



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**MORNING SESSION: 10.35 a.m. – 12.50 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Friday, 16th March 2012**

## The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 10.35 a.m.*

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. H K Budhrani QC *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: M L Farrell Esq RD *in attendance*]

## Questions for Oral Answer

**Clerk:** Sitting of Parliament, Friday 16th March, Answers to Oral Questions continue.

### ENTERPRISE, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

#### **Future Job Strategy Incentives for employers**

**Clerk:** Question 261/2012, the Hon. D A Feetham.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Can the Minister for Employment state whether any special or different measures

5 will be taken in order to incentivise employers to permanently employ anyone in sheltered employment under the Future Job Strategy?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

10 **Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano):** Mr Speaker, as was the case previously under the Vocational Training Scheme, there are no special or different measures in place currently to incentivise employers to permanently employ anyone in sheltered employment under the Future Job Strategy.

15 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Is he insisting that employers who take on board disabled people, under the sheltered employment scheme, sign Future Job Strategy contracts with Employment Training Company? And is he also insisting that those who are currently placed with those companies, that those companies sign those contracts?

20 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I believe I told the hon. Member last month, Mr Speaker, that everybody had been put into ETCL, simply because they were there in the vocational scheme originally, but that they were not going to remain permanently there and that the present system, which is that they have contracts that say, up to eleven months, will not apply to the people in this category, who will have a separate company that will employ them permanently. I believe I have already told him that.

25 **Hon. D A Feetham:** So the answer... I cannot remember that the hon. Gentleman has told me that, otherwise I would not have asked the question – and I do look through *Hansard* before formulating the questions.

30 But what he is saying is that, effectively, they are going to be employed by a separate company and that the employers, within which these individuals are placed, will not be required to sign a Future Job Strategy contract basically undertaking to employ them at the end of a period of time or, as an alternative, repaying the cost of their notional training.

**Hon. J J Bossano:** That is correct.

35 I mean, some of the persons in this category have been five or six years already as vocational training scheme individuals on £400 a month so, you know, in effect they were not... the placement was having no responsibility for them, other than giving them something to do. That will continue to be the case in future, but it will not be done the way it was done: it will be done on the national minimum wage and go up as the national minimum wage goes up – but there will be a separate entity that will cater for supported employment.

40 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes. Well, I commend that approach; it is clearly the correct approach.

**Clerk:** Question –

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Jaime Netto.

45 **Hon. J J Netto:** My supplementary question was... obviously, the question is directed to the Minister for Employment, and the Minister of Employment has given his answer. I just wonder whether, perhaps, the Minister for Social Services, within part of her remit, she is actually in discussions with perhaps some NGOs in order to try and see whether there are some viable plans to develop opportunities for disabled persons.

50 The reason why I am saying this is because I myself, although I was not the Minister for Employment in the last four years, I took it upon myself to have constant discussions to try and promote the uptake of opportunity for disabled persons. There was one scheme in particular, which I am happy to share the details with, with both the hon. Lady or even the Minister for Employment, which never took off through lack of time, which might have meant the opportunity for employment for disabled persons.

55 So I just was wondering whether, quite apart from the initiatives that the Hon. Minister for Employment may be taking, whether the Minister for Social Services is also in discussions with relevant NGO organisations, in order to try and get some particular ideas for the promotion of employment opportunities for disabled persons. Is that the case?

60 **Mr Speaker:** If the Minister is able to answer.

**Minister for Equality and Social Services (Hon. Miss S J Sacramento):** Mr Speaker, even though I think it is irregular to ask a supplementary question to a different person (**Mr Speaker:** Yes.) to whom the original question is aimed, I am happy to answer that the case is yes, that I have already been in discussions and there are already plans afoot to develop a scheme for supported employment.

65 Having said that, Mr Speaker, I do not think it would be appropriate to continue answering supplementary questions. I have answered that on a one off, with a caveat that I started... Mr Speaker, the original question has not been addressed to me.

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**Training Schemes  
Number introduced since General Election**

75 **Clerk:** Question 262, the Hon. D A Feetham.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, what new actual training schemes have been introduced since the last election by this Government?

80 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

**Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano):** Mr Speaker, other than the continuation of those that existed under the Vocational Training Scheme, such as Construction Training Centre, Gibdock, or the training of nursing assistants at GHA, for example, all other training since 1st February is new.

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** Sorry, can you repeat the last part of that. I could not hear it

90 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I am saying that all other training, other than the ones I have identified that existed already, is new. All the training that is currently being provided, other than those that existed, is new training. It was not being done before.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, but what is it?

95 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, it is the training that is provided by an employer to fit the person for the job that the employer wants the person to do, so it is the training that is provided by the placement that the trainee is sent to. So if we send somebody to the telephone company, he is trained in the work that the telephone company will require of that person.

100 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Does he not agree with me that that is not a new training *scheme*, that that is the position, a continuation of the position as it existed at the last General Election, and that is precisely what happened before the last General Election. There were a number of training schemes, one of them was the placement of people with different employers so they could undertake relevant training in the area where that employer operated. Is that not the case?

105 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, that is the theoretical case. The practical case is that the employers who have had this placement have told the Department and me since the Elections that they have no work for these people and that they really were taking them on at the request of Bleak House, on the basis that they were being, if you like, responsible employers by providing a niche for some people, so that it was better to have them in this placement than on the dole.

110 In practice, the fact that only five employers have actually so far said that they would take on five people shows that there has been no training directed to a job. There was no job at the end of the training.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** So, is it not the position... What you are really saying to this House is that it is a

115 betterment of what existed before, but there are no new training schemes that have been introduced by this Government, since the last Election. Is that not the case?

120 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, the case is that, unlike the philosophy of the previous Minister for Employment, who used to tell us that it was a good thing to provide people with interminable doses of VTS Bleak House placements, on the basis that that improved their prospects of being employed by somebody – for which there is absolutely no evidence from the questions that I have asked in the Department and the information that I have been provided – it is now the case that it is not just an *improvement*, it is a different approach, where the placement only takes place if it is known that there will be a job.

125 The reason why we have not yet been able to move faster is because there were no jobs in the 300 people that were previously placed. Otherwise, they would all be working now and we would be dealing with more people. So the result is that we have replaced a completely false concept of training people for jobs which was, effectively, an attempt – by the previous administration – to mislead the public as to the numbers of unemployed, by one that is directed at getting people into work, and the training is provided to get people into work.

130 In the areas that training has been provided, like the Construction Training Centre, I am in discussion with employers to see what it is that has stopped them, until now, from taking on the people who come out of the Training Centre, because out of the 15 years, the figures that I have seen of people working in construction trades, *out of 15 years of training* is something of the order of 50 individuals, all of whom are in the public sector.

135 **Hon. D A Feetham:** The hon. Gentleman seems to be obsessed by my former Ministerial Colleague, Mr Montiel, and if it was not because I am professionally engaged to act on his behalf, I would make several comments in response to the comments that he has made. (*Interjection by Hon. J J Bossano*)

140 But, look, is the hon. Gentleman looking at, for example, something that I was personally involved in when I was Minister for Justice. During the last year or so of the last administration I was closely involved in employment matters myself, working very closely with Mr Montiel, and one of the things that we were looking at was scaffolding, for example. In Gibraltar this is conducted primarily by labour, by qualified scaffolders, that either come from the UK or come from... in fact, there were a lot from Poland. And one of the things that we were considering doing, and we would have done had *we* been elected into Government, would have been to use GJBS to train people in scaffolding. As I understand it, it requires people to be sent to the UK in order to do some examinations and obtain qualifications – part of it is done in the UK – and then, obviously, we would have a trained scaffolding pool of skills, here in Gibraltar, by people who are resident here in Gibraltar.

145 Now is he considering something like that, or anything else that is different to what was occurring on 9th December last year?

150 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, I am considering somethings that were not occurring before and one of them is what we need to do with the Construction Training Centre in order to produce craftsmen that will be able to find employment and be acceptable to employers.

155 I can tell the hon. Member I have also had discussions with people who employ, in the trade, electricians, who tell me that, as far as they are concerned, what they are looking for is City & Guilds qualifications and not NVQs and that, as long as we insist on producing NVQs they will not find employers recruiting the people that we produce. So the training is being reviewed on the basis that what we want to do is train people who do not just get a piece of paper that shows that they have satisfactorily completed the training, but get a piece of paper that actually is what the employers demand, and are able to do, on the practical side, the skills that are required for them in employment. That will include all the construction trades, including scaffolding.

160 But I have to tell him that one of the things the we have done, in order to assess that, is in fact set up, as I told him in the earlier questions yesterday, an individual formerly in the Training Centre, now in the ETB, whose job it is to provide the labour force for the construction industry whereas, previously, the position was that people from the construction industry would be sent to construction employers even though they had never had any previous involvement and possibly very little interest in entering in the, the whole thing has been shifted so that there is a far greater selection of employees in sending them to employers, instead of a random selection.

170 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Does he not accept that he will be judged, certainly at the next Election – but he will  
be judged during the next four years – on results? And does he not also accept, and agree with me, that  
placing, so far, five individuals and having five individuals who have been guaranteed a job, bearing in mind  
the huge fanfare with which he rolled out this programme at the last election, does not bode well for the  
future, and so far does not represent a huge success in the implementation of his much vaunted Future Job  
Strategy scheme?

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**Mr Speaker:** Does that not ring like a question that was asked yesterday – exactly the same question?

**Hon. J J Bossano:** I'll give him the same answer!

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**Mr Speaker:** I seem to recall that question but, anyway.  
Yes, the Hon. Minister.

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**Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, Mr Speaker, it is true that the disastrous state in which the employment market  
was left by Mr Montiel and the Government, to which the hon. Member opposite belonged – and, clearly, he  
must share part of the blame as he has just told us now that he was also involved in what was happening in the  
labour market – means that the task is proving more difficult at the beginning than I anticipated, but I have not  
the *remotest doubt* that it will be a total success and that when people judge me, in three years and nine  
months, they will be very happy with the results. No doubt whatsoever!

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**Clerk:** Question –

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Edwin Reyes.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I am slightly confused and perhaps the Minister for Employment can try to  
enlighten me.

He said that, talking with the people in the electrical trade, they preferred trainees to have City & Guilds  
rather than NVQs. Can he please explain to me the difference, because I have a different interpretation to him.

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**Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, all I can tell the hon. Member is what the people in the industry have told me.  
They asked specifically for a meeting with me, they told me that, in fact, the MOD, for example, on MOD  
contracts insist that the qualifications for electricians should be City & Guilds. They say that, in the industry,  
City & Guilds is considered to be the 'brand' that has been there since time immemorial and the preferred  
option for official employers in the United Kingdom and that the industry here clearly will not recruit people  
with NVQs, if the client demands City & Guilds.

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As far as we are concerned, I see no problem in shifting from one to the other, because I imagine that there  
isn't all that much difference in the content of what has to be learned. It is the same as if you said 'I have got a  
degree from Oxford or Cambridge and a degree from Southampton', they are still degrees and they ought to  
be the same, but employers don't treat them the same. That is the nature of the argument that they put to me.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, so just to make certain we are both clear. NVQ is the level 1, 2, 3  
whatever, that is the actual qualification. City & Guilds is the awarding body, so City & Guilds actually award  
NVQs.

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What I think the Hon. Minister is trying to say now is that they would rather that the electrician had his  
NVQ validated by City & Guilds, as opposed to, for example, EMTA, or whatever other awarding body  
*[inaudible]*. But City & Guilds and NVQs are actually one and the same. City & Guilds issue NVQs, which is  
what they do at the Construction Training Centre. The trainees learning, for example, carpentry are training at  
NVQ level 2, which gives them a qualified craftsman status in a certificate issued by City & Guilds, because  
that was the preferred awarding body.

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So let us not... I think we both mean the same. City & Guilds and NVQs are not opposed. City & Guilds  
is one of the *awarding bodies* in respect of NVQ's.

**Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, that is not how they explained it to me. All I can tell him is –

225 **Hon. E J Reyes:** If the hon. Member will give way. Then I suggest that he talks to the Director of Education, because they are wrong.

230 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I accept what the hon. Member is saying. All I am telling him is that the people that came to see me said 'Look, the NVQs are considered to be a less demanding qualification than the City & Guilds and that the MOD wants electricians to come –' (*Interjections*)

235 Mr Speaker, I am not making myself responsible for the accuracy of what I have been told. I am *sharing* the information with the hon. Member because he asked me to explain exactly what it was that the *industry* had put to me. And it is in response to that request from the industry... If an employer says to me 'Look, if you keep on producing people with NVQs we are not going to take them on, we want them to come with City & Guilds,' well, I then go back and say to the people that are doing the training, what do we need to do to make sure that they come out trained with a certificate that says City & Guilds.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** No, Mr Speaker. I don't think I have succeeded in explaining myself.

240 City & Guilds is not a qualification. City & Guilds are an awarding body. The Hon. Minister was correct before in an example he was trying to give to clarify the situation: you can end up with a degree either from Canterbury University, like I got, or like the Chief Minister has from Oxford. Perhaps his is far more prestigious than mine. Understood. But what the employers cannot say is that I want a 'City & Guilds'. No, City & Guilds is just one of the awarding bodies, and the qualifications to be attained is an NVQ level whatever, in respect of electrical trade, welding, fabrication, mechanical trade.

245 The qualified craftsman status is achieved with an NVQ level 3, that is the standard and then there are certain awarding bodies of which, one of which I think they are expressing a desire, should be City & Guilds, I can go along with that because perhaps it is a more prestigious and more established awarding body. In respect of the construction trades, plumbing, carpentry, tiling and so on, their qualified craftsman status is actually attainable at NVQ level 2. The level 2 gives them a qualified craftsman status and a level 3, although possible, and I hope is still being offered for those who have the ability at the training centre is really something that is aspired to by those wishing to become foremen in the future. So I am not blaming the Minister, I am just trying to advise him, as a colleague that, with the best intentions in the world, he may be being slightly misled, and in a friendly way I advise him to contact the Director of Education, who can show you how the whole thing works, and the different awarding bodies for particular qualifications.

250 But a qualification is NVQ and then the employer wants to be... or wants to express a preference for City & Guilds validation, as opposed to one of the other awarding bodies. I want the Minister to make certain that, although he takes in good faith what is being said, he should perhaps ask his colleague, the Minister of Education, to get the Director... just to make sure that, for the benefit of trainees, that we give them the best product possible...

260 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, and perhaps come properly prepared to the next Parliament because, in answer to my supplementary about new training schemes, he cited precisely that example as something new that he was doing, which obviously is not new, if what my friend, Mr Reyes, says is true.

265 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if sharing with Members opposite information or requests that I have received from employers is judged by the Member opposite to be that I am not properly prepared then the answer will be no, obviously not, no.

270 You have asked me a supplementary and, in the supplementary, I have told you what an employer has told me. The employer has given me something that you claim is incorrect or misleading. In future, I can tell the hon. Member, when he asks me something I will not tell him what people tell me, because clearly that, in his judgement, makes me insufficiently prepared to deal with him, and the last thing I want to do in this House is not to be able to put him in his place constantly at every meeting, and I wouldn't want to be not sufficiently prepared to be able to do that.

275 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Can he, in the light of what has transpired in the last few moments... does he not agree with me that, therefore, the answer to my previous supplementary which was what new training schemes or skills is he promoting in his Department since the last General Election, the answer is *none*, because that is precisely the example that he gave. It is the wrong example and, therefore, will he not be man enough to admit that there are *none*. (**Members:** Oh!)

280 **Hon. J J Bossano:** If he wants to put to test whether I am manly enough to do then I don't think the Chamber is the place. But we have the ante-chamber, we can put that to the test any time the hon. Member wants to test my manliness!

Mr Speaker, as far as I am concerned, if the hon. Member wants to have information and he wants me to say whether it shows that I am doing nothing and that I am not manly enough to admit it, then I can assure him that I am doing more in the three months than the previous administration did, at the very least, in the last 285 four years and in all probability in the last fifteen years, and they were not *man enough* to come out and admit, in an election campaign, half the things they were doing and covering up.

When he came out with a statement in the Election campaign, saying it will cost £11 million to employ people who are seeking employment he was, in fact, admitting that he knew already that the numbers of people seeking work, if they were all given £10,000 each, would cost £11 million, notwithstanding the fact that we have had this constant misleading of Parliament and public by producing *cooked* and *concocted* and 290 *massaged* figures year after year in budgets and in the figures presented to the House! (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) And will he not be manly enough to admit it? (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

295 **Hon. D A Feetham:** The hon. Gentleman should really calm down. (*Laughter*) In his advanced years he really is going to blow a gasket (*Interjections*) if he continues down the vein that he habitually continues in these sessions.

Does he not accept that when I made my statement about the £11 million –

300 **Mr Speaker:** Order, Order. I think now that that remark, which was 'the £11 million issue' – I call it briefly that – was beyond the scope of this discussion. It was not properly brought into the discussion by the Hon. Minister, but when the Hon. Daniel Feetham invites the Hon. Minister to calm down, with respect, he did raise the tempo by accusing him of not being man enough. (*Applause*) Perhaps we can keep our questions away from personal epithets.

305 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, and, of course, Mr Speaker will apply that across the board, no doubt.

**Mr Speaker:** Absolutely.

310 **Hon. D A Feetham:** I am absolutely certain about that, because yesterday the Chief Minister made a number of allegations. He made an allegation... I will be separately writing to Mr Speaker in relation to this.

**Mr Speaker:** Please do.

315 **Hon. D A Feetham:** He made an allegation of impropriety in relation to – he did not name – Members sitting on this side of the House, accused Members on this side of the House of writing in the *7 Days* without a *shred* of evidence.

And let us not forget, Mr Speaker, that if we are to apply, for example, the rule that you must not call a Member of Parliament a liar, I do not see what the distinction is between calling a Member of Parliament a liar and accusing a Member of Parliament of impropriety or, without any *shred* of evidence, accusing them of writing anonymous articles in a newspaper. I hope that Mr Speaker also bears that in mind for future sessions of Parliament. 320

**Mr Speaker:** I certainly will.

325 I take on board the point the hon. Member makes and I would be grateful if he did write to me and I *will* address the issue. But in my defence, if I may say so, statements are made in this House by both sides and I have absolutely no means – or limited means – of knowing the veracity of statements, so it is very difficult for me to actually rule on the actual content of statements. My job here, I think, is to create an atmosphere where proper, meaningful debate can be had on the issues and if any statement is made which is not true there is a procedure whereby the matter can be dealt with on a motion, where we can carefully examine the real facts.

330 (**Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes.)

So I take on board that the hon. Member may well have a grievance in terms of the allegations of impropriety but, again, I hope he will appreciate that I have no means of knowing whether that is true or not true.

335 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes but, of course, Mr Speaker, you do have the means of actually saying to Members of Parliament, 'If you are going to make an allegation like that, produce the evidence.' What you cannot do is just simply make those kind of blank statements because there is, as I said, there is an inconsistency here. If I then stand up and say 'You're a liar', you would then call me to account for calling him a liar! (*Interjection by Mr Speaker*)

340 The hon. Gentleman has made allegations which are completely and utterly unfounded and, if we are, and I appreciate, Mr Speaker, that you are in a very difficult position. I accept that. I accept that, sometimes, Members of Parliament do not help your role in some of the comments that I make...

**Mr Speaker:** They make it impossible, actually.

345 **Hon. D A Feetham:** And I accept that.

But there has to be even-handedness in relation to how one deals with this particular issue because, of course, if those allegations are made we are inevitably going to stand up and call the hon. Members 'a liar', and then we are the ones who are called to account for calling them a liar – which is incongruous.

350 **Mr Speaker:** No, I take on board everything the hon. Member says and I do not disagree with him.

All I am saying is, as I say, when statements are made I have limited knowledge or resources to be able to judge, there and then, whether the statement is true or false. You must accept that. But I can judge when terminology, for example, 'a liar' is used. It is a different thing altogether. But I will take it on board and I will be grateful if the hon. Member would write to me, and I will address the issue, in a fair and even handed manner.

355 Can we proceed to the next Question.

360 **Labour Market  
Skills Audit**

**Clerk:** Question 263, the Hon. D A Feetham.

365 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Has the Government completed a full skills audit of the labour market??

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

370 **Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano):** No, Mr Speaker.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Is the Minister on course to complete the full skills audit by the date set out in his manifesto, which I believe was April 2012?

375 **Hon. J J Bossano:** There are two elements, one is an assessment of the demand for skills which is being done through an analysis within the ETB, and then there is an assessment of the skills held by the resident population which will be done later in the year, taking advantage of the census.

So, in the census, we will have questions which will identify what the resident population skills map is. That, of course, is not the whole of the skills in the market because the skills in the market include 7,000 frontier workers.

380 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, can I just add to that. The hon. Member is slightly mistaken when he refers to the manifesto and says, and asks, whether the Government is on course to complete the skills audit by the date given in the manifesto, and the date he has given is 1st April. That is not, in fact, what the manifesto says. What the manifesto says is:

385 'a full skills audit of the labour market will be undertaken in the current financial year to prepare the final action plan of the Future Job Strategy, from April 2012.'



390 So the final action plan is going to be started from April 2012.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** I still do not see what the actual difference is. But, turning to more important matters than the date of the skills audit, will the skills audit also include an analysis of the skills required by employer, which seems to me to be a far more important aspect of, or an equally important, I should say, aspect of the aim of conducting a skill audit.

395 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I have already answered that, Mr Speaker. I have told him there are two sides, the supply and the demand.

400 The demand for skills is determined, as far as we are concerned, by the vacancies opened in the ETB. That is the source of the demand, people are opening jobs. And we can analyse the skills of the jobs that they are opening, and then there is the supply, from the resident population, which we would have had to do in some other way but since the census that should have taken place in 2011 did not take place in 2011 and has had to be deferred to 2012, and we are now in the process of setting that up, I have already spoken to the statistics office who will be including the questions that are required in order to establish the skills that exist in the resident population in October or September this year, when the Census takes place.

405 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, I understood him the first time about the vacancies opened in the ETB.

410 I don't think that just simply analysing the vacancies that are opened in the ETB will give him a full picture of the skills that employers think are necessary within the labour market. And could I urge upon him, and does he think that perhaps it is a good idea, to also conduct a survey, just apart from the question of the vacancies that have opened, but conduct a survey of employers in Gibraltar as to what are the skills that *they* believe are necessary within the labour market and can I urge upon him that approach.

415 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, I imagine that no employer can give me that information, other than about his own business. (**Hon. D A Feetham:** Absolutely.) So I mean if somebody... for example, there are 2,500 shop assistants in Gibraltar: I am not talking about whether the people that own the retail shops consider the shop assistants are skilled enough or need to be trained to achieve a certain level of skill. That is not what I am talking about, What I am talking about in the assessment is whether there is a demand for 2,500 shop assistants, or a demand for 2,500 carpenters, not the skill of the individual.

420 So the nature of the audit of the vacancies and of the supply is to establish what *is* the supply and demand for workers of a certain trade in a certain industry. The idea of talking to individual employers is something that will happen if we find resistance from employers in employing the people that we have got and the argument is they are not trained enough. That is part of the exercise that will be done in the context of whether we find the numbers signing up to employ the people that we can provide grows or does not grow. If it does not grow, and the reason is that they do not consider that our people have the skills it is an argument, of course, that we will have to analyse because they do not seem to have the same problem with skills with those who come across from the border.

430 **Department of Employment**  
**Ministerial involvement re job vacancies**

**Clerk:** Question 264, the Hon. D A Feetham.

435 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Can the Minister for Employment please confirm whether job vacancies are held back by his Department and are not advertised until he *personally* vets notifications?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment.

440 **Hon. the Minister for Enterprise, Training and Employment (Hon. J J Bossano):** No Mr Speaker.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Well, is he aware – knowing that he is aware, or so he says, of everything that happens in his Department, that he is all-knowing about what occurs in his Department – he is aware that, in

445 fact, there are employers that are very concerned about the amount of time that it is taking for job vacancies to be advertised, from the point at which notification is received by the ETB? And does he not agree with me that that is a matter of concern, particularly, in fact, within, for example...

450 I notice that he is deep in conversation with the Minister for Justice. Perhaps he may want to – the Minister for Justice and for Gaming – listen to the question because it also concerns him, that, in relation, for example, to particular sectors like the gaming sector, which is already facing considerable difficulties from pressures in the United Kingdom that, we would not want to do anything that places obstacles and impediments in the way of these companies?

**Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, it is, of course, not a matter for the hon. Member to direct me, or to suggest what I can do or cannot do on this side of the House.

455 The hon. Member mentions certain difficulties which, presumably, have come to him from the gaming sector. Those are not difficulties that have been brought to me as Minister for Gaming, or Minister with responsibility for gambling. One would have thought that if the industry had a particular issue with a particular Department and there is a Minister responsible for that particular industry that that issue would have been brought to my attention. It has not and, as far as I am aware, that issue simply does not exist.

460 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the Department usually sends candidates to vacancies within 24 to 48 hours of the vacancy being recorded with us.

465 I do not think that anybody has complained that that is too long! Of course, they may be complaining about the fact that they are no longer able to do what they used to do, when the hon. Member was in Government. I don't know whether he knew about it and agreed with it, but it had been going on for a considerable time, and that is that, notwithstanding requirements of the law, people used to fill the vacancy first and inform the Employment Service later. It was called 'passing through' by the officials in the Department, and apparently there was no political directive to tell them to do anything else about getting the law respected and implemented.

470 The 'passing through' is now non-existent. Everybody in the private sector and, indeed, in Government Departments, who were as guilty of this, have now accepted that they have to open the vacancy first because, otherwise, what we have is a situation where, in fact, individuals who go to the Department seeking employment are sent on a wild goose chase. They go round half of Gibraltar with lots of cards and all the places that they go to tell them the vacancy has been filled already.

475 That is the change that has taken place and that is a change that is a matter of policy. I am surprised that the previous administration allowed it to deteriorate to the extent that 9 out of every 10 jobs that were registered with the Department were, in fact, jobs that were not available to the people who were unemployed and that only one tenth of the jobs were.

480 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Well, we are actually being told is that it is taking, in some cases, two weeks for adverts to come out from the time that they were notified and that, in fact, there are employers that are actually going to the ETB and asking why the advert has not come out promptly.

485 But can I ask him this – and I hope that he doesn't challenge me to a *mano a mano* in the lobby as a consequence of the question – but does he send notifications to GSLP headquarters to see whether some of his stormtroopers are employed in relation to some of these vacancies, thus causing delays in advertisement of the jobs. (*Interjections*)

490 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, as long as the hon. Member chooses to put into question my manliness, I will tell him that he can put it to the test any time he wants! (**Mr Speaker:** But he hasn't done so on this occasion.) If he wants a *mano a mano*, we will have a *mano a mano*.

I have no problem, and if he thinks I am too old to take him on, he can test that as well! And we will see who comes off better out of it.

495 **Hon. D A Feetham:** I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that he continues to be value for money! (*Laughter*)

**Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, he can tell me whatever he wants! But he should know me, having known me since he was a little boy, he should know me sufficiently to know that I am not actually joking. I am deadly serious. So he should take it seriously.

500 Let me say that if the hon. Member thinks that I am sending the vacancies to the stormtroopers – which were his stormtroopers in another age, when he used to consider it a matter of pride and not something to be ashamed of, as he does nowadays – then he has been misinformed by his henchmen, wherever they may be.

505 I can tell him that I was told that during the election campaign there was regular contact between Bleak House and the GSD headquarters precisely in order to infiltrate as many of *their* stormtroopers into the system before we got there, since they could see the way the wind was blowing, and, maybe, because *he* was doing it and *his* party was doing it, he must think that it is common practice.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** I do not know where the hon. Gentleman gets the information about my communications with Bleak House. I can assure him that there has been no communication, certainly, from me to Bleak House.

510 Has he had an opportunity – because I left him all the files – of going through all the files that I left him of people that had come to see me, some of whom were, in fact, his own supporters that we were trying to help prior to the General Election?

515 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, when I asked the civil servant that he used to have for the files, I was told there were no such files and they were never given to me. I was given a piece of paper with handwritten notes, and that is all the information that I have.

520 Those people I have checked in the ETB records to see whether they are employed or not and, if they are not employed, then we will, in fact, do everything we can to employ them, regardless of which political party they support, because the commitment of the Government is to employ *all* the people who are unemployed, irrespective of political affiliation. He will know that if he cares to look at the names of the people that go into employment because, in fact, there is no indication. We look at their skills and their ability and their suitability and it will make no difference which way people vote. They will find that I am 100% committed to getting a job for every single one of them.

525 **Mr Speaker:** Before we move to the next Question, again may I just point out there were two words used which I think are quite unnecessary: ‘stormtrooper’ on this side; ‘henchman’ on that side. Both of you know what the English language has to say about both those words.

Next Question.

530

## HOUSING AND THE ELDERLY

### Housing Waiting Lists

535

### Empty homes awaiting repairs

**Clerk:** Question 290, the Hon. E J Reyes.

540 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Housing state how many homes are currently empty and awaiting repairs before they can be allocated to applicants on the Housing Waiting Lists?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

545 **Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** Mr Speaker, there are 149 flats currently empty and awaiting repairs before they can be allocated to applicants on the housing waiting lists.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, does the hon. Minister have some sort of indication of the target timespan when, perhaps, he would like to see these flats ready for allocation?

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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Not exactly, Mr Speaker.

I can inform the hon. Member that we do prepare these flats as quickly as possible and we have a system in place whereby the Housing Works Agency does part of the work and also private sector companies are employed to speed things up for us.

555 I can state in Parliament that we are improving the system and that more houses are becoming available on account of the efforts that we have put in since we came into Government.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** The Hon. Minister may need a bit more notice, but does he have some sort of indication of whether these are pre-war or post-war houses, or perhaps an indication of the percentage of which fall into which category?  
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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** As the hon. Member hinted, I do not have the facts at my disposal, but I can acknowledge in Parliament that many of the pre-war houses are in pretty poor shape and they do require a lot of refurbishment, both on the outside and within, so these will take a little longer to be prepared – to be made available, rather – but the post-war flats, which regrettably also experience an element of dampness, also require sometimes major refurbishment from within. So it is impossible to give you a time limit or timescale on this, but if you want to know how many of them are post-war and pre-war, I would be happy to provide the information, if you give me notice.  
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**Clerk:** Question –  
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**Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker –

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Jaime Netto.

**Hon. J J Netto:** Could I ask the Hon. Minister for Housing... I take on board the question of the difference between pre-war and post-war in relation to any refurbishment work that may be carried out – meaning that the pre-war, obviously, would, by nature, have more work involved – but in relation to the moment when the Housing Department at City Hall get the vacant keys and the process starts, whether the refurbishment is going to be taken either by the Housing Works Agency, or now, as the hon. Member has said, the private sector, does he have an indication as to the time it will take for at least work to *start*, because another thing would be how long it would take, depending on the condition of the house? At least does the Hon. Minister for Housing know the time between getting the keys, so that the process starts for the works to start? Does he have an indication of that, Mr Speaker?  
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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Again, it is only an indication, because I do not have accurate facts at my disposal, but there are two dimensions to the process.  
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One process is called the cleaning-out process: when flats are made available, we get the keys, we go and inspect them and they need a good clean-out – old stuff that has been left there by the previous tenants. That, of course, could take just a matter of a couple of weeks or less. If there is an element of more serious internal refurbishment that is required, it could take a little longer – a month, two months – because there is an element that requires the drying up, the dampness to dry up, the skimming, the... I am not a technical person, so I cannot give you exact... use technical jargon, but it could take up to a month, maybe two.  
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As soon as we get the keys, our inspectors go and inspect the flats and the process is as fast as it can possibly be because we know that there are many applicants waiting for homes to be allocated to them.  
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**Hon. J J Netto:** I appreciate that, Mr Speaker and, of course, I am aware of how the process starts, in terms of cleaning first but, in relation to the work as far as refurbishment of flats is concerned, does the Housing Works Agency – I am only asking – have the first bite of the cherry, in the sense of saying, ‘We do the work, so long as we can do the work in a specified period of time,’ and if they do not do the work in a specified period of time, because they may have other works to do, then the work is taken off the Housing Works Agency and given to the private sector?  
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At the end of the day, what the Housing Minister wants is to be able to do the turnover and allocate the house. Is that the system in place?

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Yes. The first bite of the cherry, as the hon. Member implies, of course, goes to the employees of the Housing Works Agency and they have to give a commitment to undertake to achieve the task by specific dates. Of course, this will differ, depending on the enormity or the smallness of the jobs. That is why there is the bonus scheme and they are encouraged to work for that bonus, and therefore... That is  
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what it is there for. At least that was the idea of the previous administration and we want it to work.

610 There is also the question of the private sector companies that we are using. That is when we are told by the people in charge of the Housing Works Agency that the jobs have to go out so that as many people as possible can be allocated homes in the shortest possible period of time. Then *they* come into play, but the first bite of the cherry goes to the employees of the Housing Works Agency, yes.

615 **Hon. J J Netto:** If I can pursue this a little bit further, Mr Speaker, I guess that what may be happening right now is that, because all the housing projects that the GSD Government had come to fruition, in the months that follow – probably in the 12 months that follow – there is going to be a huge increase of work to the Housing Works Agency, particularly people moving or who have moved already to all the different housing projects, leaving behind the flat they used to occupy in the current housing stock. So that means that  
620 the volume of work now in the Housing Works Agency is going to increase.

At the end of the day, what the Minister quite rightly is interested in is to do the turnover of the work so that the people on the waiting list continue to come down. So, is the Minister finding himself in a situation where the volume has increased so much at the moment, as a result of this example I have just given, and it is as a result of that that he is using the private sector? Is that the case, Mr Speaker?

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**Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the position is that the Government introduced an early-exit package, which has reduced the numbers of people working in the Housing Department by 47 initially. Subsequently, there are still, I think, 16 in the pipeline entitled to take the early-exit package. So the workforce of the Agency is down; it is not that the workload is up.

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**Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker, notwithstanding what the Hon. the Minister for Employment has said, even when the workforce was much bigger – in fact, even if we go back to 1995, which was at the time of the GSLP Government, because obviously we came in in May 1996, when the workforce was even much bigger – there were cycles in the volume of work. It used to go up and down, regardless of the size of the workforce, and what I am saying at the moment is that what is happening... I *guess* what is happening right now is that  
635 the volume of work is increasing at the moment and it will be increasing for the next 12 months, simply as the result of all these people who have been moving into the new housing schemes that we provided. It takes a lead up time between the time they move out and the keys being given to them.

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So, at the end of the day, what the Housing Minister wants is a quick turnover of the works to be done, and he might be using the private sector in order to drive the works much forward for the benefit of the people on the housing waiting list. That is what I was trying to get at in my supplementary question. So, formally, my supplementary question is: is he experiencing a surge of volume of work as a result of what I am saying and, in order to meet that work, he is using the private sector?

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645 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** I am trying to understand what the hon. Member is saying. I think the work continues to be the same as it has always been.

Housing stock in Gibraltar consists of over 5,000 homes for rental. It has increased slightly, obviously, because we have had 490 that the other administration, rather late on in their 16-year term, provided, which was very good.

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Obviously, he has to remember that we distinguish between our manifesto commitments to construct new homes and to refurbish homes as an ongoing thing, but we are talking about 149 empty flats, which was the question asked in the original Question. That Question I think I have answered, and I am not sure if I want to venture and attempt to answer the hon. Member to the extent that goes beyond the knowledge I have at the moment in connection with Question 290, basically.

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You may ask another supplementary, if you wish to make it clearer.

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**Housing Waiting Lists  
Additional applicants since Q178/2012**

**Clerk:** Question 291, the Hon. E J Reyes.

665 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing state how many additional applicants, since the answer given to Question No. 178/2012, have been added to the Government's Housing Waiting Lists, giving a breakdown of their housing allocation requirements?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

670 **The Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** Yes, Mr Speaker.  
A further 31 applicants have entered the housing waiting lists since the Answer given to Question 178/2012, and the breakdown is as follows: 1RKB, 21; 2RKB, 1; 3RKB, 2; 4RKB, 6; and 5RKB, 1.

675 **Hon. E J Reyes:** These, I take it, as a consequence, have been added to the pre-list?

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Yes, Mr Speaker.

680 **Homeless persons**  
**Additional housing applicants since Q179/2012**

**Clerk:** Question 292, the Hon. E J Reyes.

685 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing state, since the answer given to Question No. 179/2012, how many new applications for housing from homeless persons have been received?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

690 **Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** Since the answer given to Question 179/2012, no new applications for housing from homeless persons have been received.

695 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Therefore, Mr Speaker, the situation in respect of the homeless persons remains exactly the same at the figure of 25, as it was a month ago.

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** I would have to check with my staff but I hope that some of those 25 have already been allocated a house. I cannot be sure, so I would need notice of that question.

700 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, thank you.

Mr Speaker, would the Minister try to, if possible, give me some sort of explanation, what priorities is it his policy to try to give to homeless persons, because he did explain to me, two meetings ago, that although they fall under the nomenclature of 'homeless', they are not necessarily sleeping out on the street.

705 I do now happen to know, and am personally aware of, a couple of cases of people who have no roof over their heads, and actually have to beg and borrow, sometimes, little vehicles in order to have a roof over their head at night time. So the Minister might want to enlighten us as to what sort of priority he is giving these people.

710 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** Well, some of these cases go to the Allocation Committee for their consideration, and then they will provide advice to the Minister as to how... with what speed we should proceed with some of these cases.

715 **Hon. E J Reyes:** And some of these cases, Mr Speaker, when they turn up at the Housing Department sort of desperate, they have no roof over their heads, they, for some reason or other, they don't seem to leave satisfied that a certain urgency is being allocated to their case. One particular applicant was explaining to me that, not blaming the Minister directly, but is perhaps a bit under the impression that the information is not being quite forwarded to the Minister of how desperate her own situation is. Is there some advice or otherwise that the Minister can offer, where this lady can, perhaps, get an opportunity to see him as soon as possible?

720 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** Absolutely. If the hon. Gentleman will be kind enough to give me her name in the ante-chamber, I will do my best to see her and help her.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** I really appreciate that, Mr Speaker.

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**Housing Allocations Committee  
Meetings since Q180/2012**

730 **Clerk:** Question 293, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Housing state how many times the Housing Allocation Committee has met since the answer provided to Question 180/2012?

735 **Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** Mr Speaker, since the answer provided to Question 180/2012, the Housing Allocation Committee has met three times.

740 **Housing allocations since Q181/2012  
Breakdown and assigning authority**

**Clerk:** Question 294, the Hon. E J Reyes.

745 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing state how many homes have been allocated since the answer to Question 181/2012, giving a breakdown of the size of home and indicating whether these have been assigned on the advice of the Housing Allocation Committee or by any other authority?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

750 **Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** Mr Speaker, since the answer to Question 181/2012, a total of 31 homes have been allocated. Two of these were not assigned by the Housing Allocation Committee.

The breakdown is as follows: 2RKB, 9; 3RKB, 17; and 4RKB, 5.

755 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, under what authority, have... [*Inaudible*]

Sorry, Mr Speaker, if it is not on the advice of the Housing Allocation Committee, by what authority have those two homes been allocated?

760 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** Let me remind the hon. Gentleman that I am the Housing Authority and, in fact, I allocate every single home, on the advice of the Allocation Committee.

These two incidents were exchanges of one [*inaudible*] flat to another. So the Allocation Committee did not have to be involved. It was a straightforward matter.

765 Maybe I should also explain that the Housing Allocation Committee comes into play, more than anything else, when there are elements where applicants have medical conditions, there are serious social issues and they provide advice to the Housing Ministry, so that we just simply look at these specific cases, and their assistance, of course, is invaluable. The process just carries on naturally, in terms of whose turn is it to have a house next.

770 I sit with my Housing Manager, and we look at the empty flats that are given to us – the keys to those empty flats – and we actually authorise and sign the allocation of every single home. The Housing Allocation Committee will then, at a later stage, be made aware of *all* the allocations that have taken place.

So the question that you have asked me two or three times is one that I myself am responsible for, because I used to ask the previous Government, but at the time I did not fully understand the procedure. So the reality is, Mr Speaker, that the Housing Allocation Committee will advise the Minister and the Authority and *I* do all

- 775 the allocations myself. I have got to sign every single allocation.  
Everything I do is also submitted to the Allocation Committee, so that they know exactly what is going on, but their advisory role comes into play mainly in what concerns medical cases, social cases, etc. There is a system in place and we follow that system. (**Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes.) Whoever is next on the list gets the next home.
- 780 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Basically, if I have understood it correctly, and I had always had that interpretation which the Minister now says he also sees but, in respect of two allocations that have been given, they were not necessarily on the recommendation there.  
However, I am a bit confused – and I may have got this wrong, Mr Speaker – the Hon. Minister mentions that there was an exchange there, so it is not really a new allocation of a flat, but rather a person living in address *A* has moved on to address *B* and has therefore taken over a property but handed one back in, so it does not necessarily follow, then, that the number of applicants has been reduced. It remains the same; it is just that this person has been moved for reasons sometimes that a person may be considered by either the Housing Allocation Committee or by a Minister – and I think rightly so – you allow the person to move somewhere else, mainly connected with medical reasons, but it does not help to reduce the housing waiting list. (*Interjection*)
- 790 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** The Minister is, in a sense, right.  
I was going to simply say that all the allocations have been made on the advice of the Allocation Committee, but I was asked to explain it in this way. That is why I have done it like that.
- 795 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Jaime Netto.  
**Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker, can I –
- 800 **Hon. J J Bossano:** I would like to... Mr Speaker, the hon. Member is wrong in saying it does not reduce the waiting list.  
It does reduce the waiting list by one, because that person may have been waiting for the house to become available, and the exchange means that he is no longer –
- 805 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, I see.  
**Hon. J J Bossano:** So there is one person less.
- 810 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, let us say, if it is an exchange of a 2RKB for another 2RKB, we have had a case... It could be an exchange from a 2RKB to a 3RKB and, therefore, it does then remove an applicant who was a 2RKB tenant, applying for a 3RKB.  
I am grateful for that clarification, yes.
- 815 **Hon. S M Figueras:** I think, Mr Speaker, sorry – just for purposes of clarification, the number of allocations that you referred to, how many were transfers by allocation *versus* allocations to people on the current list? I do not know whether – I cannot recall this as something that has been covered. If it has, I apologise but I did not quite get it.
- 820 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** The 31 homes that have been allocated have been allocated for people on the Housing Waiting List – period.  
**Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker, can I just point out to the Hon. Minister for Housing that, in terms of allocation – in fact, he may have found himself already in this position – as far as the decanting is concerned the Minister might find himself, as I used to find myself on a few occasions, in a situation where the housing inspector would actually go out to inspect a particular flat – sometimes even a flat in the private sector – and submit a report on the basis of Health and Safety, whether the Health Inspector may find himself that there were electrical faults maybe endangering the lives of people or the structural building was in such a detrimental state and, on the basis of that report, if the Minister is satisfied that he has to take urgent action
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830 and this is not something that he can wait for the next meeting of the Housing Allocation Committee, then the Minister, obviously, should act on the basis of putting Health and Safety before the normal procedure.

I do not know whether the Minister has already found himself in a situation like that but certainly it is something that you need to act very quickly. Has the Minister already found himself having to act in those circumstances on the basis of decanting?

835 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** The reality is that the hon. Member is right, there are situations whereby people – even elderly ladies...

I had a case, not so long ago, who lives in private rental accommodation in a fairly disgraceful state of affairs and, of course, we do our best to help them but then the system comes into play. The case goes to the Allocation Committee. She could well be placed in Social Category A or she will be placed on the homeless list. Therefore, we move as fast as possible to find an adequate home for her, or for him.

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**Clerk:** Question –

845 **Hon. E J Reyes:** May I, Mr Speaker – ? Just something... I am sorry, I have only just noticed now.

Last Question Time, the Hon. Minister said that, the previous session, he had managed to allocate 36 new homes, and there were 40 offers that had been made that, hopefully, he was expecting.

Am I correct in assuming that these 31 that have been allocated are 31 who accepted of the 40? Because I do not know how to account for the figure. Is it 31 *after* those 40 offered, or these 31 could be from the 40 that were offered?

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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** I have not got the exact answer. The 40, however, offered were obviously offers of allocation.

I know for a fact that just a handful did not accept. So it could well be that these 31 *are* the ones that have been allocated since the last question was asked, yes.

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**Housing tenants  
Works completed since Q182/2012**

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**Clerk:** Question 295, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing state how many tenants, since the answer given to Question 182/2012, have had their pending works completed?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

**Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this Question together with Questions 296, 297 and 298.

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**Housing tenants  
Additional works required since Q182/2012**

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**Clerk:** Question 296.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing state how many tenants, since the answer given to Question 182/2012, have been added to the list requiring works to be done in their homes?

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**Housing Agency  
Jobs completed since Q183/2012**

**Clerk:** Question 297.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing state how many jobs, since the answer given to Question 183/2012, have been completed from the list requiring the attention of the Housing Agency?

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**Housing Agency  
New jobs added to list since Q183/2012**

**Clerk:** Question 298.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing state how many new jobs, since the answer given to Question 183/2012, have been added to the list requiring the attention of the Housing Agency?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

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**Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** Mr Speaker, in answer to Question 295, since the answer to Question 182/2012, a total of 88 tenants have had their pending works completed.

Since the answer given to Question 182/2012 – and now I am answering Question 296 – a total of 41 tenants have been added to the list requiring works to be done in their homes.

In answer to Question 297, since the answer given to Question 183/2012, 321 jobs have been completed from the list requiring the attention of the Housing Works Agency.

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The answer to Question 298 reads as follows: since the answer given to Question 183/2012, a total of 47 new jobs have been added to the list requiring the attention of the Housing Works Agency.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you for that information, Mr Speaker.

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I do not know if it is correct, but would the Minister agree with me that we seem to be able now to be completing more jobs from one Question Time to another than the number of questions coming in. Am I correct in my simple mathematics?

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Yes, that is right.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** That augurs quite well for the Housing Works Agency and, if you have a chance, please congratulate them on my behalf.

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

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**Housing Agency  
New jobs contracted out since Q184/2012**

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**Clerk:** Question 299, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing state how many new jobs have been contracted out, and to which companies, by the Housing Agency since the answer given to Question 184/2012?

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**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

**Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** Mr Speaker, the number of jobs contracted out by the Housing Works Agency, since the answer given to Question 184/2012, is 13, as follows: Gemini

940 Riteway Scaffolding Ltd, 6; Skybridge Ltd, 6; Health Safety and Environmental Consulting Ltd, 1. That makes a total of 13 jobs.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** An increase of? What was the *[inaudible]* numbers compared to last time? Any particular reason that the Minister may wish to enlighten us why, last time, only five had to be issued out and now 13?  
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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** The demand for jobs increased and more jobs were given out to these companies. That is a fairly straightforward answer, I think.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Sorry, Mr Speaker, I did not quite phrase it properly. What type of jobs? Is it a particular nature because of major structural problems, or?  
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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Without having the information in front of me, I would venture to suggest that these are to do with external jobs, because the Housing Works Agency – up to now, anyway – have been concentrating on *internal* refurbishment work. The concept that I want to introduce is for big jobs and small jobs, and if our boys cannot do the small jobs, the big ones, obviously, will go out to private contractors.  
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The important thing, as I keep saying, Mr Speaker, is that we have to provide as many homes for our people as possible and this is being done as we speak.

**Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker, I am somewhat confused. In the figures that he has provided that 13 particular jobs are being put out to the private sector. Leaving aside the six works which is to do with scaffolding, the balance, was it works to do with that refurbishment, or was it works to do with some other kind, which not necessarily means work with flat refurbishment?  
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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** I really cannot answer that question, Mr Speaker. I would need notice. I am sorry.  
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**Hon. J J Netto:** Fair enough, Mr Speaker, given the comments that the hon. Gentleman just said, to the effect that the big jobs would go to the big contractors because, obviously, of the size of the work, the housing works, they may not be able to do it and the smaller jobs might be the type of work that the... Does he have any particular threshold, in terms of money, where it would determine what goes to the big contractors and what goes down to the small contractors? Does he have that in mind?  
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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** There are technical officers who will advise the Minister as to which jobs go to which company, or whether they will be handled by the Housing Works Agency and, as far as money is concerned, then I have not got the information available, Mr Speaker.  
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**Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker, I am aware of that but, normally, as far as the technical officers, which he is referring to, they would have different thresholds. They would probably say, look, a job, which may cost from £5 to £1,000, we will give it to the self-employed person. A job that may cost between £1,000 and £10,000 may go to the small contractor that may employ 10 people, but a big job that costs £250,000 or £500,000 would go to the big contractors.  
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That is what I am asking the hon. Gentleman. Fair enough, he may not have the information available there with him, which is fair comment to say, but what I am trying to determine is, as far as his Department is concerned, where are the thresholds in terms of value for money in jobs, before deciding whether it goes to a big contractor or to a small contractor in the private sector.  
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**Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the change has not yet been introduced of moving for a criterion of small and big. The original criterion that was introduced when the Agency was set up is the one that is still being applied, which is inside and outside.

I think the logic of inside and outside is that it is assumed that the inside jobs will require less resources and less manpower and the outside jobs will require more. But that is not necessarily so in every case. Consequently, it would be a question, once the new policy, that we have been discussing with the people concerned, is actually put into effect, that it will not just be a question of value, but a question of the pool of resources that we have.  
990

995 For example, we have got a situation where the hon. Member must remember that, given that the  
opportunity to take the early exit was given to everybody, we are committed to respecting that agreement and  
continuing with it. It does mean that the mix of trades can, unintentionally, become unbalanced, simply  
because more people choose to go who are plumbers, and less people choose to go who are carpenters. So you  
could finish up where, not only have the numbers gone down, but the profile of the workforce has changed  
1000 and, therefore, what the Agency can take on may not just be a question of the *value* of the job, but the *size* of  
the job, given the number of carpenters, or given the number of plumbers, or given the number of masons.

So when we move from inside and outside to *size*, it will be that whether the job is an inside job or an  
outside job, they will tell us, look, if we can do a job inside a house and it is going to take ages, because we  
have only got three plumbers, then the logic is that we want to get the house ready quicker, we may need to go  
1005 to a contractor. So it is not as straightforward as drawing a line and saying anything above this cost goes out  
and everything below it stays in.

**Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker, I accept everything the hon. Gentleman has said, in terms of the availability  
of skills that may be available for the Housing Works Agency to do the job. Indeed, this is one of the areas,  
perhaps, from his employment angle, he may be able to look at, if there is a scale of certain skills to  
1010 complement the needs of the Housing Works Agency.

Absolutely, but the Hon. the Minister for Housing, in his previous answer, from my hon. Colleague, Mr  
Reyes, when we were talking about allocation of flats, he was also talking in terms, not just of value for  
money for works that go outside, but he was also talking in terms of timing for the job to be done. Therefore,  
1015 the only determination for putting the jobs, the way I understood it from him, was not just the size or the value  
of the work that would be going out, but also, if the work is registered to be done and never gets done, the  
implication of the comment that the Hon. Minister said before was, if the work does not get done, beyond a  
certain amount of time, then that will trigger giving the job to the private sector.

That is the implication of what the hon. Member was saying in terms of flat allocations. This is what I was  
trying to get at, not just in terms of size and money, but also in terms of timing, so that the work gets done.  
1020 Perhaps if he could clarify that, it would be very good.

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** I do not think I said, but if I did –

1025 **Hon. J J Netto:** It was an implication.

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** – an implication, okay.

The aim – and I speak in general terms – because I cannot talk about thresholds or about how much money  
*exactly* has to be requested from a contractor before we do this or that. I am not... I have not been briefed on  
that. That is why I am trying to explain to the Member, that there are some of the supplementary questions for  
1030 which I would need notice.

The reality is that we do our best to get – as soon as we get the keys handed over to us – our inspectors  
will inspect the flats. Then the decision will be made as to whether it is just an easy, clean-out job, or whether  
refurbishment has to be done in the flat and that is happening as we speak, in connection with the 149 flats  
1035 that was in part of the answer I gave to the Hon. Mr Reyes.

**Housing applicants living in Spain  
Creation of new waiting list since Q185/2012**

1040 **Clerk:** Question 300, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing confirm if, since his answer to Question No. 185/2012, he  
has opened a separate housing waiting list for applicants currently living in Spain and wishing to return  
1045 home?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

1050 **Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** The simple answer is no, Mr Speaker.  
Since the answer given to Question 185/2012 no separate housing waiting list has been opened for applicants currently living in Spain. I may add, as I think I mentioned last time, that the demand is, literally, very limited. One or two people have expressed an interest and I have got... I have made a note of that and my staff is aware of this. So we have not really opened an official list yet.

1055 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, although I do not disagree that the demand may be small, for those one, two or three people, for them it is a question of wishing to return home and not being entitled to go into the pre-list or any housing list proper and so on. So, for them, they are not interested in the numbers, but rather interested in the quality of life and they are expressing to me a desire to see this list open, as has been promised by the Members in their manifesto.

1060 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** I do take his point, Mr Speaker.  
The reality is that there are, as the previous administration is well aware of, people who offer a local address. This is the reality, I think, both the previous administration and our administration is aware that there are people who wish to live in Gibraltar. It does not mean to say that I am forgetting them, or putting them to one side, certainly not, we are trying to advise them to go through a procedure, which is legal, we do not want people to lie, but if there are valid reasons why they have been forced to live in La Línea, or whatever, we keep them in mind and, whether or not there is a list, there are a number of people already on the housing waiting list who provide local addresses and we are trying to do our best to help them.

1070 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Daniel Feetham.

1075 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, given the fact that he now says that the demand from people living in Spain – Gibraltarians living in Spain – is very small and I think he mentioned a figure of one or two, will he not accept, therefore, that the criticisms that he levelled against my Government, that there were ‘scores of Gibraltarians’ forced to live in Spain, because we were not providing accommodation here in Gibraltar for them, was misplaced and was wrong?

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** No, Mr Speaker.

1080 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Well, Mr Speaker, how could he possibly justify the statement he has been making over the past four years about those ‘scores of individuals’ living in Spain, who could not find accommodation here in Gibraltar in the light of the statement that he has made a few moments ago that the demand is very small and there are only two individuals, that, in fact, have expressed a desire to come to Gibraltar from Spain, to the hon. Member?

1085 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** These one or two individuals, Mr Speaker, have approached us in connection with our manifesto commitment. It is as simple as that. They have read the manifesto, they are aware that we are opening a new list, and they have got in touch with Housing. That is all.

1090 By the way, I did not spend the four years criticising the GSD administration because they had ‘forced people to live in Spain’. The reality is that some of our Gibraltarian people had to go into Spain, because the GSD Government took much longer than they should have in the construction of rental homes for our people.

1095 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Just in relation to that last point, it gives me an opportunity of asking this supplementary. I thought I heard him say that the GSD had constructed 490, nearly 500, homes for rental and that that was very – I think he used the term ‘insignificant’ (**A Member:** Slight.) – a slight increase in the rental stock. Does he not accept that 490 rental flats over 5,000, if I may, I know that this question makes Mr Costa nervous, but he has an opportunity to – (*Interjections*)

1100 **Mr Speaker:** Order! Order?

**Hon. N F Costa:** On a point of order, I simply said that the number was 500 or 400 over 15 years. I was just making his question complete, that is all.

1105 **Mr Speaker:** Yes, well... Order!

That remark was made from a sedentary position. It should not have been made and any Member on his feet would be well advised to ignore remarks made from a sedentary position.

1110 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, well, will he not accept that, in fact, 490 over 5,000 is *not* an insignificant amount and will he not congratulate the previous administration for being the first administration (*Interjections and applause*) to construct Government rental homes since Varyl Begg Estate was constructed in the 1970s?

1115 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** I will certainly *not* congratulate the previous administration for *only* constructing 490 rental homes for our people.

1120 Those 490 homes, Mr Speaker, that was a good thing and I have always acknowledged that in Parliament, I wish they had done that four, five or six years earlier to help the people on the waiting list. The reality is, Mr Speaker, that when those 492 flats were actually allocated, the housing waiting lists were not reduced by 492, because only 139 Government flats were made available to people on the waiting list because many of the people who moved from Government rental accommodation to those 490 new rental flats did not necessarily vacate rental accommodation. The lists were not reduced in the way that the GSD *hoped* they would. They were not reduced to the extent of 490. Only 139 flats were actually made available to people on the housing waiting list, Mr Speaker.

1125 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Given that he is critical of the fact that the GSD only constructed 490 rental homes during 16 years, will he also join me in condemning the hon. Member, the former Leader of the Opposition and Chief Minister for eight years here in Gibraltar, for constructing *no* rental homes when he was Chief Minister of Gibraltar. (*Applause*)

1130 **Hon. N F Costa:** That is inaccurate. That is not true. He knows it is not true.

**Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, I was not responsible for constructing homes. The Government was responsible for reducing, in eight years, the waiting list, under Ministers which *he* at the time supported.

1135 **Hon. D A Feetham:** I was in the UK at the time.

**Hon. J J Bossano:** Well, yes, but I imagine you supported the Minister who was responsible for the estates – as he happens to be your dad! (*Applause*)

1140 **Mr Speaker:** Order.

1145 **Hon. J J Bossano:** And I think a magnificent job was done, which reduced the waiting list and which produced 50/50 home ownership at prices of £18,000 and £19,000 which, in fact, taking into account the tax breaks introduced by the GSLP administration, were practically at the level of rents. That is to say, people were moving from rented accommodation and getting an opportunity to buy 50% of a brand new house for very little more, in net terms, than they were already paying in rent and that meant that the waiting list was dramatically reduced. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

1150 In 1996... (*Applause*) (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) In 1996, the hon. Member will know that the party that existed then, to which he did not then belong and which then he used to criticise as much as *we* did, came in and actually allowed the waiting list to grow bigger and bigger and bigger (**A Member:** Shame!) and, eventually, when it was getting *so* big that it was going to sink them, they came up with this estate which they promised in one manifesto and then had to re-promise in the subsequent manifesto, (*Interjection*) before they finally completed it in a rush, at the last minute, having paid many millions of pounds over the original costs, when all the companies...

1155 So I think if we compare the eight years of the GSLP and the first eight years of the GSD, the comparison is that the first eight years of the GSD were lousy; and if we compare it with the *second* eight years, all that they managed to do in the 15 years is to put the [*inaudible*] the list which they inherited. All that they did was to re-house and re-accommodate and allocate property to people that *they* had allowed to go on to the list after 1996, and the figures today show that the list today is where it was in 1996, but not where it has been in

1160 between. So, fortunately, we are now able to continue what we started doing in 1988 and we will show, in three-and-a-half years' time, what it is possible to do with a Government that is committed, as the eight years before proved. (*Applause*)

**Several Members:** Hear, hear.

1165 **Mr Speaker:** Order. Order. Before the hon. Member carries on, I ought to remind the Hon. Minister it is not in order to refer to relationships in regard to any Member of this House. The reference to 'your dad' was not proper.

The Hon. Daniel Feetham.

1170 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker –

**Hon. J J Bossano:** Can I just say that I intended no offence. I did it in the affectionate way (*Laughter*) that reflects the warmth of feeling that I have for a colleague who did such an excellent job in building those housing estates.

1175

**Mr Speaker:** I am sure no offence was intended, but the rules... my distinguished predecessor ruled 15 or 16 years ago that, whilst it is proper to name persons by their proper name, it is not proper to refer to anyone by relationship.

The Hon. Daniel Feetham.

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, well, Mr Speaker, I do not mind at all –

**Mr Speaker:** No, no.

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** – and let me tell the hon. Gentleman that my father shares exactly the same warmth for him as he shares for my father.

My father was his best man at his wedding and I think that the hon. Gentleman was my father's best man at his wedding. But he should also recognise that, in my political career, I have shown more than once that I am my own man, that I am not my father's keeper and that simply because my father was a Minister in the GSLP Government, does not mean that I was born into that tradition, – because, clearly, I *was* born into that tradition – but that does not mean that I am bound to follow that tradition or, indeed, keep quiet and not express criticisms of him or his Government when I believe that it is justified. I will continue to do so, whether my father was a Minister in his Government or whether he was not.

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1195

Now, Mr Speaker, does he not accept that it is the height of political hypocrisy for the hon. Member to have made the comment that he made a few moments ago, that there is not any demand from Gibraltarians resident in Spain and there are only two people who have approached him, when not only him but you yourself spent a considerable amount of time during the last four years criticising our administration precisely on those grounds? Now, either there was a huge demand then and there is no demand now, which is very odd indeed; or, alternatively, this really is a case of the height of political hypocrisy.

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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Mr Speaker, I am just as concerned about the 28 people who the GSD acknowledge were living in Spain as I am for the 1,500 Gibraltarians still waiting for housing, (*Applause*) which the other Government did not do as much as they should have, in their 16 years, to provide homes for those people.

1205

As Mr Bossano has just said, my colleague here, the housing waiting list was reduced to a mere 200 or 300 when their term in office regrettably finished in 1996. It has been going up and up and up to a figure of about 1,680, which was when it reached the top a year or two ago. It was reduced slightly, yes, to 1,490 to 1,500. There were new rental homes made available, but the reality is that my criticism of the previous administration on the way in which they did *not* make adequate provision for the people on the waiting list, that criticism is as valid now as it was then.

1210

I have always acknowledged in Parliament that what they did in Bishop Canilla was good – 82 or 86 flats – but by 'always', I do not mean that I said it every single day, 24 hours a day. I did refer to this a couple of times, when the then Chief Minister reminded me that they had done 82 or 86 houses for rental. The reality is that they inherited Edinburgh House, handed over by the MoD. The reality also is that, in their 16 years in

1215 office, Mr Speaker, they did not do *enough* to cater for the demand of people on the waiting lists and that criticism from me, and I assume from all my colleagues, is still as valid now as it was then.

**Clerk:** Question 301, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1220 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Minister.

**Hon. J J Bossano:** The hon. Member opposite has made the mistake of inviting me to agree with him that the statement made by my hon. colleague was the height of hypocrisy. He should know how dangerous it is to tread on that ground. I will tell him what I consider to be the height of hypocrisy.

1225 I think it is the height of hypocrisy to have just heard him say that he is his own man, that the fact that the Hon. Mr Feetham was a colleague and a very close friend of mine, and continues to be a very close friend of mine and did a very good job, does not mean that he cannot criticise him, because he seems to have forgotten that the *only reason* that he came to Gibraltar – he told me in my face in my office when he was trying to persuade me to hand over the control of the GSLP to him – (*Interjection*) was that he was here to get rid of Mr Caruana for all the nasty things that they had said about Mr Feetham, and that he was not interested in coming  
1230 back to Gibraltar, that he was not, in fact, a person with any political ambition and that the only reason why he thought I should do a secret pact with him and pretend I was still going to carry on in the leadership of the party was so that *he* could do what he claimed I could not do, which was, in fact, to rid Gibraltar of the GSD and of Mr Caruana!

1235 *All that* is evidence of what the height of hypocrisy means – not whether there are 28 people in La Línea or two.

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Well, with respect, the hon. Gentleman has sidestepped the question.

1240 Now, look, if he wants to conduct a debate about Daniel Feetham, we will conduct a debate about Daniel Feetham. I do not recognise anything that he has actually said and it is a matter of public record. I wrote to him, saying to him that I was not going to be standing for election, asking the hon. Gentleman for a commitment that if he lost four elections in a row he should go. I shouldn't have even asked him for that because that is the only decent and credible thing for a leader in his position to have done, having lost four elections. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

1245 But, Mr Speaker, is –

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Order.

May I just say, I think we are straying away from the question on housing. We are now straying into the realms of internal party politics, with which I do not believe most Members of the House are interested.

1250 **Hon. J J Bossano:** If there is a question, I am happy to answer.

**Mr Speaker:** Can we stick to the housing issue, please.

1255 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Is he avoiding the question? Is it not the height of political hypocrisy for the Minister for Housing to stand up in this House today, saying there is no demand of Gibraltarians living in Spain for housing in Gibraltar, having *him* constantly bleating on over the last four years that there were Gibraltarians living in Spain because of the actions of the GSD Government?

1260 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. the Minister of Employment.

1265 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, the hon. Member invites me to agree with a value judgment that he is making about what constitutes 'the height of hypocrisy'. Therefore, in order to determine whether *this* is the height of hypocrisy or what he was saying half an hour ago is the height of hypocrisy, in order to do justice to the question that he is putting to me, I have to say, well, look, he is a man who says, 'People should not think that because Mr Feetham senior was your best man and was in the –

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, point of order.

You have already made a ruling in relation to this. I have accepted it and I have not carried on with the



1270 many points that I could make about the hon. Gentleman opposite. He *insists* on deviating the answer to the question about something that is completely and utterly irrelevant. I am prepared to have a debate with him about this.

1275 **Mr Speaker:** I take the point. Yes, the Hon. Minister is requested to focus his answer on the question about housing.

**Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, you ruled that I could not talk about –

**Mr Speaker:** Internal party politics.

1280 **Hon. J J Bossano:** No, no.

No, Mr Speaker, you ruled, if you will excuse me (**Mr Speaker:** Certainly.) and I take a very careful note because I always obey a rule. You told me I could not say it was ‘his dad’. I am not saying it is his dad any more.

1285 **Mr Speaker:** I accept that.  
No, the point is –

**Hon. J J Bossano:** So, therefore, I am talking about *my* Minister.

1290 My Minister, Mr Feetham senior, right, was a person who was at the receiving end of many, many accusations from the GSD and consequently –

**Hon. D A Feetham:** He was on the receiving end of many accusations, mostly from his own supporters!

1295 **Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**A Member:** – and if he wants to continue –

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

1300 **Hon. D A Feetham:** If he wants to continue with this line (**Mr Speaker:** Order!) I will happily have this debate with him. (**Mr Speaker:** Order!) I have no problem at all.

**Mr Speaker:** Order! The Hon. Minister is in the middle of an answer.

1305 **Hon. J J Bossano:** He is asking me, Mr Speaker – and I do not know whether the rules permit that kind of question, but the question has been allowed – and the question is: do I agree with him that saying that there was a big demand from people living in Spain to live in Gibraltar, and now saying that there are only two who have actually come forward, is the height of hypocrisy?

1310 I am being invited by the hon. Member to express my view on whether that constitutes the height of hypocrisy and, therefore, by that invitation, I have to respond to say, ‘Well, look, I do not think this is the height of hypocrisy because what I think is the height of hypocrisy is the things that *you* do, and the things that you have done, and the fact that you said you had come to Gibraltar to clear up the unfair and unjust accusations against one of my Ministers, for which I was very grateful you wanted to do that. But now you are telling us that, in fact, you now agree with the people who did all those things to my Minister and that you agree with the views of the people who did it. *That*, I think, is the height of hypocrisy. That is my answer.

1315 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, there has to be an element of fairness in relation to this. (**Mr Speaker:** Absolutely!) You have allowed him to make all of this and, really, I do not mind, because I do not mind having a debate on this and throwing back at him what he throws at me. But the reality is that, if we are to have proper, structured and effective proceedings of Parliament, then your rulings must be respected by both sides.

1320 **Mr Speaker:** Absolutely! There was no question, I think.

1325 **Hon. J J Bossano:** Mr Speaker, can I ask you to clarify: is it not correct that the questions are supposed to be to obtain information and not opinions? (**Mr Speaker:** Absolutely!) Well, if he is asking me to agree what is the height of hypocrisy, he is asking me to express a value judgement and an opinion. Then the question should not be allowed and then none of this would happen.

1330 **Mr Speaker:** Yes, the question was an invitation to express a value judgement and an opinion which, in strict practice, should not be allowed. I did allow it, as there is a certain degree of latitude allowed in questions and the Minister and, indeed, well, both Ministers were given the opportunity to express their view on the matter, which we are, of course, listening to.

1335 The ruling I did make, was that, because the matter was straying from expressing value judgements on *housing*, I did not feel it appropriate to engage in, or bring up matters of internal party politics, because that would take the debate further from housing than ever before, so that was my way of seeing it and that is the way it should be conducted.

1340 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Mr Speaker, because it is not the first time that he has done it. He has done it on a number of sessions. (*Interjection by Hon. J J Bossano*) He appears to – I am addressing the Speaker, please may I be allowed the courtesy that I have allowed Mr Bossano when he has been making his points. It is a number of times that they have made these points and, in my respectful view, are attempting to shield from valid political criticism about comments or policies of the Government by, effectively, referring to my father and what I intended to do and what I intended not to do...

1345 I hope, Mr Speaker, that in the future – and I will have a debate with the hon. Gentleman about it and I do not mind having a debate – but, of course, what I do not want is a situation where, every time there is a political criticism, we then... the hon. Member launches into that kind of political diatribe, because that is really what it is, and Mr Speaker allows him to do so and does not, in fact, cut him short because, of course, if he makes comments like that, then we are bound, on this side of the House, to stand up and make other comments. That is not really the way that parliamentary proceedings ought to be conducted and it is not really what members of the public listening to question and answer expect from us as parliamentarians.

1350 The hon. Gentleman has, during the course of today, mentioned my father, mentioned conversations which did not happen between me and him in, I don't know when. He has invited me to the lobby to have fisticuffs with him and that is not the way parliamentary proceedings ought to be conducted.

1355 **Mr Speaker:** Can I just bring this debate to an end by making one clear ruling and I will enforce that very strictly henceforth: internal party politics – whichever party you are talking about, whatever the circumstances – is not a subject properly to be discussed in this forum. Parliament is *not* about internal party politics. That I think is very clear and we will all observe that henceforth, very strictly.

1360 The Hon. Charles Bruzon.

1365 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** As the original question was for me to answer, may I just make a comment in connection with supplementary remarks made by the Hon. Daniel Feetham, that the demand that I am referring to was not the demand for housing coming from people who have had to be housed in Spain because there was not sufficient rental homes in Gibraltar. The demand that I was talking about was the demand in connection with the list, that new list. That is all, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Edwin Reyes.

1370 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I know it was a while ago, but am I right in interpreting then that what the Hon. Minister for Housing is now saying is that every single applicant on the housing list, as it stands today, will be given a house within the current term of office?

1375 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** Not everybody who is on the housing waiting list today, Mr Speaker, but those who were on the housing waiting list, pre-list and list on 9th December. They have an assurance from us that they will be housed before the four term in office is completed.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** That, Mr Speaker, is a slight deviation from the manifesto commitment, because the manifesto commitment says that those who were on the housing list prior to election day will be allocated

1380 during their term of office and that those subsequently putting their names down will be allocated a house within a three-year period. So, a three-year period is less than what their term of office is left, therefore it should mean that everyone today on the housing list should be allocated within the term of office.

1385 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** Mr Speaker, the assurance and commitment that we offer is that all the applicants on the waiting list as on 9th December will be allocated a home within the four term in office. After that, people who go on the list later on, will be allocated a home in three years, but we have to do the first part first. We have to complete the four-year commitment in connection with housing those people on the waiting list on 9th December.

1390 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, my understanding is slightly different. It says:

‘The supply of new homes will be kept under review in the light of applications received from 9th December onwards’,

1395 so an application submitted on 16th day of March is after 9th December. Full stop. Next sentence, still within the same paragraph:

‘Nobody in future will have to wait for more than three years to be rehoused.’

1400 Therefore, within three years of today’s date, if I become an applicant, I expect to get a home. Is that not correct, Mr Speaker?

**Hon. N F Costa:** Mr Speaker, if the hon. Gentleman is confused, because he clearly has not read the paragraph that is above it:

1405 ‘Eliminating waiting list: Everyone on the housing waiting list and on the pre-list on 9th December, who has not received a letter allocating them a flat will also be rehoused before the next election, eliminating the existing waiting list and pre-list. The pre-waiting list will be eliminated.’

1410 In other words, everyone on the pre-list or the waiting list on the 9th will be allocated a house within this term of office and *then* the supply of *new* homes will be kept under review, in the light of applications received from the 9th onwards. So, if he does not understand that, it is because he does not understand reading plain English, I am sorry.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** No, Mr Speaker, then it is clear that my teachers did not teach me quite well. No, sir.

1415 Two separate paragraphs under two separate headings. One is ‘Elimination of waiting list’, which is what the hon. Member has said. New paragraph, new heading: ‘Waiting reduced to three years maximum.’ Tell me, sir, what do I not understand in English language? It says here, if I put my name down for housing after 9th December within three years I am going to get a house. (**Several Members:** Hear, hear.) Explain to me, Mr Speaker. (*Applause*)

1420 **Hon. D A Feetham:** May I also add to that, so I do not have to ask later on, he finished reading and did not read the sentence that said:

‘Nobody in future will have to wait more than three years to be rehoused.’

1425 **Hon. N F Costa:** That’s right!

**Hon. D A Feetham:** That is absolutely clear.

1430 **Hon. N F Costa:** Yes, that’s right.

But, Mr Speaker, I am sorry, they are making political mischief and they know it. It is very simple. A plain, ordinary reading of both paragraphs combined give the net result of the answer that the Hon. Mr Charles Bruzon has made.

The difficulty, of course, that Mr Charles Bruzon has is that he is a kind-hearted and polite gentleman, who does not give time to the *ridiculous* misinterpretations that they proffer for political, partisan reasons.

1435 The answer he gave is perfectly clear. I will read it again, so that it is perfectly clear for those who pretend to be able to read plain English, but clearly cannot for their own political mischief reasons.

‘Everyone on the housing list and on the pre-list on 9th December, who has not received a letter allocating them a flat, will be rehoused before the next election.

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*Everyone. Everyone. Everyone* before the next election. All right, so that is a four-year mandate and then it *eminently clearly says*,

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‘the supply of *new* homes will be kept under review from 9th December onwards, so that nobody in future –’

i.e. in respect of the new homes, as clearly stated, peradventure,

‘will have to wait for more than three years to be rehoused’,

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which may I also say, Mr Speaker, given the appalling and atrocious record of the GSD of creating an average of around 40 or 50 flats for rental a year over 16 years is a strong, solid... and I know the people of Gibraltar welcome this manifesto commitment. (*Applause*)

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** With respect to the hon. Gentleman for *his* interpretation of what this manifesto actually says, you have to be a lawyer and you have to be an extremely *bad* lawyer at that. What you are saying is, that the sentence,

‘nobody in future will have to wait for more than three years to be rehoused’

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is a reference to *new* homes. So what you are saying is that commitment only bites when you, on the other side of the House, decide to build new homes. It is the most *ridiculous* ‘commitment’, if that is the case, that I have ever heard and it is the most ridiculous commitment contained in this manifesto, far more ridiculous than the Future Job Strategy that Mr Bossano came up with at the last General Election.

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Does he not agree with me that the words, ‘nobody in future will have to wait for more than three years to be rehoused’ only is capable of one meaning and that is that no-one will have to wait more than three years to be rehoused?

**Hon. N F Costa:** As from 9th December.

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, as from 9th December. I understand that [*inaudible*].

**Hon. N F Costa:** That is the answer. As from 9th December.

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**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order! Order!

**Hon. N F Costa:** If I am bad at interpreting, I am a bad lawyer...

Let me remind the Minister about political hypocrisy, (**Mr Speaker:** Order!) when *he* came out in a party political broadcast saying that he was very worried about Gibraltarians having to live in Spain because of the GSD’s appalling housing policies. How about that for political hypocrisy? (*Applause*)

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**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Hon. D A Feetham:** Is the hon. Gentleman going to answer the question? (*Interjections*)

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**Hon. N F Costa:** Did he not make that statement in a party political broadcast?

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

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**Hon. D A Feetham:** If the hon. Gentleman wants to ask the questions, perhaps he might be able to persuade all his colleagues to resign en masse and then come to this side of the House. Otherwise, it is us that

ask the questions; you have to answer them.

**Hon. N F Costa:** Point of order, Mr Speaker. I am answering the fact that he said I was a bad lawyer –

1495 **Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

**Hon. N F Costa:** – the answer I have just given, if I was a bad lawyer, he has a bad memory!

1500 **Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Hon. D A Feetham:** I am not suggesting... the hon. Gentleman is a good personal friend of mine. Never would I suggest that the hon. Gentleman is a bad lawyer. (*Interjections*) And he knows that. (*Interjections*)

1505 **Mr Speaker:** Order! Order! Would the hon. Members please listen...

Order! In this House *none* of us are lawyers. We are all Members of Parliament, so the accusation ‘good or bad lawyers’ is totally out of order and irrelevant. We are all Members of Parliament. Nobody is a lawyer here and, quite frankly, having listened to this discussion, we are both looking at the same document. I do not think we are going to get much further trying to analyse what the document says.

1510 I think both sides know what the document says. I think the people out there know what the document says and I do not think there is a call for any further interpretation of the *document*. Any further questions, yes, but not on the document, mainly the manifesto.

1515 **Hon. D A Feetham:** Yes, I think the question that was asked by my friend, Mr Reyes, was a question about Government policy in relation to housing, perhaps the Hon. the Minister for Housing, or indeed Mr Costa, if he is so keen to participate in the debate, might be prepared to answer, which is... Is it a commitment of the Government to rehouse anybody within three years? In other words, anybody that is on the list today is going to be rehoused within three years. Is that the commitment?

1520 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** Mr Speaker, in January I think we had a less heated debate, or question and answer session, with the Hon. Edwin Reyes, when he asked me about that and I said that weren’t we splitting hairs here, really?

1525 Let’s face it, the important thing, I suggested then, was that we provide as many houses for our people as is conceivably *possible* and that we have a serious commitment, whether it is three years, whether it is three years and nine months, whether it is four years and three months – and we failed a little bit, because we are three months late. The reality is that we have a *serious commitment* to provide as many houses as possible, and I pray to God there will be more than... that we do it as quickly as possible and as efficiently as possible, whether it is three years, whether it is four years.

1530 Mr Speaker, whatever interpretation we want to suggest, or want to give to the manifesto commitment, the commitment is, on an ongoing basis, to provide as many homes as possible for our people and reduce the housing waiting list as far as we possibly can.

**Mr Speaker:** The Hon. Edwin Reyes.

1535 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker.

I think there are some areas there I would certainly agree, so in that agreement I was just trying to get a confirmation: what was the policy?

1540 I was trying to explain to the Hon. Minister, I took it that anyone who was on the housing list, pre-list or whatever type of list, before 9th December, the commitment was that they would be offered a home within a four-year period. I then added, for the clarification of what the electorate is asking me as well, those who put their names down on a subsequent date, meaning the future – and I used today’s date as an example – is it then not the case and is he still stuck to the commitment that, within a three-year period of putting your name down? Hypothetically, that I become an applicant today, within a three-year period it is his intention to offer me a home as well? That is simply what I was trying to get at.

1545 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, the commitment is as set out in the manifesto. It is very clear and we

intend to keep to that commitment and every other commitment in the manifesto. (*Applause*)

1550 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, just for clarification purposes, is that what the commitment is, as my hon. Friend has requested?

**Hon. G H Licudi:** Well, Mr Speaker, it seems somewhat out of order for me to say, 'the commitment is what it is' and the hon. Member then gets up and says, 'Well, is that what the commitment is?' I have already said that it is and we stand by it.

1555 **Hon. S M Figueras:** Mr Speaker, with respect, I do not agree with the hon. Member. My hon. Friend, Mr Reyes, has asked for a clarification of what the commitment is and he has been unable to give it. That was the simply the reason why I asked.

1560 **Hon. G H Licudi:** There was no inability to provide any clarification. The matter is absolutely crystal clear. It is as set out in our manifesto and we intend to commit to that and everything else.  
If he wants me to repeat it 10 times, I will do so, but I can go no further than –

1565 **Mr Speaker:** Please don't. Order.  
I think I have allowed sufficient opportunity for this particular information to be obtained. The answers have been provided. It may not be the answer which a particular questioner has sought, but that is the answer and we have to accept that, as far as this question goes.  
The Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

1570 **Hon. Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, I move that this House do now adjourn until half past three today.

**Mr Speaker:** Will that be convenient to all the hon. Members, adjourn until half past three this afternoon?

1575 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** Sorry, not to me, Mr Speaker.  
Could you kindly, with the Deputy Chief Minister's permission, allow me to finish my answer.  
Have I actually answered all the questions I had to because I cannot come back at half past three?

1580 **Mr Speaker:** I have drawn a line at that last question.  
The way I see it there are still (*Interjections*) three... (*Interjections*) Order! Order!  
There are three Questions still... (*Interjections*) Order!

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, we will finish the Questions and then adjourn.

1585 **Mr Speaker:** Question 301, is it?

**Management Companies of co-ownership housing estates  
Meetings with Minister for Housing since Q186/2012**

1590 **Clerk:** Question 301, the Hon. E J Reyes.

1595 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister for Housing state if he has, since his answer to Question No. 186/2012, held meetings with any management companies of co-ownership housing estates in order to address the issue of increasing service charges and/or other concerns?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

1600 **Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** No, Mr Speaker, I have not yet met with any management companies of co-ownership housing estates.

1605 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, if I recall correctly, last month the hon. Member said that the meetings were imminent and then, in the Chamber, in order to help the Minister be better prepared for the meetings, I gave him an example of a letter showing how service charges were being increased, which is the main concern for these residents. Does the Minister expect to hold the meetings quite soon because the talk within these co-ownership housing estates is that it is taking quite a long time to get this matter started?

1610 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** What I am doing, Mr Speaker, is that I am meeting a number of representatives of housing estates – hundreds and hundreds of individuals – who want to see the Minister for Housing, and the reality is that I know that the Chief Minister is interested to be present at this meeting and, therefore – he is not in the House now – but I would suggest that... or if I could ask a rhetorical question... if the Member is speaking on behalf of a particular group, if they were to write to us, I am sure that we could give them a meeting as soon as we possibly can.

1615 **Hon. E J Reyes:** No, Mr Speaker, I am only speaking on behalf of the electorate and not of any particular group – certainly not. I do not pretend for a minute to speak on behalf of the group of the housing estate or the co-ownership housing estate in which I live. I have no such mandate, only a mandate on behalf of the electorate.

1620

**Varyl Begg Estate**  
**Estimated completion date for works in communal areas**

1625 **Clerk:** Question 302, the Hon. E J Reyes.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing give an estimated completion date for the works currently being undertaken in the communal areas at Varyl Begg Estate?

1630 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

**Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** Yes, Mr Speaker, a certificate of practical completion was issued on 27th February 2012.

1635 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Do I take it, then – and I am asking this question with a bit of ignorance – that all the works are now deemed as having been completed?

1640 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** My understanding, Mr Speaker, is that the works started by the previous administration have been completed. Obviously, it is an ongoing process and we intend to continue refurbishing not only this particular estate but all other Government estates.

1645 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, what I am trying to get at is that some of the residents of Varyl Begg Estate have expressed a bit of a concern that there seems to be Heras fencing and so on around and they do not quite see much work happening. Now that the better weather is coming along and refurbished play areas and the communal areas... they are a bit concerned that they may not be able to enjoy as much this area with young children because of the ongoing works. So is there a message that the Hon. Minister can send to those tenants of Varyl Begg Estate to assure them of the completion of those works?

1650 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** Yes, Mr Speaker, I am conscious of the concerns expressed by the Varyl Begg Association and I am constantly in touch with them and I have spoken to one individual only a few days ago about it and things will happen.

1655

**Government Rental Estates  
Reporting and replacing of fused light bulbs**

**Clerk:** Question 303, the Hon. E J Reyes.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Housing explain what procedures are in place for the reporting of and replacement of fused light bulbs in all communal areas of Government Rental Estates?

**Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Housing and the Elderly.

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**Minister for Housing and the Elderly (Hon. C A Bruzon):** For any fused light bulb problems in all the communal areas of Government Rental Estates the standard procedure is to report this to the Ministry for Housing Reporting Office. The work will then be tackled by our contractor engaged for this task.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, when he said to 'report' this, who is meant to do the reporting?

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** The reporting is made by whoever notices that there is a bulb broken in an estate.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** So it is upon the tenants of the estate to report this to the Housing Work Agency?

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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** I imagine so. If one of my men are driving through Varyl Begg Estate and they see that there are some lights broken or fused, I imagine that they would report it themselves.

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**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I understand the hon. Member is trying to be helpful, but it is not a question of 'imagining'. One has to know clearly what the procedure is. I will give him an example of one which was expressed to me.

Since very early in this new year there seems to be a very good, or very substantial, number of fused light bulbs in Mid Harbour Estate, including the stairwell which has to be used when the lift is not working, and people are concerned that one or two, close to three months later, no-one seems to have fixed those light bulbs and the tenants are simply asking... well, you know, the onus is upon whom to report this and who is responsible to ensure that the works are done within a reasonable period of time, and certainly, two months on does not seem to be a reasonable period of time to have to wait for light bulbs to be replaced.

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**Hon. J J Netto:** Could I ask, Mr Speaker, from the moment that a tenant makes a report in the Reporting Office in the City Hall, within the procedures that the reporting staff have, can the Minister judge whether there is a response time between the time reporting the fault and the time of execution of the works? Is that the case?

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** You have asked if I can judge and then you say, 'is that the case?'

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**Hon. J J Netto:** Sorry? What I am trying to get is, within the resources available within the Reporting Office, will the Minister – or, indeed, management for that matter – be able to print out a printout saying the day on which a tenant reported a bulb which was fused and the actual time that the bulb has been replaced with a new one? Is that resource available?

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**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Yes, Mr Speaker, the computer keeps records of all the reports made to the Reporting Office and I am sure that if a bulb is broken and the report is made, it can appear on a printout if it is printed.

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**Hon. J J Netto:** Given that the resources are available, does the Minister for Housing have a judgement, an idea, what is a reasonable period of time that a tenant should wait for the bulb to be replaced?

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Mr Speaker, to be honest with the hon. Gentleman, I have got many, many more serious problems in connection with applicants for housing than worrying about a bulb; but, indeed, I take your point. I certainly do not wish our tenants to walk in the darkness when the sun sets and, therefore, these repairs should be done immediately, basically.



1710 **Hon. J J Netto:** Mr Speaker, I do, of course, realise that the Hon. Minister for Housing has a lot more serious problems, but let me tell him that if there is a particular person – as there is, and I know some people who are partially blind, and if a bulb is fused at night time that could be the cause of an accident – for that particular person that is an important thing.

1715 So whilst, obviously, the Minister for Housing has much more important things to do, the partially blind person is also an important person, who needs that bulb to be replaced. The point I am trying to get at is the Minister and the senior management, indeed, should have a target of accepting when it is reasonable that work should be done – in this case replacing bulbs which are fused – and going beyond that certain time, which is the response time, then the Minister and the management should take action to ensure that the work gets done. Is that the case, Mr Speaker?

1720 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** Mr Speaker, I think I have already answered that, or partly answered that.

1725 The aim should be – and I have just taken over the Housing Department recently – that light bulbs should be replaced ASAP with the maximum possible speed, but I cannot say, ‘I will allow it to be like that for a whole month before I take action.’ No. It has to be done as soon as is conceivably humanly possible for the benefit of all the people that you have mentioned and for everybody.

**Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I am still none the wiser in my original question.

1730 I asked for an explanation of the procedures and I am still none the wiser. When a light bulb is fused, whose responsibility is it? Is it the tenants to report it to a particular Department or are there personnel within the Housing Agency that go and check this out so that these tenants can at least be informed and know what it is that they have to do?

**Hon. C A Bruzon:** Mr Speaker, first of all, let me say that I have not heard of the problem in terms of my staff coming to me to say, ‘Minister, who is responsible for this or for that in terms of light bulbs?’

1735 I do know that... I *imagine*, common sense tells me, that if a tenant spots that all of a sudden his area is dark because a light bulb is fused, then that tenant probably will report it. If that tenant does not, maybe others will or maybe our own people as they drive through the estate. As I said earlier, if they spot it, the likelihood is that they are not going to go driving through there at 11.00 p.m., so it would probably would depend on the tenants letting us know. That is all I can say to him at this point.

1740 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, would the Hon. Minister assure me that he will undertake... because I am informed by tenants, for example, the one I gave on Mid Harbour Estate, that some time during the month of January they reported fused light bulbs which rendered a certain degree of darkness that made it difficult for them to access their homes at night time, especially if, unfortunately, the lift was out of order and they had to walk up this dark stairwell. They have reported the matter at some stage during the month of January – I do not know the exact date – and in the middle of March the repairs have still not been undertaken.

1745 **Hon. C A Bruzon:** That is wrong and, as far as I can, I will avoid this happening in the future, Mr Speaker.

1750 **Hon. E J Reyes:** I am very grateful for the Minister agreeing that it is wrong and I take his personal assurance that this will be remedied as soon as possible, in some cases as a matter of urgency.

1755 **Mr Speaker:** The Hon. the Deputy Chief Minister.

**Hon. Deputy Chief Minister (Hon. Dr J J Garcia):** Mr Speaker, I move that this House now adjourn until half past three.

1760 **Mr Speaker:** Is that convenient to all the hon. Members?  
This House will adjourn until 3.30 p.m. this afternoon.

*The House adjourned at 12.50 p.m. and resumed its sitting at 3.30 p.m.*