

TERTIARY STUDENTS - BUS PASSES (04/04/17)

(No. B/109) Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac) asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport whether, in regard to the students of the tertiary level, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the National Transport Authority, information as to where matters as to the issue of bus passes thereto.

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, according to information obtained from the National Transport Authority, there are at present 21,214 students enrolled on full-time courses at 34 tertiary institutions who have been issued with a student identity card as per established eligibility criteria. Those criteria were proposed by the Tertiary Education Commission in 2005 and approved by the Central Monitoring Committee of the then Ministry of Public infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping. That was in 2005.

The main criteria for students to benefit from the student identity card are as follows: they should be enrolled on full-time programmes of study at a tertiary institution or a post-secondary institution for an award course of a duration of at least nine months in an academic year.

Moreover, the students should attend the institutions for about 20 hours per week, within normal hours, that is, from 9 to 5 in the afternoon.

Based on the above criteria, the minimum contact hours for eligibility of students to benefit from the Student Identity Card Scheme is 720 hours in an academic year.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that the TEC is having discussions with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research and with the NTA for a review of the eligibility criteria from 720 hours to 500 hours, thus extending the benefit to a larger number of students.

I am given to understand, at this stage, that if the criterion of 500 contact hours is approved, the number of students who will benefit at the tertiary level will gradually increase at an average of 5% annually to reach around 25,000 by the year 2020.

Madam Speaker, we will take a policy measure on this issue very soon, but I think that we should do everything to cater for those students as well.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he has received any request that this bus facility be extended to students with disabilities who cannot take the regular bus, but who still would like to benefit from the

subsidy, so that they can use a private coach or whatever transport to attend tertiary education.

Mr Bodha: This is a specific demand, Madam Speaker. In fact, the travel scheme is based on the normal shuttles, the normal commuting routes, and I think this issue has to be addressed to the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity because it is a specific demand for a specific category of people.

Madam Speaker: Next question, hon. Ameer Meea!