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Reply to Keith Azopardi by the Chief Minister

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, has today replied to Keith Azopardi's statements about the Civil Service.

Fabian Picardo said: "The GSD cannot credibly attack the GSLP Liberals for using supply workers as we inherited more from them than we employ today.

Additionally, the GSD cannot credibly attack us for the number of vacancies in the Civil Service as we have reduced these considerably.

Moreover, the GSD has attacked us for growing the Civil Service, telling us it is "bloated" and insisted we should reduce numbers!

As a result, it is absolutely hypocritical and totally lacking in credibility for Mr Azopardi now to pretend to say the opposite.

In fact, the Civil Service will not forget that it was the GSD who ended the final salary pensions scheme and who, additionally, have been against the mechanism for commutation that we introduced.

Civil Servants will know that, as Minister for the Civil Service I have been and continue to be a supporter of the Service and its future.

Its numbers have grown under my leadership, salaries have increased and terms and conditions have improved, including the introduction of the new Civil Service hours.

My respect, support and commitment to the Civil Service is demonstrated and it is a respect, support and commitment that will endure whilst I am Chief Minister, because our Civil Service is an important, valued and essential back-bone for our democracy.

Finally, I think that Sir Joe Bossano has once again demonstrated that he is deeply committed to Gibraltar and that he is always straight, honest and well prepared in his answers when questioned on matters of finance and statistics. In his recent interview on GBC's Viewpoint, Sir Joe defended himself against an unjustified and personalised attack made against him in unfair terms. The empirical evidence shows that the highly personal attack on Sir Joe was not just unfair, it was unsustainable and untrue. His robust defence of his position - grounded in his cross-generational defence of Gibraltar and its people, in particular the sustainability of our public finances - will surprise no one who has followed his remarkable trajectory as a champion of our nation."