

Breda Burke  
Committee on Procedure and Privileges  
Standing sub-Committee on Dáil Reform  
Dáil Éireann  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

16<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Dear Breda,

As instructed, please now find below the submissions for Dáil reform, as proposed by the members of the Independent Alliance.

#### **Dáil Reform**

The Independent Alliance is committed to fundamental Dáil Reform.

We are seeking that power be decentralised. Following the election, we believe there is a unique opportunity to return power to the Dáil and reduce the power of the government.

We believe the following measures are imperative for true Dáil reform;

- a. The Independent Alliance will not be imposing any party whip, except on votes of confidence. This automatically rebalances power in favour of the Dáil, against the cabinet. We would welcome a reciprocal gesture from other parties. If this is not possible for them on all aspects of Dáil votes, perhaps parties might commit to removing the whip for certain topics?
- b. We believe the Taoiseach's prerogative on when to call a general election can be abused and manipulated to suit the Taoiseach of the day and their party, as opposed to acting in the country's best interest. For that reason, we want to remove this unique power and create stability and certainty for the lifetime of a government, thus increasing the work rate. For that reason we propose that Ireland follow the example of many other countries and introduce fixed terms for the Dáil. There would of course be provision for an impromptu election if the Taoiseach fails to retain the support or confidence of a majority of the Dáil. To that end, we ask to consider supporting the implementation of the Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Fixed Period for the Duration of Dáil Éireann) Bill 2015, as provided to you at our meeting (please find it enclosed).

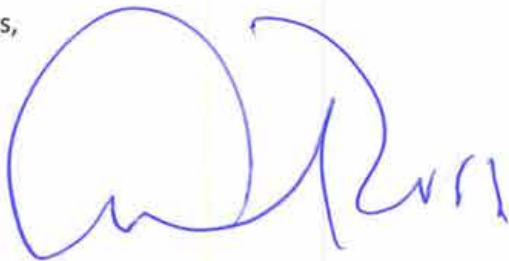
- c. We believe the Economic Management Council; a key but narrow, centre of power should be abolished.
- d. We propose that all proceedings of the Dáil's Procedures and Privileges Committee- which determines Dáil business- shall be held in public.
- e. All Dáil Committees should be chaired by opposition TDs.
- f. There must be equal speaking rights for all TDs.
- g. We believe the use of the guillotine should be prohibited for all future governments to allow for full and robust debate.

Finally, we are also seeking full reform of the Seanad and hope that this Committee will consider further Oireachtas reform in the future. As a starting point, we would ask you to consider the *Seanad Bill 2013*, as introduced in the Seanad by Senators Feargal Quinn, Katherine Zappone and Mary Ann O'Brien in May 2015. It was also subsequently introduced in the Dáil by Deputies Finian McGrath, Noel Grealish, Mattie McGrath, Stephen Donnelly and me.

The above suggestions form part of our initial assessment on some of the areas of Dáil reform we wish to see implemented. It is certainly not exhaustive and we look forward to working with other members on the committee to explore further measures.

We look forward to hearing from you with further details about the meeting.

Best wishes,



Shane Ross

On behalf of the Independent Alliance