

Waterford News & Star

Tim Ryan, Oireachtas Correspondent

Waterford woman uncertain on insurance claim eight years after accident

The ongoing harrowing insurance case of Waterford woman Kate Flynn was raised at the Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure & Reform and the Taoiseach by Fianna Fáil's Finance Spokesman Michael McGrath.

He told members of the Committee that Ms Flynn's partner and her friend's partner were killed in a head-on collision involving a drunk driver in 2009. She was left with a five-month-old baby girl at that time who lost her father in the accident.

"They received a court award but it has not been paid because the drunk driver was a Setanta policyholder," he said. "These are the issues with which we are dealing. That is the human reality of this issue not being resolved. People were waiting for the Supreme Court judgment in the expectation that they would finally have clarity and know where they stand. It seems that there are more questions now than there were previously. I am not even hearing empathy from the Government. I am not hearing that it is the Government's objective that 100% of the claims will be covered. What are we saying this morning to Kate Flynn and others who are caught up in this? I do not know what to say to them."

In response, Minister of State Eoghan Murphy said it was a very difficult situation for many individuals. "What we have been trying to do with the insurance industry is to reach a point whereby we can protect people in the future with a new compensation framework," he said. "It is very important that people will know that once this legislation is on the books, this type of uncertainty will not arise in the future. I met the relevant actors involved before the judgment was handed down in order to ensure that they were ready to progress the first tranche as quickly as possible. That work continues to be done. They will move forward with it very quickly and bring about as much certainty as they can for those involved in the initial 250 cases. They will then move to the next tranche. Other work has been done to speed the process up even further. I do not want to go into detail at the moment."

Conversations are being held to see if we speed up the process, he said. It might require a change in legislation that would have to be fast-tracked almost immediately. "If we can do that, we will because we want to resolve the uncertainty people have felt for a number of years," he said. "If the Deputy recalls, this company failed in 2014 but there has been a delay because of the case that was taken. It is unacceptable but that is the system. However, to provide clarity in the context of expectations, it may be one or two years. What we need to do is make sure that this actuarial report that has been promised is compiled immediately and we can then move on from that."

Fine Gael should contest Northern Ireland elections – Coffey

Waterford Fine Gael Senator Paudie Coffey told the Upper House he looked forward to the day when political parties in the South, including Fine Gael, run for election in the North of Ireland.

“It is something we need to debate seriously in this country,” he said. “We need to look at putting up representatives there to bring some real politics to Northern Ireland and to represent people when elected in the various representative chambers. In that sense, I urge the parties of Northern Ireland to get around the table and form the Northern Ireland Executive to bring the representation and government that people so badly need as well as to bring stability to the entire island.”

Senator Coffey said he was sorry to see that two parties which he considered to be of the middle ground in the North of Ireland, namely, the SDLP and the Ulster Unionist Party, no longer have MPs in the House of Commons.

“They sacrificed their political futures some years ago in the interests of peace, and we should acknowledge that as representatives in this country,” he said. “The SDLP is the party of Hume, Mallon, Durkan and McGrady and, as a representative in this country, I will always hold it in the highest of respect. I hope to see the day when the SDLP will return representatives again.”

Senator Coffey said he also wished to be associated with the tributes to the outgoing Taoiseach Enda Kenny. “I have been honoured to serve with him since 1999, when I was first elected as a councillor,” he said. “Over many years I have had the great honour to serve under him as a councillor, Senator, Deputy and Minister of State. I wish him the very best in his retirement. He is a man of the utmost integrity, a man of compassion and a man who has shown extraordinary stamina and vision through difficult times. I wish him and Fionnuala the very best in their retirement.”