank you.

5.15.2 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

What was the Minister's reaction to comments made by her fellow Minister, the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development, with regard to seeking to abolish the minimum wage, in particular on the implications this might have for her department and the payments that might be necessary to low-paid workers if they were paid even less than they currently are?

Senator M.E. Millar:

As he has confirmed, I do not believe the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development is suggesting abolishing the minimum wage, he was simply discussing its impact on inflation.

5.15.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

The question still stands. I was not asking about what he said, I was asking about the reaction to it. Would the Minister give her reaction to what he said?

Senator M.E. Millar:

I am not entirely sure what the Deputy is getting at, but I come back to the Employment Forum will make a report, I will make my decision based on the report. My discussion with the Minister made it clear that I can make no decision until the Employment Forum has reported. We will consider what that report says and make the decision based on the Employment Forum recommendation. I think what the Deputy is suggesting is that if the minimum wage was not increased or was to diminish, and there is no suggestion of those things happening at present, there could be a small impact on income support. I think it would be a very small impact given the relatively small number of people who are already on the minimum wage.

5.15.4 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

Given that a minimum wage set below a living wage is indeed a poverty wage, what advice would the Minister give to somebody who is currently on a minimum wage and struggling to make ends meet, in particular those people who have not lived here for 5 years and cannot claim income support?

Senator M.E. Millar:

The issue that people have lived here for less than 5 years is something that we will continue to consider, but you would like to think that when people come to Jersey they are coming to take jobs that give them wages they can live. Many of the people coming to Jersey in hospitality or agriculture are provided with food and accommodation, as she is aware. If people are coming to Jersey and cannot survive, then I think they need to discuss with their employer whether they are having a wage that they can possibly survive on.