



PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION NO. 24
Answered on 24th July 2024
Fourth Meeting 2023-2024 Session - Third Sitting

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION
ASKED BY

MR. G. DAVID C. WIGHT, MP - ELECTED MEMBER FOR THE
CONSTITUENCY OF GEORGE TOWN WEST

TO

THE HON. JULIANA Y. O'CONNER-CONNOLLY, JP, MP - MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR
FINANCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION, DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATION & LANDS

QUESTION:

Can the Honourable Premier provide a timeline for the implementation of the amendments passed under Private Member's Motion 7/2023-2024 in September 2023, which include increasing the ex-gratia Financial Assistance to the elderly, seafarers and veterans, as well as raising the Civil Service Pensioners monthly payments to CI\$1500?

ANSWER:

The Private Member's Motion 7/2023-2024 which was passed in the House resolved that Government considers further increasing the monthly ex-gratia stipend paid to older persons and adults living with permanent disabilities who receive financial assistance, retired seafarers and veterans and their surviving spouses and Civil Service pensioners to at least \$1,500 per month, effective 1 January 2024.

The Government has considered the suggested increase in the ex-gratia stipends — that is, \$1,250 per month to \$1,500 per month — and has concluded that it is possible to readily agree to the suggested increase until further financial analysis is carried out to assess its affordability.

The following points make it clear that Government has made reasonable effort to assist financially challenged individuals:

1. long-term financial assistance and the seafarers' and veterans' ex-gratia benefit was increased in August 2023, retroactive to July 2023, which was a \$300 per month increase;

2. approximately 130 individuals receive both long-term financial assistance via the Needs Assessment Unit (NAU) and the seafarers and veterans ex-gratia benefit: therefore, these 130 individuals have benefitted from a \$600 per month increase;
3. in the majority of cases, through the increase that was provided in August 2023, recipients are often left with a residual amount of approximately \$200 to \$300 per month to cover unanticipated incidental expenses. Accordingly, data available to NAU reflects that most recipients of financial assistance are able to meet their basic expenses and therefore, the current financial assistance level, is considered sufficient;
4. in a minority of cases where persons' expenses exceed the present \$1,250 per month assistance level, those persons are eligible to, and are receiving, additional forms of financial assistance, such as food. Since June 2024, recipients of long-term financial assistance, whose shortfall in their monthly financial needs is greater than \$1,250, such persons can also receive a further financial assistance amount to help with purchasing food. The current approved amount of financial assistance for food, for one person, is \$400 per month; and
5. the increase in the ex-gratia pension paid to eligible Civil Service pensioners, who completed least 10 years' pensionable service, was carried -out, and paid, from December 2023. The effect of the ex-gratia payment to such eligible pensioners means that they too, receive \$1,250 monthly.

Therefore, the Government has considered Private Member's Motion 7/2023-2024 and has made significant progress in implementing the requests therein.

The final step of increasing the stipend from \$1,250 per month to \$1,500 per month will be carried-out when Government is absolutely certain that such an increase can be sustained indefinitely into the future.