4.9 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity of the Minister for Economic Development regarding industries he wishes to attract to Jersey. (OQ.107/2026)

Will the Minister advise what specific industries he wishes to attract to Jersey and explain what steps he will take during this term to attract them?

Deputy F.G. Voisin of St. Helier North (The Minister for Economic Development):

I do not believe it is for Ministers to pick and choose winners in our economy. The role of Government is to create the right environment for businesses to thrive so that they can create secure, well-paid jobs. We will do that by reducing bureaucracy, where possible, and by encouraging companies to improve their productivity. By its nature, Jersey attracts high value, low footprint businesses and Locate Jersey and other agencies continue to focus on attracting and supporting their arrival into the Island, but new sectors naturally take longer to become productive and provide a meaningful contribution to the economy.

[11:00]

We need to support what is already here. I intend to continue to support the Minister for External Relations with his excellent work in financial services, and we will ensure that the best possible conditions are in place for the wider economy to contribute to and benefit from the *Time to Win* programme. I would regard new sectors as the icing on what is already a very good cake.

4.9.1 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Two medical cannabis licences were granted before Jersey had regulations for this industry in place, and in 2022 Scrutiny found it was not even clear who the Minister was responsible. Could the Minister name specific lessons his department has learned from this and what work is he doing to embed these lessons?

Deputy F.G. Voisin:

It is the Minister for Health and Social Services who is in charge of the regulation for these areas. We understand that our regulation is not quite up to scratch. There is an issue over how the industry is being regulated and, more importantly, the sort of prescriptions that are being given to Islanders. This is an area of concern, and it is certainly an area of concern for the Minister for Health and Social Services.

4.9.2 Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central:

I was quite surprised to hear the Minister say he did not think it was for him to target specific industries. I wonder if he could put that in the context of Government supporting "Bergerac" and wanting to support an emerging film industry, for example. Does he think that we should not be doing things like that?

Deputy F.G. Voisin:

I think that there are 2 different issues there. The initiative to support "Bergerac" was largely done to support the tourism sector and also promote the Island generally. Indeed, that has been very successful. One in 4 visitors to the Island have seen "Bergerac" and have been encouraged to visit Jersey as a result. The other issue is the film sector, and that is a sector that we are looking at. Indeed, there are a number of areas. There is a biopharmaceutical area that we have spoken to, and I must give credit to Deputy Romeril, the Assistant Minister for Economic Development, who is doing a sterling job and spending a great deal of time talking to people who are interested in coming to Jersey. Very often these businesses do involve new industry sectors. There are also specialist engineering businesses that are interested in coming to Jersey. It is a question of meeting these people, discussing what the issues are, whether they can come to Jersey quickly, and if they cannot, then what is the barrier to that. So as far as the film sector is concerned, this is something that is of interest. I was at a presentation only yesterday on the film sector, and we are going to be looking closely at it. If we are able to support this sector, then of course we will need some financing in the 2028 Budget. The one thing that we have learnt, talking to film producers and programme producers, is that they go where the money is, so if Jersey wants to attract these productions, then I am afraid we need to provide some sort of funding to go with that.

4.9.3 Deputy L.V. Feltham:

It is my view that a strong and sustainable economy needs to be a diverse economy. Again, going back to the Minister's comments that he did not think that it was his role to support specific industries, how will he then ensure that we do have a sustainable and diverse economy?

Deputy F.G. Voisin:

I did not say that I would not support particular industries, but what I do not want to do - and what my Assistant Ministers do not want to do - is to try to pick the winners of the future. I am afraid Jersey has made that mistake in the past and it has cost us dearly. It is a question of having an open door and discussing with potential businesses what their needs are and whether we can accommodate them. It probably is a question of looking at individual businesses and then seeing if other similar businesses can locate to Jersey. As far as having a diverse industry sector is concerned, I entirely agree. We do need to diversify our economy, if possible, but we need to do that in a way that generates additional tax revenues and improves the standard of living for people in Jersey. That is why, coming back to the film sector, that is of interest because of course at yesterday's presentation there were a large number of Highlands College students, and of course we have a very good media section at Highlands, so a lot of those students were coming from there. I am sure that they would appreciate the opportunity of finding employment in this sector in Jersey.

4.9.4 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I am pleased to hear the Minister's enthusiasm for a new film industry, and indeed I was pleased to hear about yesterday's event, which I was unable to attend. I know that the current Minister for Treasury and Resources will no doubt also be fascinated by the attempts to make a new film industry. He will be impressed, like me, about the Minister's "can be done" attitude, and it proves that nothing is Impossingworth for he who believes; I do not expect the reference to be got by everybody. But would the Minister answer the question about whether he thinks, like me, that it was a bit of a contrived way to fund a film - "Bergerac", for example - by giving the money to Visit Jersey and effectively asking them to fund the film rather than giving the money directly? What was the reason for this?

Deputy F.G. Voisin:

I believe that the original decision was made before my appointment, and I understand that the series 3 has largely been funded by royalties from series 1 and 2. So all I am doing really is continue what seems to be a successful formula of the past, put in place by my predecessor, and I think he did an excellent job there, thank you. So really it is a question of placing the money where it can be best used. Visit Jersey have used some of their existing budget to complement the additional funds that have been provided by the department.

4.9.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am still trying to understand the logic that the Minister is perpetuating this bizarre and contrived funding mechanism. Does it mean, for example, that Visit Jersey will be getting the royalties that would be due back to Jersey's initial investment? Would it not be simply straightforward for Government to decide whether they want to fund this? Is the reason because Government - after Senator Maclean, when he got his fingers burnt perhaps 11 years ago - have little appetite for risk? Is he satisfied that that looks okay on paper and it is doing its job?

Deputy F.G. Voisin:

Yes, it is working. The Deputy is correct to raise the issue of who gets the royalties. The royalties do go back to Visit Jersey, and those royalties are being applied to fund future series, and every series improves the chance of the programme being sold to more jurisdictions because the more series there are, the more attractive it is to networks to buy the series - or the series of series - and it fills slots in their programming. Can I just refer to the States previous experience with funding film? We need to take those lessons that have been learnt and apply them to how we go forward. I think there are valuable lessons to be learnt.

4.9.6 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I think the answer to my follow-up question shows how complicated the system is around medical cannabis, because I was talking about the growing of medical cannabis. The Minister will find that the former Minister for Economic Development, who is now the Chief Minister, was attracting the industry to come to Jersey. I am glad that he recognises that there was not the regulatory framework in place and now we are trying to sort it out, but for the residents in my district, who have lived with the noise and smell from a

cannabis farm for many years - and the States of Jersey Complaints Panel have upheld a complaint about how it was handled - what assurance can the Minister for Economic Development give them and Islanders that any future new industry will be handled differently, and that would be coming from his department or at least advising other Ministers how to set up a proper framework to ensure we do not have the same issues again?

Deputy F.G. Voisin:

Yes, it is important that we do have the right regulatory framework. Indeed, we have already spoken to another biopharmaceutical player in that market, and we have already flagged up some potential problems with what they want to do in Jersey. It is true that we need to take a balanced view as to any potential impacts on residents living around a particular manufacturing plant. I think there are also issues around having to work with, in this case, the cannabis growers to make sure that they mitigate any smells and noise emanating from their production units.