



***Coimisiún Thithe an Oireachtais***  
***Houses of the Oireachtas Commission***

*Minutes of the Commission*  
*Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2007*

1. The twelfth meeting of the Commission of 2007 took place at 3.30 p.m. in Room 2, Leinster House.

**2. MEMBERS PRESENT.**

Deputy John O'Donoghue, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson), Mr. Kieran Coughlan, Secretary General, Deputy Tom Hayes, Senator Cecilia Keaveney, Deputy Séamus Kirk, Senator Pat Moylan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, Deputy Michael Mulcahy, Deputy Dan Neville, Deputy Pat Rabbitte and Senator Jim Walsh.

Apologies for inability to attend were received from Senator Paul Bradford.

**3. SECRETARIAL FACILITIES FOR PARTIES AND MEMBERS - REVIEW OF S.I. 888/04 IN LIGHT OF NUMBERS IN THE 30<sup>TH</sup> DÁIL AND TO PROVIDE FOR APPROPRIATE GRAPHIC DESIGN SERVICE (*resumed*).**

The Commission had before it the following documentation in this matter:

- (i) a detailed discussion paper regarding the allocation of secretarial facilities to qualifying parties [12-01-07];
- (ii) an associated summary paper [12-2-07];
- (iii) correspondence received from Deputy Finian McGrath and from the Administrator of the Fine Gael Party on behalf of Senator Frances Fitzgerald [Tab 11-6, Tab 11-10].

The Commission-

(1) adopted the following formula for determining the allocation of party staff resources:

1. 0.5 of a secretarial assistant per non-Office holding Deputy,
2. 0.25 of a secretarial assistant per non-Office holding Senator,
3. Allocation of parties in Government is to be reduced by one-third,
4. The one-third is then distributed among parties in Opposition on the basis of their relative strengths,
5. The minimum allocation to a qualifying party shall be one secretarial assistant.

The formula will be written into the Regulations to be made by the Commission governing the provision of secretarial facilities for parliamentary parties and members;

(2) agreed additional staffing changes as follows –

**Fianna Fáil** + 3 secretarial assistant posts  
**Fine Gael** + 14.94 secretarial assistant posts [equates to 9 sec assts + 4 administrators]  
**Labour** + 2 secretarial assistant posts  
**Sinn Féin** – no change  
**Green Party** – no change  
**PDs** – loss of 1.3 secretarial assistant posts.

The Commission noted that these allocations were 3.39 secretarial assistant posts above the overall staffing ceiling under the formula as set out at paragraph (1) and that, while resources had been allocated broadly by reference to the formula, there had to be some element of flexibility in applying the formula in order to accommodate all parties. The Commission therefore agreed that these additional changes would be ringfenced for the 30<sup>th</sup> Dáil and 23<sup>rd</sup> Seanad with an overall budgetary ceiling of €3.5 million per annum to meet the cost of all staffing for parties;

- (3) agreed the flexibility mechanism set out at page 12 of the discussion paper, namely, 1 secretarial assistant = 0.84 administrative assistant; 0.67 administrator; 0.35 Chef de Cabinet;
- (4) agreed that the anomalies regarding Chef de Cabinet posts be addressed as per page 11 of the original discussion paper [eg. 3 secretarial assistants must be surrendered for a Chef de Cabinet post];
- (5) agreed that red-circled staff be accommodated before new posts are filled;
- (6) agreed that the request from Senator Frances Fitzgerald (for an additional 0.75 of a secretarial assistant to support her in her duties as Opposition Leader of the Seanad) be met from within the allocation agreed for the Fine Gael Party as set out in paragraph (2) above;
- (7) noted that under the legislation governing the Secretarial Assistance Scheme, facilities may only be granted to qualifying parties and, on that basis, did not approve the request received from Deputy Finian McGrath requesting the allocation of “an administrator post and similar resources” to the Independents. The Commission further noted that Independent members are adequately catered for by individual funding allocations under the Party Leaders’ Allowance.
- (8) agreed that the deadline for voluntary retirement applications be extended in specified cases;
- (9) agreed that the contracts of the graphic designers be extended to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2008;
- (10) agreed that the provision of graphic design facilities be reviewed by the Printing Users’ Council in good time before that date;
- (11) agreed the amendments regarding ICT and non-ICT equipment at page 9 of the discussion paper: provided that where a secretarial assistant/parliamentary assistant works part-time in Leinster House for two or more members, equipment provided to that secretarial assistant / parliamentary assistant shall be discounted when determining whether each Member has received her / his full entitlement of equipment;
- (12) agreed that the Leas-Cheann Comhairle be allowed the option of employing an additional personal assistant, subject to waiving his entitlement to vouched secretarial allowance.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT.**

The meeting adjourned at 3.50 p.m.

JOHN O’DONOGHUE, T.D.,  
Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission.

Dated:

