

## OPENING REMARKS

Mr Chairman, Members of Committee etc.

Following the demise of the Celtic Tiger over 300,000 people left Ireland, the economy is now said to be improving in some parts of Ireland. We now witness the Irish government actively encouraging many of those same people and those who left long before the Tiger ever came to town to consider returning to Ireland (that includes many who find themselves living illegally in the United States) HOWEVER the sad reality is that those returning Irish citizens now find themselves being penalized because they had to go abroad to earn a living during the bad economic times this great country of Ireland went through.

By the way, you may have noticed that I refer to those returning to Ireland as returning citizens where many refer to those returning to Ireland as returning emigrants. In America or England or anywhere else they call their people returning from abroad, citizens. I believe we are talking about returning Irish citizens as they are recognized that way by our constitution however when they return to this country they are met by a number of government bureaucratic hurdles (man-made) which has made their return difficult when they try to reestablish themselves at home. This is especially the case in rural Ireland.

There seems to be reluctance by the government agencies to deal with the issue of returning citizens with empathy. They have this need to measure-how many will be coming back they ask? How many will want these services? Yet all the time they are asking "Come home to Ireland" They are promoting a new Home to Work Campaign highlighting the new resources and initiatives that are creating, the conditions for citizens to come home to live and work.

I offer to you that these basic conditions that I have outlined are deterrents to people coming back, they are obstacles that affect everyone but particularly those living in a rural area. We need to simplify the process of getting car insurance, buying house, getting education for our children, returning to family farms, getting electricity, getting health insurance.

Showing compassion would help so would setting up a one stop shop and letting people know about it- where one department could help our returning citizens would be more than helpful, staffing that department with people who are returning citizens would be more than helpful, after all isn't that what we deserve!

I will keep my remarks brief, this will allow the members more time to discuss the relevant issues,

Regards

Ciaran