



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DÁIL ÉIREANN

TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL—*Neamhcheartaithe*
(OFFICIAL REPORT—*Unrevised*)

Tuesday, 17 February 2009.

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TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL OFFICIAL REPORT

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Tuesday, 17 February 2009.

Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 2.30 p.m.

Paidir.
Prayer.

Ceisteanna — Questions.

Constitutional Amendments.

1. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the constitutional referenda that will be held during 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46569/08]

2. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Taoiseach the constitutional referenda planned for 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1782/09]

3. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach the constitutional referenda the Government plans to hold during 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5591/09]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 1 to 3, inclusive, together.

The Deputies will be aware that agreement was reached at the December European Council that, if the Lisbon treaty comes into force, all member states would retain a Commissioner. It was also agreed that a number of other concerns of the Irish people, which I spelled out at the Council meeting, would be addressed satisfactorily, including by way of appropriate legal guarantees.

[The Taoiseach.]

On the basis of this agreement at the European Council and on the condition of our being able to agree the satisfactory texts of legal guarantees in the coming months, I have said that I would be prepared to return to the public with a new package and to seek their approval of it in a referendum.

The other potential referendum is in the area of children's rights. Deputies will be aware that the Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children is due to report to the Oireachtas in April 2009. The Government will await that report before making a decision on the holding of a referendum on children's rights in 2009.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I recognise the importance of the Lisbon treaty and having a referendum on it passed. Obviously, while the Fine Gael Party campaigned strongly on this issue last year, the result is as was. I discussed this matter with the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and set out my views on the holding of the referendum. My view was, and is, that the issues of concern to the Irish people should be dealt with sequentially. I refer to issues, be they ethical matters, corporate tax or conscription, which were to the fore during the referendum debate. For this reason, I set out my view that the referendum should be held towards the autumn of this year and that the timeline the Government was working on should be towards that date.

From the last meeting I attended in Brussels, I understand the Czech Presidency is working on the declarations to which the Taoiseach referred, with the aim of having them ready in time for the June summit. I ask the Taoiseach to confirm that the timeline is as was, that is, the Lisbon referendum should be put to the people some time during the autumn. This would provide a decent timescale to deal with such issues and everything could be given proper structure and debate so that, on the next occasion, the assurances the Taoiseach correctly sought and was given at the December Council meeting can be understood fully by the people. They can then be asked the question on the Lisbon treaty, with the added declarations, at a future time.

I ask the Taoiseach to confirm this because I do not want this issue clouded by other issues. Obviously, this is of great importance to our country, its economy and to Europe as a whole. It is important to have a clear strategy and timeline, as well as clear and adequate preparation, in order that on the next occasion there is no ambivalence and there are no unanswered questions, and that everyone in the country is made as fully aware as possible before answering the question.

The Taoiseach: The December Council conclusions guide the Government in this matter. They have given us until June to ascertain whether we can agree texts with our colleagues and until the forming of a new Commission to decide when a referendum is to be held. As Deputy Kenny noted, I met the Opposition leaders, both before and perhaps after the Council meeting. They gave me their views on the matter and I stated I would work to the December conclusions. I wish to get on with the business because until such time as agreement has been reached on the texts, we are not in a position to ascertain whether we can proceed with the referendum, although that is our intention. Everyone acting in good faith and the receipt of the legal texts, which are the equivalent of the political commitments we obtained at the December Council meeting, will be what will guide us in this matter. I have asked that this be given full priority. The timing of a referendum can be decided as soon as such work is done.

Deputy Enda Kenny: One of the reasons for a negative result in the last referendum was the uncertainty and confusion that arose because the Taoiseach's predecessor always responded in that way to questions in the House. In other words, on at least a dozen occasions when the

former Taoiseach, Deputy Bertie Ahern, was asked the question, he never gave an indication of approximately when he expected to hold a referendum. This caused a lack of focus and concentration and consequently certainly caused great confusion.

I have set out my views on this and would appreciate ongoing contact from the Government. While the Taoiseach has done this twice previously, it is necessary to have clarity. One will get a clearer, more structured, comprehensive and better way of dealing with this issue if one adheres to what was the original timeline. I understand the Czech Presidency is preparing these declarations and I expect the Taoiseach will keep Opposition parties informed about developments in this regard. The proposed referendum on the Lisbon treaty must not be clouded for any extraneous reasons. We must have a full, thorough and comprehensive debate on what is an issue of great importance for the future of Europe and of Ireland.

The Taoiseach: As I said, the timeline to which I am working is outlined in the December conclusions. We have until the specified time; it is not a question of waiting until then. We should get on with the work, do it as quickly as possible and see what options are available to the country. It is my strong view, particularly in the context of the economic and financial crisis with which all of Europe and elsewhere is contending, that this uncertainty regarding the Lisbon treaty is an issue that does not benefit us to any great extent. Obviously, we have work to do in this regard.

Priority has been given to this matter by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of State with responsibility for European affairs. I have asked that this work be given the highest possible priority. Discussions are ongoing with representatives of the various institutions in the Union, for example, legal services. As soon as the work is done, the Government can consider where to go from here. Others have expressed their view. I simply want to make sure the work gets done as soon as possible. We do not have to wait until June. It may be necessary to wait until then or it may be possible to get the work done sooner. We will have to wait and see.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: If it is the Taoiseach's intention to proceed with a second referendum, is it not the case that not a single word, let alone a line, in the Lisbon treaty will change when next he presents proposals to the Irish electorate? Does he accept that the Lisbon treaty, on which the Irish people have already voted, will remain absolutely as they have already judged, the text being exactly the same? Why has the Taoiseach indicated such a willingness to run a second referendum when all he has at this point in time, we understand, are indications of intent from other member state Governments? He does not have written declarations that have been signed off. He apparently does not have firm agreements in regard to specific matters, be they declarations, protocols or whatever. Why would he make such a willing indication? Does he accept that this contrasts starkly with his refusal to accept the judgment of the Irish electorate which has already voted on the Lisbon treaty and decided by a significant majority to reject it?

If it is the case that the Taoiseach is to proceed with this pursuit, when does he expect to have these declarations or whatever form they take or are to be referred to? Does he have drafts of these matters at this point in time? Is he prepared to publish them? Is he prepared to share them with Opposition voices in this House so that we have the opportunity to see exactly what he is proposing? Does the Taoiseach accept that, for a significant body of Irish people, the idea of running a second referendum on the Lisbon treaty, just as was done with the Nice treaty, is a serious blow to the sense of the importance of democracy not only internally within this jurisdiction, but within the European Union itself?

If the Taoiseach is to proceed, will he take the opportunity today to make it abundantly clear that his understanding of the Irish people's judgment in the Lisbon treaty referendum as

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already presented was as a judgment on proposals regarding the future governance of the European Union's structures and so on and not a referendum on Ireland's future participation in the Union? If he is to run with a second referendum, will he make clear that it will again be a referendum on the make-up and form of administration and so on within the European Union context and is not and cannot be portrayed, as others in his Cabinet and colleagues have attempted so to portray, as a decision on Ireland's future participation within the Union?

The Taoiseach: With regard to the question on the conclusions in December and what they mean, we obtained political commitments and we are now embarking on detailed discussions as to what legal texts can be agreed with partners regarding the issues outlined in the December conclusions. The change that will take place in respect of the Commissioner can be taken by decision of the European Council but the assurances we can find to give legal effect to concerns identified as influential for some people in deciding to vote against is an exercise in democracy. It is precisely that, it is about listening to what people have said, identifying their concerns and how we can seek to assuage those concerns. The decision is respected since no treaty can come into place unless all 27 member states sign up to it. That is a clear indication that the decision of the Irish people is respected since the treaty cannot come into effect without our consent.

Regarding the work being undertaken at the moment, it is the job of the Government to proceed with that based on the political commitments we have received. If there is a successful outcome to these discussions and if there is prospective agreement from partners we can make their views known and make the terms known to the people for a debate in the House. We require a European Council meeting at Heads of Government and State level to adopt those protocols and commitments on which we received political agreement in December.

Regarding our future participation in the Union, there are consequences to decisions. Were we to have these commitments agreed to, were they to be satisfactory, were we to hold a referendum and were we to vote "No" again then obviously the other members states of the EU in agreement with the Lisbon treaty would have to see how they want to proceed. We would remain members of the Union but it is very much open to question whether, as was suggested, we would remain as influential as we have been given that all decisions carry consequences, both positive and negative, depending on the extent to which they contribute to a consensus that is otherwise there. This is a work in progress and there is more work to be done. As soon as it is completed we will be in a better position to assess where we will go from there.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Does the Taoiseach not accept that his assertion — that the efforts to explore how to put the Lisbon treaty to the people again are democratic — flies in the face of people's understanding of democracy? A direct analogy would be if, in the event of a general election going against the Taoiseach, he were to turn to the people and ask them to hold on until he consulted with them to see why they did not vote for him and rejected him, and if he were to hold a second general election in order to ensure he had a manifesto people could support and commitments just as useful as the commitments he hopes to secure with regard to the Lisbon treaty. This is exactly how people feel. The Taoiseach's argument that this is a further exercise in democracy does not stand up. People are not buying it and it holds no water. The Taoiseach does himself no good service by taking this position.

What is the view of the Taoiseach of the remarks of the Minister of State, Deputy Dick Roche, that these so-called agreements, declarations and protocols will not be ready by June? Does that influence the Taoiseach's thinking on the timing of the referendum? Perhaps the Taoiseach has not yet decided on the matter but is he considering running the second Lisbon treaty referendum in tandem with the local and European parliamentary election and other

possible by-election scenarios on the same day in June? Are we facing a scenario in which the people will be asked to make a further judgment on the Lisbon treaty and, like a pig in a poke, be asked to buy something without seeing firm agreements in black and white and their legally binding value? Is the Taoiseach seriously considering this?

In speaking about the Minister of State, Deputy Roche, what is the Taoiseach's view of his repeated assertion that the Irish people's decision to reject the Lisbon treaty has in some way contributed to the current economic recession? Does the Taoiseach believe this claim to be just as off the wall as some of the claims made by people who campaigned on the "No" side in the course of the Lisbon treaty referendum debate? I am prepared to acknowledge that not everybody was presenting a factual scenario in their arguments but is the Taoiseach not prepared to be at least as gracious in saying that this continued effort and utterances by Ministers — or half Ministers in the case of Deputy Roche — are equally outrageous and off the mark? They have no place in this debate.

The Taoiseach: The Deputy will be surprised to hear I do not agree with him at all. The idea that one is precluded from putting a question to the Irish people, or that it is in some way a negation of democracy, is at variance with the facts. If the people's voice is to be respected — it has been and will be unless there is a change — we will simply address the issues that cause concern. People are still saying they are in favour of the European Union and want us to be part of the Union. The Union wants to proceed along the lines it set out in the Lisbon treaty and it is likely that all other 26 member states will eventually get to that point. That leaves the other partners asking what is our position in that context. They have indicated to us a preparedness to accommodate issues and concerns which we identify. This is precisely what we have done.

We have gone back to our partners and in the true spirit of the European Union, they have shown a preparedness to seek to accommodate Ireland and allow work to proceed to see what way that can be put in effect. We have until June to complete this work but if we can complete it sooner, all the better. We will continue to work with the other parties but I cannot anticipate that agreement until the work is done, positions are put and people signify their consent and agreement to the positions sought. Until that is done, I will not give consideration to anything as that is the first job we must do. When that is done, we can see where to go from there.

The conclusions in December confirm the timelines, which are indicative. It is a matter of deciding what is in our best interest. We are dealing with an economic and financial crisis currently, along with the international recession, and where we stand on the Lisbon treaty is an issue as far as the international investment community goes. It is my strong view that it is not helpful to Ireland's case at the moment. The quicker we are in a position to clear up and deal with those issues as effectively as we can, the better. It must be done on the basis of the conditions as set out in the December Council meeting. That is our task, which will take account of the concerns of those who may have voted "No" on the last occasion.

I do not agree with the Deputy's point of view in this matter. I doubt I have anything to say that would satisfy him.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The working assumption arising from the December summit and the Taoiseach's report from it was that work would proceed on the drafting of the various declarations and statements. That work would be concluded, it would go to the June summit and then there would be another referendum in the autumn. To be fair, the Taoiseach has not committed himself to that timetable but that is the working assumption. On two or three occasions in response to Deputy Kenny and Deputy Ó Caoláin, the Taoiseach indicated that work on the various statements and guarantees might be completed before June. If that is the

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case, is there a mechanism by which they could be agreed by the European Council and would go to referendum on the same dates as the local and European elections?

What is happening with the drafting of those documents? The Taoiseach stated work is under way and Deputy Kenny mentioned the discussions that took place around the time of the December summit with Fine Gael and the Labour Party. Will we be involved in discussions about the drafting of those documents? What progress has been made with the drafting?

The Taoiseach: The question of adoption of whatever is agreed between ourselves and our partners on the issues outlined in the December Council conclusions would need to be agreed at a meeting of the European Council at heads of Government and state level. That could be the meeting in March, the meeting in June or a special meeting. Such a meeting can be convened at any time, it is up to the Presidency to decide it is right to do it.

The December conclusions set out indicative timelines. We are not obliged to say we can hold a referendum only between June and October, or that we can come to conclusions on these protocols only at the June meeting. We have until then to do these things, there is an understanding on the timelines for decisions, they are indicative, and I cannot say at this point what the time will be. This is a work in progress, although we know the indicative timelines. We do not have to stick to them rigidly, we can see what progress we are making, but we cannot continue with discussions about securing agreement beyond June. No decisions have been made.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs met with the Czech Presidency on a couple of occasions and officials met with Council legal services. The Attorney General has begun work, although we are not at an advanced stage of drafting as things stand. Discussions are taking place and the normal liaison is under way between the legal services division of the Council and a member state that is having something drafted based on Council conclusions at previous Council meetings.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: Does the Taoiseach think sufficient progress is being made to allow for agreement at the March summit? I appreciate these matters depend on progress made but is that a realistic possibility? Will the Taoiseach involve the parties that supported the treaty on the last occasion in discussions on the drafting?

The Taoiseach: I do not see it arising at the moment but, as the Deputy is aware, a lot of work can take place in two or three weeks if it can be agreed. Whether we can make that degree of progress, where the Presidency can organise a consensus around text which has yet to be presented, remains to be seen.

We had a meeting of the Cabinet sub-committee on Europe Affairs last week and I said that we need to move on this as quickly as possible and make progress quickly rather than believe we can just incrementally move along and assume everything will be fine in June. We need to get down to the substance of the issues quickly.

We will consult like-minded parties on the referendum proposals as soon as they take shape and we see what might form the basis of an agreement. However, a lot of work needs to be done.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I listened to the Minister of State, Deputy Dick Roche, on a number of occasions talk about the importance of this for investment in Ireland, which is true. I also listened to the director from SR Technics talk about Ireland being 20% above cost. The Government has a real job to do in getting down Government costs for which the Lisbon treaty or Europe is not responsible in terms of the attractiveness of the country as a centre for

investment and of job protection and job creation. A great deal of work needs to be done there as well.

I have made the point that in view of the way we deal with referenda, I do not want confusion to arise where, in the run lead-in to the question being answered by the people, there is 50% media coverage for and against. There will be 1,500 to 2,000 candidates for various parties involved in other elections. However, I take the Taoiseach's point that it is not the central issue now and that work is being considered by the Czech Presidency. I assume the Taoiseach will report progress as it happens.

Mr. Sean FitzPatrick, the former chief executive and chairman of Anglo Irish Bank, has declined to attend an Oireachtas committee for legal reasons. Recently, a senior member of FÁS refused to attend——

An Ceann Comhairle: We are talking about constitutional referenda, which will be held in 2009.

Deputy Enda Kenny: That is what I want to ask about, if I may.

A senior member of FÁS refused to attend the Committee of Public Accounts because Dáil committees cannot compel or subpoena witnesses to attend and give information in regard to certain matters. The committees can examine issues but cannot apportion blame or otherwise. In view of this situation, people ask why the Oireachtas cannot require people to attend committees and subpoena people to give evidence which is in the public interest.

Is it the Taoiseach's view that a constitutional referendum might be required to give that authority to the Oireachtas and, as a consequence, to Dáil committees or does he believe it is within the ambit of the Oireachtas to rewrite Standing Orders to make that possible? This issue is of critical importance to stability and to the people's understanding of the way business is done.

The late Deputy Jim Mitchell chaired the DIRT inquiry and while the powers were not changed, the interaction of personalities and the goodwill of the parties involved allowed people to attend that committee. I will support the Government if the Minister of State, Deputy Pat Carey, redrafts Standing Orders to give committees the right to subpoena witnesses to appear before them, whether the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Finance and the Public Service, the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Economic Regulatory Affairs or otherwise, if it is in the public interest. Does the Taoiseach believe that arising from the Abbeylara case and the Supreme Court decision in the case of *Maguire v. Ardagh*, it might be necessary to do this by way of constitutional referendum?

The Taoiseach: I did not anticipate the purview of these questions extending to the question Deputy Kenny asked. The Chief Whip has indicated that he is available to speak to committee Chairmen, Whips or whoever regarding this matter which has arisen in recent days. The question of people coming before committees was governed by the case mentioned by the Deputy, and the case of *In re Haughey* before that, back in the 1970s, regarding the principle of constitutional justice and the natural justice issues arising. The need to ensure that processes respect those rights is important in order for the process to be effective and beyond challenge in terms of judicial review. There is case law in these matters and legal advice available that can help guide the consideration of the questions raised in recent days.

Deputy Seán Sherlock: I understand the Government Chief Whip stated he expects such legislation could be drafted within the next fortnight. Is that still a realistic prospect?

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Kenny's question was outside of the field of play, but it was at least inside the wall as he had asked a question relating to the possibility of a referendum. Deputy Sherlock, however, is completely out of the ballpark. It will take a lot more than Standing Orders to do what is requested.

Deputy Paul Kehoe: Perhaps the Taoiseach should reply, as a matter of courtesy.

An Ceann Comhairle: There is nothing about courtesy in Standing Orders.

Official Engagements.

4. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the number of meetings planned by the National Forum on Europe during 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46573/08]

5. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the foreign visits he plans to undertake during 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46589/08]

6. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach when he will next meet with the President of the European Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46590/08]

7. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach his plans for meetings with other EU leaders over the coming months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1036/09]

8. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach his priorities for the European Council meeting on 19 and 20 March 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1037/09]

9. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his attendance at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3348/09]

10. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach if he will make a statement on his participation in the World Economic Forum summit in Davos in Switzerland. [3467/09]

11. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his recent visit to Kosovo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48112/08]

12. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his recent visit to Japan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48113/08]

13. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach if he will make a statement on his pre-Christmas 2008 visit to Irish troops serving in Kosovo. [1000/09]

14. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach if he will make a statement on his January 2009 visit to Japan. [1001/09]

15. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his visit to Japan. [1775/09]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 4 to 15, inclusive, together.

On 22 December I visited Pristina in Kosovo along with the Minister for Defence, Deputy Willie O'Dea. We had a cordial meeting with the President and Prime Minister during which I congratulated them on their efforts to implement the Ahtisaari proposals, including the adoption of the constitution in June 2008.

While in Kosovo, I addressed Defence Forces personnel stationed in Camp Clarke who are currently serving with KFOR. I congratulated them on the hugely significant role they have played in restoring peace and confidence in Kosovo since 1999.

I visited Japan between 12 and 17 January at the official invitation of the Japanese Government. The visit follows more than 50 years of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Japan. Japan is the country in the region with which we share the closest political and economic values and is a priority country under Ireland's Asia strategy. It is the second largest economy in the world and, as such, is a hugely significant global player thoroughly deserving of our full attention.

I was accompanied on the visit by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Deputy Brendan Smith, and by the Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Deputy John McGuinness. I was also accompanied by a significant Irish trade mission with more than 70 companies participating, including businesses from Northern Ireland.

The aim of the mission was to raise awareness of the potential of Japan among Irish companies and increase the knowledge of Irish companies among Japanese businesses. We also aimed to explore the potential for Irish and Japanese businesses to collaborate, particularly in the area of research and development. While in Japan, I participated in a number of trade and promotional events organised by the various state agencies and a number of important trade and investment-related deals with Japanese partners were announced.

I delivered a keynote speech on research and development policy and opportunities in Ireland at a joint IDA Ireland-Science Foundation Ireland event. I also addressed an audience at one of Japan's oldest and most prestigious institutes of learning, Keio University in Tokyo, on the theme of Ireland, Europe and Japan.

I met with Prime Minister Taro Aso and we exchanged views on a range of bilateral and global issues, including the international economic and financial situation, climate change and conflict resolution. These discussions proved to be extremely useful and, during the course of our very cordial meeting, I extended an invitation to Prime Minister Aso to make a reciprocal visit to Ireland. I was also received in audience by the Emperor, His Imperial Majesty Akihito, a significant and rare honour for Ireland.

I made a brief visit to the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos at the end of January. Coming ahead of the G20 summit in April, discussions focused on the need for greater global co-operation, governance and regulation of business and finance, following the crisis in the banking sector and the onset of recession in many countries. I participated in key working sessions for Heads of State and Government on the global economy. More than 40 Heads of State and Government attended the forum. While in Davos, I also addressed a function organised by IDA Ireland, attended by senior executives of major international companies, to reinforce the message that Ireland remains a very attractive location for foreign direct investment, international business opportunities and research and development. I also took the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Reinfeldt of Sweden in the margins of the World Economic Forum meeting. We discussed the follow-up to the December European Council conclusions and preparations for the forthcoming Swedish Presidency of the EU.

On my travel plans for the remainder of this year, it is my intention to visit New York and Washington around St. Patrick's Day, and to attend the New York Gala of the Ireland Funds on 7 May and attend the European Council meetings scheduled for 2009, including the extraordinary Council on the economy which has now been fixed for Sunday, 1 March.

With regard to future meetings with EU leaders and the President of the European Commission, Mr. José Manuel Barroso, I have no specific meetings planned at present. I recently

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received the draft agenda for the spring European Council which is due to focus on the economic and financial situation as well as on energy and climate change.

As regards the National Forum on Europe, I expect that it will hold a number of meetings during this year, continuing its good work in promoting public debate on the European Union, its future and Ireland's place in it. It is an independent body and as I have no function in its day to day operations, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on its planned work programme for this year.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Arising from his meetings in Davos and with the European leaders does the Taoiseach feel we should revisit the Lisbon agenda? The Lisbon agenda, as distinct from the Lisbon treaty, was put out by European leaders and Heads of Government to be the direct competitor to the United States in terms of creating more jobs, reducing red tape, providing incentives for employers and initiatives for job creation. This is now a crisis.

From discussions I have had with my own grouping in Brussels, I think this is a real opportunity for Europe and the Heads of Government, of whom the Taoiseach is one, to revisit the Lisbon agenda which was never implemented properly or focused on properly by European Governments and which could be responded to very strongly by European Heads of Government backed by the European Central Bank. In my view, this is a real opportunity to put forward a very strong case for job creation throughout Europe proportionately in this sense and I would like the Taoiseach's views on this.

Last week I asked questions on the following matter. The Taoiseach intends to travel to Washington in March. Has he received an official invitation to the White House to meet President Obama? Are the officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs working with their counterparts in the US to make this a reality given its importance in terms of the relationship between Ireland and the United States and the circumstances in which we find ourselves at present?

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: With regard to Davos, the President of the European Commission made a number of very unflattering remarks about Ireland and comparisons with Iceland which I know the Taoiseach rejected in Davos. I note the European Commission President repeated much of what he stated in Davos at a later stage. Has the Taoiseach taken this up with the President of the Commission and what response has he given?

I appreciate that visits abroad are planned in advance and one cannot always anticipate what will be going on at home while one is abroad. However, given what did happen while the Taoiseach was in Japan, such as the gaffe about the IMF which caused huge damage to our international reputation, and the issue of the nationalisation of Anglo Irish Bank and the way in which the Government decision was made on this, does the Taoiseach now think it was wise for him to have fulfilled the engagement in Japan or was it something that, on reflection, he might have usefully delegated?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: To reflect a little more positively on the Irish Government delegation's visit to Japan, I welcome very much that one of its products was the removal of the ban on Irish pork accessing the Japanese market as a result of the negotiations that took place. I understand negotiations also took place on reopening the Japanese market for the importation of Irish beef. This negotiation has not concluded. Will the Taoiseach indicate where this is at? What prospects does he hold for a successful conclusion to the negotiations to see Irish beef once again access the Japanese market?

Bearing in mind that we are hearing a lot about the forum in Davos, was the Irish Government represented at the World Social Forum in Brazil? The forum was attended by 135 countries and had 150,000 participants. Its central focus was the urgent need for major reform of the United Nations. Were we represented and, if so, by whom?

The Taoiseach: On Deputy Kenny's question on the Lisbon Agenda, the objectives were updated, I believe, during our own Presidency in 2004. The annual economic spring summit that takes place at European Heads of Government and State levels has as its precise focus, in normal times, the progress being made in regard to the achievement of those objectives. While one would like to see progress in a range of areas accelerate, there is, in the annual calendar of Heads of State and Government, a specific summit meeting held for the purpose of determining how the Lisbon Agenda is being advanced. That structured approach has brought more focus and commitment to that important work.

On the question of St. Patrick's Day, final arrangements have not been agreed but our embassy in Washington is in contact with the White House, as is normal at this time of year.

I am not so sure Deputy Gilmore's question accurately reflects what President Barroso had to say. I said at the time in question, and reiterate, that Ireland, as part of the euro area, has a wider zone of stability in which it can seek to meet the very serious challenges it is confronted with. This contrasts with the position of Iceland, which had to try to rely on its own resources. This led to and will continue to lead to great difficulties for Iceland. We wish it well in its efforts.

I was simply making the point that Ireland must confront the effect of sterling depreciation, the financial crisis, the economic crisis, the international recession and the Lisbon treaty issue. These constitute a confluence of events that have occurred at the one time and which make the challenge a considerable one, and one about which we cannot be complacent. I emphasise the difficulties that do not go away and also the need for all of us, in trying to deal with the issues, to do so in a way that does not exacerbate an already difficult problem.

I do not know to whom Deputy Gilmore is referring to in regard to the gaffe about the IMF. When this became known here, the emphasis in the reportage was unfortunate. I certainly did not indicate that I regarded that as something that was imminent or relevant to us, particularly given that we are part of the euro area. The European Central Bank continues to be of strong support to Ireland in these circumstances.

Deputy Ó Caoláin referred to my recent visits and plans for the year. I am not aware of what representation, if any, there was on the part of Ireland at the World Social Forum in Brazil. I will have to check this and revert to the Deputy.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: That concludes questions to the Taoiseach.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: What about my question on Irish beef?

The Taoiseach: That remains a matter for further discussion.

Priority Questions.

Public Transport.

51. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport the way he will increase public transport capacity here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6020/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Significant progress continues to be made in the provision of increased capacity for public transport.

With regard to the rail network, the Cork to Middleton and the Ennis to Athenry lines will reopen later this year while capacity on other services will be refocused to match capacity with demand at a time when the overall position is leading to reduced demand for public transport on particular services at particular times.

The year 2010 will see the completion of the Kildare route project, which will double capacity on that route, and the opening of phase 1 of the Navan rail line from Clonsilla to Pace, near Dunboyne. On the Luas network, construction is continuing on the Luas extensions to the docklands and Cherrywood, with both lines opening for service in 2010. The contract to commence construction of the Luas extension to Citywest was signed recently and the line is expected to open for services in 2011.

Significant planning work for rail, metro and Luas projects is also continuing. The preliminary hearing by An Bord Pleanála on the railway order application for metro north is scheduled for 2 March and the Railway Procurement Agency intends to lodge further applications for railway orders with An Bord Pleanála for the cross-city Luas line and metro west later this year. CIE will also lodge a railway order application for the DART underground later in the year.

As I have stated previously the provision of increased capacity is my key consideration in determining public transport investment priorities in the period ahead. In that context, metro north and the DART underground are particularly important rail investments as they form a core part of the planned integrated public transport network for the greater Dublin area envisaged by Transport 21.

The recent Deloitte & Touche report concluded, in the case of Dublin Bus in particular, that the current fleet size is more than adequate to serve current demand. My priority in regard to the bus network is, therefore, working with the bus companies and the local authorities to maximise the efficient and effective utilisation of the existing fleet. In that context, Dublin Bus will focus in the period ahead on a reorganisation of its network in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Deloitte & Touche report. My Department is also engaged with local authorities on the provision of bus priority measures such as the bus gate at College Green and green routes in the provincial cities in order to maximise the potential of the network.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I call Deputy O'Dowd.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Is it possible for Deputy Mitchell to offer?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Unfortunately, I do not think it is possible to have someone else take a Priority Question. I am sorry about that. We will have to move on to the next question.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I will ask on behalf of Deputy O'Dowd.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: Some aspects of that question may be dealt with later.

52. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport if he will report on the key actions contained in his recent document, Smarter Travel — A Sustainable Transport Future; the reason there are no specific targets and deadlines for each of the actions proposed within the document; when the total €4.6 billion that this policy will cost will be allocated; the amount of the €4.6 billion which will be spent in 2009; the way the policy aim of promoting a modal switch to public and other more environmentally friendly forms of transport will be

achieved in view of the recent programme of cutbacks announced for Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann and the recommendations that he has accepted from the recent Deloitte & Touche report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5910/09]

54. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport the specific budget that is planned for the sustainable transport plan; the timeframe associated with each individual action point; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6022/09]

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I propose to take Questions Nos. 52 and 54 together.

Smarter Travel — A Sustainable Transport Future, sets out a range of actions across all areas of Government to deliver a sustainable transport system by the year 2020. The new policy framework has ambitious targets, including a reduction in car commuting from a 65% share in 2006 to 45% by 2020. It also sets out specific ambition in other areas. For example, it affirms the Government's commitment to have 10% market penetration for electric vehicles by 2020.

I do not see the present financial difficulties of Dublin Bus or Bus Éireann as impacting negatively on the long-term goals of the smarter travel policy. In response to the financial difficulties they face, it should be noted that the Deloitte & Touche report on a cost and efficiency review of the two companies makes clear that there is now an opportunity in the case of Dublin Bus to create a simplified network offering improved services with improved cost efficiency.

Such an approach, complemented by other measures to improve the efficiency of bus services such as more bus priority measures and integrated ticketing, could minimise if not offset any potential adverse impact of service changes eventually decided on by the companies. Implementing the recommendations of the Deloitte & Touche report shows clearly that doing things smarter and being more customer focused could lead to a better service, more customers and savings that can be used to improve services even more.

The action period of 12 years is ambitious in itself. International experience teaches that the type of wide-ranging changes needed do not happen at defined milestones but rather occur on an incremental basis over a period of time. In that light, it is not useful to assign precise deadlines to each action.

Similarly, the policy is upfront about the estimated cost of €4.5 billion. The allocation of such funding will depend on the prevailing economic climate and in the present circumstances the focus will be on making progress from within existing resources. Having the framework in place means that future transport expenditure will be geared towards the implementation of those policies so the 2011 review of Transport 21 and the 2015 review of the national development plan will have to take the policy fully into account.

That said, I am happy to announce that intensive work has started on delivering actions in 2009. The National Sustainable Travel Office has been established. The proposed national cycle policy framework will be launched shortly. In the near future I will also announce a sustainable travel demonstration fund to support innovative projects in this area. This year up to 150,00 schoolchildren will be reached through the green schools travel initiative. In all, I will be increasing the funding for sustainable travel projects from €3 million in 2008 to €14 million in 2009. That is in addition to other investments under Transport 21 in 2009, including €50 million for travel management grants and support. Those infrastructural improvements will support sustainable travel targets.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: If I understand the Minister correctly, under the 12-year plan, the actual net amount being provided in 2009 for smarter travel, of which the majority of Members of this House would be supportive, is only €6 million. The Minister announced last

[Deputy Thomas P. Broughan.]

week that €4.5 billion would be available up to 2020, in addition to Transport 21. To most ordinary citizens that would appear to suggest an allocation of €400 million a year over the 12 years but we find out now that the allocation is a derisory €6 million.

The report outlines 49 actions but, unlike the road safety report, there are no deadlines so there is no pressure, no sense of measurement or targets. How is the modal move away from cars to be achieved? Will the Minister indicate why there are not targets or deadlines? How will the Minister and the transport stakeholders be held to account?

At the launch of the report the Minister indicated he envisaged the introduction of congestion charges in three years. Will he outline how he sees them being introduced, and what will happen this year? The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy Gormley, wants more tolls and road pricing. Does the Minister support the introduction of those measures in 2009 and 2010? One of the most important outcomes of the report must be a fall in transport emissions but, again, there is no target in the report. The Minister, Deputy Dempsey, and the hapless Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy Gormley, will achieve a reduction in transport emissions because the economy is contracting at a rate between 6% and 10%. That is the only reason the Minister will achieve anything.

I welcome the initiative on sustainable transport. The Minister appeared to suggest that Galway is the priority city for sustainable transport and that it would get significant additional resources for that purpose. Since that announcement we heard from the media that there would be a competition involving all the towns and cities in the country. Is Galway to become a sustainable city or is it not?

The move to a more sustainable form of transport is a kind of sick joke by the Minister in the context of the loss of 600 jobs and 300 buses in Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann. On the one hand the Minister produced a fancy report, which he dallied over for the past two years and at the same time he is slashing public transport and leaving commuters all over the country with reduced services, reduced frequencies and a much inferior transport system. Is the report not simply a joke?

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I had better make sure to invite Deputy Broughan to the next launch of a report so that he will not misinterpret it or get his information third hand. His press release contained a series of premises on which he has based his criticism of me in the House.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I heard what the Minister said.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: First, I did not announce €4.5 billion extra, in addition to Transport 21. I said the full implementation of the proposals outlined in the document would cost €4.5 billion. I was asked where I would get the money and I replied honestly that it would be initially from re-ordering priorities within the Transport 21 envelope. When the review of Transport 21 takes place in 2011, I will be seeking money for the full implementation of the report in that context. In the meantime, it is not €3 million or €6 million extra, as the Deputy indicated——

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: The Minister just told us it is €6 million.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I told the Deputy it is €14 million plus. That is the net amount. The Deputy cannot ignore the other matters. I mentioned one other sum and if he tempts me I may go through a list of other things I can tell him we are doing that ties in fully with the document on smarter travel. An additional €14 million will be provided while €50 million will

be spent on traffic management plans and grants. I hope the Deputy will instruct and inform his party's councillors in the Dublin area when he is crying about buses and bus services——

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: That is an old cliché. The Minister should inform his party's councillors.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: ——that we would like progress on bus priority, public transport and the College Green bus gate.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I have no problem with that

Deputy Noel Dempsey: Absolutely wonderful. I do not know why the management of Dublin City Council seems to have received instructions from certain people that it should not go near this until well after the local elections.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: That is a smokescreen.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: The target set for the reduction in transport emissions as a result of these policies is 4 million tonnes.

With regard to the question on sustainable cities, we could do wonderful work in Galway on sustainable transport but I did not announce it as the sustainable transport city.

I did not dally over this issue for the past two years. I launched a consultation process at the beginning of last year and received 500 responses.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: Including from the Labour Party

Deputy Noel Dempsey: An interdepartmental committee went through all the responses carefully and gave due credence to them before drafting the——

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: I apologise for being late but I was studying my notes for the first priority question. As a former teacher, the Minister will understand that sometimes one can spend too much time on research.

Sustainable transport means sustainable living and while the weaknesses in the report are the failure to set deadlines and make provision for funding, a radical plan is needed using joined up thinking to link the planning process with transport and job creation policies. Proper land use and transport strategy planning is needed and, in their absence, we will never get it right. The problem up to now was during the Celtic tiger boom, houses were built everywhere but appropriate transport plans were not devised.

The planning system should be radically reformed. For example, the Minister should insist on the development of housing, even if that means it is high density and proper quality environmental build; on the greenfield and brownfield sites inside the metro west corridor; and where people work should also be taken into consideration. In the absence of a co-ordinated plan between the local authority and the Departments of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Transport, the Minister's policy will not work.

The projections of the Central Statistics Office highlight a massive population increase in counties Meath, Kildare, Wicklow and Louth. If an additional 200,000 are living in the region by 2020, the policy does not make sense, given the demand that will place on infrastructure. Does the Minister agree joined up thinking is needed to produce a radical plan, which this is not? If one does not have joined up thinking, one will not have sustainable transport.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I agree with the Deputy and I only diverge from him on one issue. I brought forward the DTA Bill, which provided for land use and transport studies, development plans and so on in the greater Dublin area, GDA. It is my intention to enhance the policy framework in the national transport regulation Bill, which will provide for the absorption of the DTA into a larger body, and in the sustainable transport and travel Bill, to be introduced at the end of the year, which will spell this out in more detail. The Deputy is absolutely correct that we have an opportunity now that we did not have during the boom to avail of joined up thinking to make sure land use and transport are provided for and high density housing is developed on the available sites.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I was leader of the Labour Party on Dublin City Council for more than eight years. One of our core policies has always been a sustainable transport system for Dublin. We launched a widespread sustainable approach to transport in the city in the early 1990s. For example, I proposed the first cycle way network for Dublin. We also sought real time and intermediate information and much better bus networks. Our current party leader, Councillor Kevin Humphreys, and his colleagues on the city council are following the same fundamental beliefs and are looking as much as I am for sustainable transport.

The Minister and the Green Party should not hide behind stupid smokescreens regarding the necessary changes in the provision of enhanced public transport. Fianna Fáil's lethargy over the past 12 years in doing anything about these measures is why we find ourselves with a serious public transport deficit. For example, when will John Tierney and his committee produce a report on the measures necessary to permit metro north to proceed in central Dublin? The Minister should not use clichés and smokescreens.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: The Dublin Transport Office produced a plan some time ago, in which it outlined diagrammatically the massive growth in the GDA and compared that to what might have been if proper land use planning had been adopted. Does the Minister agree a radical plan is needed for the GDA, particularly inside the M50-metro west corridor with all the brownfield and greenfield sites developed first before proceeding outside the corridor? That is a critical issue and if the Minister can take a definitive direction on that, he will ensure sustainable transport planning but if he cannot, urban sprawl will continue.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: The Deputy is correct that the public transport corridors should be fitted to the higher density housing development. The DTO did good work on this. One of the graphics outlined where people work while another outlined the routes they travel to work by car, which are mostly similar, and another showed the bus routes available. This graphic highlighted huge swathes of the GDA that are without a bus service but large numbers of people are moving into these areas and that is part of the difficulty.

The Deputy's general point about concentrating development and using public transport is absolutely correct. It is essential that happens and it can be done under the DTA legislation because all the local authorities in the GDA must tie their development plans to their transport plans.

53. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport if he plans to implement all recommendations of the Deloitte & Touche report on the cost and efficiency review of Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann; the timeframe he expects to be assigned to these actions; the action he will take in the event of non-compliance; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
[6021/09]

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I have asked the chairman of Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann to submit for my approval a detailed programme for the implementation of the Deloitte & Touche report

recommendations. A decision on the implementation period will be made in the context of that programme taking account of the estimate in the report that the redesign of the Dublin network could take 18 to 24 months. This programme will, taking account of the approach outlined in the report, set out the key actions, target dates and the arrangements for management, monitoring and reporting. On receipt of the plan, monitoring measures will be put in place in my Department to provide the reassurance that the necessary changes are being made. As both companies have welcomed the report, I anticipate the full support of all in the timely implementation of its recommendations. Yesterday, I met representatives of SIPTU and the NBRU who also warmly welcomed the report and supported its recommendations on the network.

The implementation of the other recommendations relating to bus priority, integrated ticketing, demand management measures, bus licensing and the move to PSO contracts are already being pursued by my Department in conjunction with the DTO and the RPA where appropriate.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: Is it not the case that even at the height of the boom the number of people travelling to work by bus was dropping? I believe it decreased by approximately 3% in 2005. It is anticipated that the number travelling by bus will decrease further and now 290 Dublin Bus workers have been made redundant and 120 buses that the taxpayer bought are to be mothballed. What will happen to those buses? This is a failure of Government policy to open the market to competition. If Dublin Bus cannot use those buses, why should they lie mothballed given that thousands of people living in the greater Dublin area have no bus service? Why not offer the buses, which taxpayers own, to private enterprise to operate routes that do not exist at present? There is no point in mothballing them for the next number of years.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I will call the Deputy again.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: Gabh mo leithscéal a Leas-Cheann Comhairle, I do not believe I have had my three minutes.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy has only one minute.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: However, it is my question.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Yes, the Deputy has a full three minutes more — that is for the full question. So I will call the Minister and then I will call the Deputy.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: I thought there were six minutes for the whole question.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Yes.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: If I have had one minute——

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: There are three and a half minutes left.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: I have not been speaking for two and a half minutes, surely.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: You have been speaking for two minutes.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: Therefore, I still have half a minute left. I may be working by a different clock from everybody else. If I may I will put the boot in, in the political sense. The job losses could be reversed by reorganising the routes and allowing private enterprise to come in and re-employ those people on buses that are to be mothballed.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: There is absolutely nothing to prevent a private sector company from applying for a licence to operate routes throughout the city on any routes that are available. There is a licensing system under the 1932 Act. By 9 December next year, if there are new PSO routes to be put in place, they will also be open to the private sector. Regarding the buses Dublin Bus believes it is necessary to take out of commission, the normal procedure is that each year a certain number of buses are bought and older ones are taken out of service, if that is necessary. That is a matter under discussion between management and unions in the company and I do not want to stray into that area.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I wish to explain the methodology I applied. Rather than allow Deputies to use up all their time, I like to get in a second supplementary question.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: I have no problem with that. However, listening to Deputy Broughan, I thought he spoke for much longer on his question. Maybe I got it wrong.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I am a faster speaker.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: On that occasion, two questions were taken together. As we did not use up the time for the first question, I allowed an extra four minutes.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: OK, teacher, I take my pain.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Go raibh maith agat.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: I appreciate the Leas-Cheann Comhairle's fairness.

The key point about the Deloitte report is that significant work practice changes are required. I accept that the Harristown garage is one of the issues on the Finglas route. Dublin Bus is losing €2 million each year on that route. If it were to reorganise it, some €2 million could be saved. If there are 14 generic routes, Dublin Bus would save approximately €30 million within the system by changing it around and still keep all those people working. If it was changed, people could still have jobs.

I was shocked at the 20% out of service time for buses on that route. In other words, for 20% of the time the bus is being driven by the driver without any passengers on board because it is going to or from the garage or the location where the driver has his or her breaks. I accept the breaks are sacrosanct, but the drivers should travel in a different vehicle and the bus should be used for its public transport purpose. In comparison, out of service time in the UK is between 3% and 10%. Radical changes are required, but there is no need for all of these job losses.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I agree with the Deputy. To be fair to both sides, the Deloitte report points to many positives and good work done by management and unions in Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann. Bus Éireann gets a very good bill of health on its services. There are a number of things it could change. Bus Átha Cliath can and must change. It is somewhat unfortunate that the Deloitte report has been published at the same time as we have hit the wall on finances. Despite the €330 million taxpayers are giving to the company, it has hit this wall and the two things happen to coincide. In a time that was less fraught than the present, we would have time to make the changes, save the money and increase passenger numbers, which is the ultimate aim.

As I said, the industrial relations issues need to be addressed. Speaking to me yesterday, representatives of both unions accepted the principles of the Deloitte report. We need to implement those changes as quickly as possible to realise whatever savings can be made. I do

not believe it would be €2 million on each route, but it should be a significant amount and would allow more money into the system. Crucially, it would give a better service to more passengers, which is my aim.

Question No. 54 answered with Question No. 52.

Road Network.

55. **Deputy Shane McEntee** asked the Minister for Transport his views on new guidelines for road works inspection; if he is satisfied that inspection of roads for safety purposes is adequate; his Department's role in providing the budget for road safety improvement measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6023/09]

Deputy Noel Dempsey: As Minister for Transport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding of the national roads programme element of Transport 21. The implementation of individual road projects is, in the case of national roads, a matter for the NRA in conjunction with the relevant road authorities and, in the case of regional and local roads, a matter for local authorities directly.

The Department of Transport and the NRA have worked closely with local authorities and the Local Government Management Services Board to develop comprehensive new guidelines for the control and management of road works sites, for use within the local government sector. The guidelines, which represent best practice, issued to local authorities in 2007 under cover of a circular letter from my Department.

Other specific measures undertaken by my Department in recent years to improve the safety of roads include augmentation of the powers of local authorities to impose special lower speed limits at road works sites; publication of a revised and updated edition of chapter 8 of the road signs manual covering temporary traffic measures and signs at road works, and the deployment of signage and temporary traffic measures at such locations; and regular updating of technical advice to local authorities regarding the correct use of surfacing materials for undertaking road pavement improvement works.

In 2009, I have provided an allocation of approximately €1.44 billion to the NRA for the national roads programme, out of which the NRA allocates funding for specific road safety measures including pavement renewal, bridge and winter maintenance, and gritting, all of which have a direct impact on the safety of roads. The NRA's overall budget of €1.44 billion in 2009, as in previous years, is being invested in the provision of a modern road network.

From 2003 to date, almost €3.8 billion in State funding has been provided to local authorities for regional and local roads. More than €24 million has been provided for specific road safety measures, through the Department's low cost safety grant scheme. The 2009 allocation for regional and local roads is €607.5 million, which includes a sum of €8.651 million allocated to 316 schemes through the low cost safety grant scheme. Safety is a fundamental consideration in the provision and maintenance of our road network and this high level of investment is delivering a significant road safety dividend.

Deputy Shane McEntee: In the past 12 or 15 months we have gone from the bottom of the list to near the top in terms of road safety and this has been achieved by the expenditure of a significant amount of money. Is the Minister happy that road safety measures implemented by local authorities are being complied with in a proper fashion? Is the Minister of the opinion that the Road Safety Authority should work in conjunction with the local authorities and with the road safety officer who must be appointed in every county by the end of September? Road accidents, road deaths, damage to cars and injuries to people cost a total of €1.3 billion in 2007.

[Deputy Shane McEntee.]

The money given to the Department of Transport by the Department of Finance was money very well spent in supporting road safety. However, it is not a success story. Both the Minister and I know we could do a lot better and be number one in Europe, if not in the world, if we continue to spend money on road safety and if we work together as a team. However, Deputies on all sides of the House are concerned because the quality of the country's roads is rapidly deteriorating. I ask the Minister to consider the possibility of the Road Safety Authority and the road safety officers, who must be appointed by every council by the end of the year, working with the county councils.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I agree with the Deputy that local authorities have a very important and key role to play in road safety issues generally. I refer to the example in our own constituency where a former Garda with a lot of experience was appointed as a specific road safety officer and this has proved to be very successful in reducing road deaths and accidents. All the local authorities are focused on this issue. From the engineering point of view every local authority road project is designed with improved safety in mind. The increased effort by the Garda Síochána and the significant improvements in the roads has contributed to the 30% decrease in the level of road deaths in the past ten years.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I will allow a brief supplementary question from Deputy McEntee.

Deputy Shane McEntee: Will the same amount of finance be provided to the Road Safety Authority for the next 12 months as it was for the past 12 months or will there be a cut in the finance needed to support the Road Safety Authority in its initiatives to reduce deaths on the roads? Has the Minister's allocation been cut?

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I will defer to my colleague on the total amount. Apart from the reduction, a special grant of €20 million was given last year to reduce driving test waiting times to ten weeks and a target of eight weeks was achieved. Most of that grant went to that project. This amount could not be repeated this year and we did not need to repeat it. Apart from that, the budget of the Road Safety Authority is similar to last year so this particular area will not be affected.

Other Questions.

Air Services.

56. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Transport if he will review the operation of the range of extra charges and levies that are currently imposed on airline passengers in view of the need to maintain passenger volumes in the airline sector; if he will work with the Commission on Aviation Regulation and the National Consumer Agency to review the increasing burden of excessive extra charges on airline passengers including the new €30 levy on passengers carrying a separate duty free bag that an Irish carrier has recently introduced and, if necessary, bring forward legislation specifically to protect air travellers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5816/09]

Deputy Noel Dempsey: As the Deputy will be aware, the air services market in the European Community was fully liberalised in 1992. The operation of the market is governed by common rules which were recently updated and are set out in a European Regulation No. 1008/2008. This regulation entered into force in November last year and has direct application in all

member states. Under the common rules set out in the EU regulation, airlines can freely set fares for air services offered within the Community and this has been the case since 1992 when the market was first opened up.

The EU regulation introduces new provisions requiring greater pricing transparency. When publishing or advertising air fares, airlines must now include all applicable conditions and all applicable taxes and charges which are unavoidable and foreseeable at the time of publication. These pricing transparency provisions were introduced because the fare structure in the industry in recent years has changed significantly with many airlines now having differentiated pricing structures consisting of a basic fare with a number of optional pricing elements. The new rules require greater transparency in pricing information but airlines still have full pricing freedom. This will ensure that consumers have fuller information available to them in making their travel choices.

Side by side with the opening up of the market, a number of other consumer protection measures have been introduced at European level in recent years. These include compensation in the event of denied boarding and the rights of passengers with reduced mobility when travelling by air. The opening up of the market for air services has completely transformed air travel in Europe and has brought enormous benefits to the European economy and particularly to the Irish economy.

As an island nation Ireland is particularly reliant on air services for the maintenance and creation of business and tourism links with Europe and the rest of the world. The benefits of liberalisation are clear to see both in the context of the European market and the EU-US market which was liberalised more recently. The number of routes available into and out of Ireland has increased dramatically in the period since the market was opened up. The increased choice of destinations available to consumers and the significant decrease in fares in the years since the market was opened up clearly demonstrates the benefits that competition brings to consumers and to the wider economy.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: Is the Minister and the Government reconsidering the €10 departure tax? We have heard in recent days that this is the straw breaking the camel's back for operators. Michael O'Leary of Ryanair says this tax is the primary reason 200 jobs at Ryanair in Dublin Airport have been lost and we hear that Aer Lingus will have to find €30 million in 2009 to fund the losses resulting from this departure tax. Given that such a small amount of money will be collected through this tax — well under €100 million this year — is this not the case of another own goal by the Minister as is the case with the Minister for Finance, Deputy Brian Lenihan, who scored a number of sensational own goals in recent months? Is this not another own goal and a devastating attack on employment at the worst possible time?

With regard to the question, can we have legislation to introduce simplified and less complicated ticketing arrangements? I note the Ryanair website states that commuters are charged a whole range of taxes such as the payment of a handling fee, the airport check-in fee, the priority boarding fee, the infant fee, the baggage fees, fees for the first bag, second bag and third bag, the excess bag, the infant equipment, the sports equipment, the musical instrument and, lately, the €30 fee to ensure that passengers will buy duty free goods only on board the Ryanair flight. The Minister has been doing nothing about this for the past couple of years. I ask him to deal first and foremost with the departure tax.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: The Deputy is of course correct; it is an open market and people can do this if they want to. The list and litany of the various charges read out by the Deputy

[Deputy Noel Dempsey.]

would lead any reasonable person to conclude that a €10 departure tax was not the straw that broke any camel's back.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: That is exactly what it is.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: It is very instructive that Deputy Broughan, who has frequently stood up in the House and attacked and ranted and raved about Ryanair and Michael O'Leary and about the manner in which he does his business, is now a firm believer of the gospel according to Michael. There is no sane person in this country——

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: We are losing jobs.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: ——who believes for one minute that Ryanair decided to reduce the number of flights out of Shannon or out of Dublin because of the €10 departure tax. Ryanair reduced those flights because it estimates the number of passengers flying out of Shannon and Dublin in 2009 will be less than it was in 2008. Ryanair has moved its operations to places where it thinks it will get these passengers.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: Where there is no travel tax and no departure tax.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: The €10 departure tax is the usual tactic from that same source.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: He might be right about some things.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Allow the Minister to continue.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: An old football coach of mine used to say that attack was the best form of defence. When one is doing something that is not popular, one should find someone else to attack. The Deputy has fallen for it.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: That is what the Government does.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Martin, is on his way to Cuba. He will pay an entry and departure tax of €25 to visit poor old Fidel's country. The departure tax is a penalty that should not be in place.

Ryanair and Aer Lingus both have weight limits of so many kilograms. Once one exceeds a limit of 8 kg, 10 kg or whatever it may be, one pays a penalty. Is anyone checking the readings from the weighing machines? Recently, I acquired clear evidence of a bag's weight differing by 2 kg or 3 kg when weighed by two different companies. Who is policing the charges? Does the Department have a nominated person to check whether the weighing scales are correct? In many cases, they are not.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: It is not a matter for my Department. Rather, it may be a matter for the weights and measures group in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: It is a real issue.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I am aware of that. If the Deputy has evidence, he should make it available, as it is important that such situations not occur. In some airlines, a commission acts as an incentive to make the charge.

The projected income accruing from the tax will be €150 million.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: That is for 2010. I remember the unfortunate budget.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: If the Deputy has any bright ideas on how else to get that much money, he should let me know.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: The figure for this year will be €95 million.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: Some €150 million in a full year.

Cycle Facilities.

57. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding a national cycle route as promised in the programme for Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5958/09]

Deputy Noel Dempsey: The policy document, Smarter Travel — A Sustainable Transport Future, I launched last week commits to creating a strong culture of cycling to the extent that modal share of cycling will increase from 2% in 2006 to 10% by 2020. This equates to a rise in daily cycle commuting from 35,000 to 160,000 by 2020.

Action 15 of the policy commits to the publication of a national cycle policy framework, which I will do shortly. The framework will not only be a comprehensive response to current difficulties faced by the cycling community in terms of road priority and safety issues, but will also prove to be a springboard to creating a culture of cycling. Among the issues to be addressed are the creation of traffic-free urban centres to facilitate cycling, cycle training for schoolchildren, the integration of cycling with other transport modes and investment in a national cycle network with urban networks given priority.

Some progress is already being made on cycling networks. Fáilte Ireland assists in the development of cycling trails and I am committed to progressing a flagship project, such as the Sutton-Sandycove route. The development of an integrated national network will take place over a longer period of time and the proposed national cycle policy framework will address the issue further.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: I thank the Minister for his reply. Between 2002 and 2006, 427 cycling collisions were reported to the Garda. Sadly, 11 were fatalities. Of those, eight cyclists were killed by left-turning lorries. We must address this serious issue. Of the other three, one involved a vehicle hitting a cyclist while changing lanes, another involved a vehicle rear-ending a cyclist while the third was caused by a stolen car driving into a cyclist head on. We must address these issues and the Minister must ensure that cyclists are secure. There should be a solution to the problem of left-turning lorries killing cyclists.

Will the Minister consider cycling routes along canals, bus lanes, DART lines and old national primary routes. While we must radically change the way in which we think, we must protect the cyclist above all else. We are not doing so effectively.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I agree. Many of the Deputy's suggestions will be included in the framework. A number of old railway lines are being actively considered. The Ministers for Arts, Sport and Tourism and Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs have been active in that regard.

To some extent, the difficulty in terms of left-turning lorries has been addressed in the past 12 months. We passed regulations that require an extra mirror to provide more visibility, which should help to reduce the accident rate. However, the Deputy is correct. If we want to change attitudes and everything else, we must prioritise bicycles and pedestrians instead of cars. This will be a central theme of the document to be published in a few weeks' time.

[Deputy Noel Dempsey.]

Interestingly, the Deputy mentioned old national primary roads. We have a significant opportunity to capture some of them for use as good cycling routes. We should narrow them down to one lane of traffic in both directions while using the remainder for cycling lanes.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: It sounds like a good idea. However, the problem with cycling provision is that the Government is not prepared to spend any money on it. While I welcome the Minister's comments on the Sutton-Sandycove route, the Australian Labour Party Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, will this year introduce a cycling programme with a value of 40 million Australian dollars. By contrast, we seem to be doing almost nothing. Will the Government take any major initiatives? For example, would it be possible to get Ministers on their bikes? The Minister of State beside the Minister could use a number of cycle lanes on his way in from the north side. Could the new cycling programme for Dublin city be extended to include Ministers, Deputies and Senators travelling between their various offices?

Concerning the injuries mentioned by Deputy O'Dowd, I welcome the report compiled by Dublin City Council's road and traffic department. Why is the Minister discussing cyclops mirrors instead of doing something about them?

Deputy Noel Dempsey: The Deputy misheard me, as that measure has already been taken.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: We are still waiting.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: The Deputy will be aware of the fact that at least two Ministers are on their bikes.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: They will be on them for a long time.

Deputy Denis Naughten: There will be many more Ministers on them in a couple of weeks' time.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: Deputy Broughan mentioned that he was involved in introducing the first cycling lane while he was a member of Dublin City Council. I was on my bike at the time because I launched the initiative on the quays.

We have a considerable opportunity to change our habits. If people felt that cycling had become safer, many, including Senators, Deputies and Ministers, would travel by bicycle.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: Ministers would not be safe on their bikes.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: My colleagues who cycle claim that it is safe, healthy and so on, but people remain to be convinced. The only way to do so is to put safe cycle lanes in place.

Public Transport.

58. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Transport the amount of subvention sought by Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann and the amount given by him to Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann for 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5961/09]

59. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport his views on reviewing the public service obligation awarded to Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann for 2009 in view of the programme of cutbacks of up to 400 buses and 600 jobs planned at both public transport companies and the effect these cutbacks will have on rural and urban communities here; the meetings he has had with Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus management on the cutbacks; if he suggested the introduction of a voluntary redundancy scheme in either public company; his

views on the recent Deloitte & Touche report on Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann; if he will indicate if he has accepted and will implement all of the report's recommendations; if new legislation will be necessary to do so; if he has received proposals on changing Dublin Bus services in the context of the recent Deloitte & Touche report; if so, the proposals in relation to same; if he will implement them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5800/09]

76. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Transport the amount of subvention sought by CIE and the amount given by him to CIE in respect of 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5968/09]

80. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Transport if, in view of the positive findings on the efficient operation of Bus Éireann in the recent Deloitte & Touche bus review, he will ensure that current Bus Éireann network, fleet and service levels are maintained and enhanced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5803/09]

95. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport the action he will take regarding the recent reductions in the Dublin Bus fleet. [5838/09]

100. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Transport the alternatives that exist for persons dependent on bus services in view of the recent cutbacks. [5841/09]

267. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Transport his views on a rationalisation and concentration of certain bus routes in line with the recent Deloitte & Touche report; the route changes which he is currently considering; if he will provide a copy of the detailed analysis of the Finglas bus corridor carried out by Deloitte & Touche which indicates that significant cost savings could be achieved following a redesign of services throughout the bus network; the recommendations from the report which will be implemented; the timeframe for implementation of these recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5590/09]

Deputy Noel Dempsey: I propose to take Questions Nos. 58, 59, 76, 80, 95, 100 and 267 together.

In the course of the 2009 Estimates process, CIE indicated that it was seeking an increase in subvention to reflect increases in cost broadly in line with the consumer price index and to meet the additional costs associated with the withdrawal of the fuel duty rebate. Following discussions with the company and its subsidiaries and taking account of the group's financial position and the overall position of the Exchequer finances, an amount of €313.279 million was provided for in the Estimates, representing an increase of €5 million on the 2008 provision.

Despite this increase in subvention and a fares increase of 10%, CIE and its subsidiary companies are facing a difficult financial outlook in 2009 due to declining demand in an increasing cost environment. In response, the CIE companies are considering a broad range of measures in the area of pay and allowances, efficiency measures and service rationalisations to restore financial stability.

While I have discussed the overall position facing CIE with the chairman, it is a matter for the CIE companies, within the resources available to them from fare revenue and Exchequer subvention, to optimise their services in the most customer-focused, efficient and effective manner, while maintaining as high a level of service as possible to the travelling public. Issues such as staff numbers, pay and the level of redundancies are matters for the companies, in consultation with their staff. It should be noted, however, that the companies have given an indication of the number of bus withdrawals that may be required, which at 270 is lower than the 400 buses referred to by the Deputy. I have requested that when the companies consider

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service reductions, every effort should be made to maintain peak-time services and those to developing areas. Service reductions should be a last resort in their efforts to maintain financial stability.

The aforementioned Deloitte report, the recommendations of which I accept in full, sets out a series of measures that are designed to enhance the role of the bus. In my statement that accompanied the report's release on 26 January, I indicated areas in which the report had identified considerable scope within Dublin Bus to improve its services to customers, increase efficiencies and save money through, for example, redesigning the network, eliminating unnecessary service duplication and improving information to the customer. In the case of Bus Éireann, I identified areas in which it could explore opportunities to further reduce costs and pursue new business opportunities.

The Deloitte report should, therefore, be seen as supporting the actions being taken by both companies to turn around their financial position, which is not sustainable in the current environment. I have asked the companies to present to me their plans for the implementation of the report's recommendations at an early date.

I do not envisage that new legislation will be necessary to facilitate the implementation of the findings of the Deloitte report. Details of the Finglas corridor case study are available in the appendix to the Deloitte report, a copy of which is available in the Oireachtas Library. As I stated in answer to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 245 and 246 of 3 February last, I am in regular contact with my Cabinet colleagues in the Green Party regarding developments in public transport and the sustainability agenda.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: In the past five years, €1.5 billion has been spent in a taxpayers' subsidy to CIE. The Minister has stated that while he has again increased the subvention this year to Dublin Bus, the service will worsen, jobs will be lost and there will be fewer buses on the road. In 2000, the Minister was part of a Cabinet that proposed the opening up to competition of Dublin's bus routes. The report, on which the Minister signed off, noted that the opening up of bus routes to competition in other countries, such as Sweden and so on, resulted in more buses, more passengers, lower costs to the taxpayer and a fall in fares. However, the Minister has absolutely failed to do this. In this critical year, with so many job losses in transport, the Minister has a golden opportunity to insist on basic fundamental measures, such as giving buses priority at traffic lights. He should insist on radical change and not simply leave it up to the unions and Dublin Bus, but should insist that such change happens now.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I wish to facilitate a brief supplementary question from Deputy Broughan before the Minister responds.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: The Minister should confirm that one of the key findings of the Deloitte report was that subsidies to public transport and specifically to buses in most other European cities are far higher than in Dublin, which is something that Fine Gael conveniently forgets. For example, subsidies of 68%, 79%, 57% and 62% obtain in Brussels, Lyon, Zürich and Amsterdam, respectively, while Dublin of course is bottom of the league at only 29%. Bus Éireann, which received a clean bill of health in this report enjoys a subsidy of a mere 12%.

The key point is that workers have voted to go on strike, if necessary, because of the manner in which the Minister is handling bus transport. As the responsible Minister, is it not time that he rolled up his sleeves to ensure that commuters will not be left without a public transport service and that young workers will not be victimised by the outcome of the public transport policies he is pursuing? He should roll up his sleeves, engage with the companies concerned

and come up with a fair resolution of this matter. For example, as I asked in the previous question——

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Go raibh maith agat. I must revert to the Minister.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: ——why is there no voluntary redundancy in this matter? Is the Minister not the responsible person in this regard?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I am afraid the Minister only has one minute in which to respond.

Deputy Noel Dempsey: In the current economic climate, I secured subvention, or investment as the unions like to call it, of more than €313 million for the bus and train services. That is a lot of money and we do not have any more to give to the companies. We have a blueprint in respect of Bus Átha Cliath and Bus Éireann as to how we can encourage a greater number of passengers, which is what I desire. I seek an efficient and effective service that meets the needs of customers. Capacity already exists in the system and we must get passengers to use it. I am focused on doing this, both through the companies themselves and by trying to eliminate pinch points around the city and trying to ensure the implementation of integrated ticketing, real-time information and an understandable network. I am trying to ensure that people can get a bus when they need one and not have three buses when they do not. This is what I intend to try to do and the way to succeed is to try to ensure the implementation of the Deloitte report. I will devote all my efforts to this end in the future.

Written Answers follow Adjournment Debate.

Adjournment Debate Matters.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I wish to advise the House of the following matters in respect of which notice has been given under Standing Order 21 and the name of the Members in each case: (1) Deputy Noel J. Coonan — to ask the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy Gormley, when an application for funding for a new fire station facility in Cloughjordan, County Tipperary, first made by North Tipperary County Council in May 2005, will be provided by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, taking into account the extreme deteriorating conditions at the establishment and subsequent health and safety concerns; (2) Deputy Ciarán Lynch — to ask the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will lay before the House the details, including financial implications, of his plans to enable local authorities to lease estates from developers as outlined by the Minister of State in recent days and if he will lay out his programme to spend €20 million in leasing currently idle properties from developers; (3) Deputy Joe Carey — the consequences of the €10 travel tax on Shannon Airport in light of the recent announcement by Ryanair that it will remove two aircraft from its fleet of six based in Shannon Airport, resulting in the reduction in flight numbers from 136 to 116 this summer and the further removal of two other aircraft from its fleet in November and a request, in the interest of Shannon Airport and the well-being of the mid-western economy in respect of jobs, business and passenger choice, not to impose the €10 travel tax; (4) Deputy Jimmy Deenihan — the threatened discontinuation of the contracts of 101 representatives planned by Teagasc resulting in job losses and a slowdown in investigating plans under the REPS 4 scheme; (5) Deputy Mary Upton — the impact that cuts in special teacher support have had on schools in Ballyfermot, Dublin; (6) Deputy James Bannon — the provision of secondary care services under phase 2B of the Longford-Westmeath hospital project in Mullingar; (7) Deputy Tom Hayes — in light of the huge number of job losses nationwide, to ask the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise,

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Trade and Employment to outline her plans to strengthen the role of the county enterprise boards, how they can expand their services to foster job creation and entrepreneurship and what is necessary to make them a key player in Ireland's economic recovery; (8) Deputy Michael Ring — the provision of funding for St. Joseph's national school, Bonniconlon, County Mayo; and (9) Deputy John Cregan — investment in agricultural colleges under the programme for Government 2007-2012.

The matters raised by Deputies James Bannon, John Cregan, Mary Upton and Michael Ring have been selected for discussion.

Leaders' Questions.

Deputy Enda Kenny: During my time in the House, I have rarely seen such an extent of anger on the streets in respect of the mismanagement and lack of leadership by the Government. The country is edging towards an economic precipice and there is no strategy, coherence or sign of action being taken to clear up the international markets' complete lack of trust and confidence in Ireland. Evidence emerged today of shares being hammered after the investment of €7 billion of taxpayers' money.

The people are disgusted beyond reason at what is happening. They are disgusted with the level of obscene payoffs for people who were central to activities that were neither ethical nor moral. It leads one to believe that if this continues for much longer, Ireland will face an economic crisis the likes of which we never have seen before. However, the Government has made no response of any coherence, direction or strength to deal with it. People are appalled by what has gone on.

Last September, the Taoiseach ignored the advice of his own experts to the effect that Anglo Irish Bank should be taken over. He followed this with a promise of €1.5 billion of taxpayers' money for recapitalisation that he was eventually forced to abandon in favour of nationalisation. In the past week, there has been evidence of allegations, rumours, stories and fact regarding what has gone on in respect of Anglo Irish Bank, with more to come. This is not business as usual, nor can it ever be. The buck stops at the door of the Government and the Taoiseach.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Who is the Government protecting?

Deputy Enda Kenny: Action has not been taken to sort out this issue. At present, the regulatory authority is carrying out an investigation, although it was itself fundamental to what happened. This is not how it should be. If the Taoiseach is to lead the nation to a point at which there is a restoration of some semblance of credibility and trust, he must take decisive action, which I have outlined in the past few days. We have heard about the manipulation of the assets and deposit base of Anglo Irish Bank. I do not want to impugn the Taoiseach's personal integrity in any way. However, will he confirm when he as Taoiseach and Head of Government knew about the transactions between Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Life & Permanent? On what date did he find out about those transactions?

The Taoiseach: It is very important that we protect the integrity of the financial system. Everything we have done has been with that in mind. I do not accept Deputy Kenny's contention that advice was ignored. In September the full advice was that all financial institutions of systemic importance had to be protected and dealt with in the way that we did.

Deputy Kenny went on to talk about the recapitalisation issue in regard to the €1.5 billion proposal, which was a step short of nationalisation, in our policy statement of 23 December. I

made it clear in the House that, subsequently, governance issues came to our attention as a result of a due diligence that was carried out, having made that policy statement that we were prepared to put money into Anglo Irish Bank in the interests of maintaining the financial system. In doing that due diligence what emerged were governance issues which meant that the nationalisation of the bank should take place. It was not appropriate to impart partial information which had to be considered by the regulator and now by the Director of Corporate Enforcement.

One issue that must be cleared up for ourselves and for the country is that where any wrongdoing has occurred, if there is to be accountability, it must be in compliance with due process. If we do not accord due process, then we put at risk the very objective we are setting out to achieve, which is to make sure that those who are responsible for any wrongdoing are made accountable and that we create clear blue water between those activities which are unacceptable and a new regime. I realise the anger that exists in the community and share that anger in many respects. What I am trying to do is to make sure that this issue is dealt with through the mechanisms available to us, that the statutory authorities investigate the people concerned, that they take whatever steps are necessary to deal with them and that at the same time, in laying emphasis on that important issue of public confidence, we also lay important emphasis on maintaining our financial system and do not underestimate the difficulties we face in so doing.

That is what we are trying to achieve. Any contention to the contrary is incorrect. I take Deputy Kenny's point at face value and I appreciate it. Everything we are seeking to do here is to bring about a situation where those involved in wrongdoing or in practices that were not in compliance with proper corporate governance principles are held accountable. That is what we are trying to achieve. We seek to do so as quickly as possible but also to make sure that we maintain our financial and banking system which, like everywhere else in the world, is under stress.

Deputy Paul Kehoe: Will the Taoiseach answer the question?

The Taoiseach: On the specific issue raised by Deputy Kenny, as I said, the governance questions were coming to light as we were making the decision on nationalisation and it was decided that this was what needed to be done. We did it for that reason.

Deputy Paul Kehoe: Will the Taoiseach answer the question?

Deputy Enda Kenny: I asked the Taoiseach the date on which he found out about the transactions between Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Life & Permanent. This is important from his point of view as Head of Government. We have had a trail and drip of information, rumour, innuendo, allegation and fact. This is an important question for the Taoiseach to answer in his own interest. When did he find out about this?

When did the Minister for Finance know about the unwinding of the Quinn-Anglo position where, we understand, ten people were given €30 million each to boost the shares. Do we know who these people are? When did the Minister for Finance tell the Taoiseach about this? There is a difference between protecting the national interest and protecting the interest of the Fianna Fáil Party or that of Anglo Irish Bank.

Deputy Martin Cullen: That is disgraceful.

Deputy Enda Kenny: These are fundamental questions that must be answered now. As the Taoiseach knows, there is no trust and no confidence in Irish financial institutions among the

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markets. It is patently wrong that the regulatory authority should be investigating these matters when it is a fundamental part of the problem.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Hear, hear.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The board and senior management should be gone and the Taoiseach should take decisive action in that regard, not in an individual sense but to send out a message of a clear, fresh and new beginning in this regard.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Enda Kenny: That is fundamental.

On what date did the Taoiseach find out about this? Did the Minister for Finance tell him about the unravelling of the Quinn-Anglo deal? If there are issues of governance or criminal activity involved, why has the Government not sent in the fraud squad to investigate? People want answers quickly from the Taoiseach as our country edges ever closer to an economic precipice. Everybody has an interest in protecting our financial institutions. Everybody has an interest in ensuring our economy develops. However, the lack of leadership, strength and decisive action from the Government is only adding further to the confusion and the darkening clouds that lie ahead.

Does the Taoiseach know the names of the ten persons involved? Can he confirm that no member of the Government was involved in any way by encouragement, support or any other activity to facilitate this situation whereby ten persons were each given €30 million from Anglo Irish Bank?

Deputy Noel Dempsey: Was any member of Fine Gael involved?

(Interruptions).

Deputy Enda Kenny: It is necessary from the Taoiseach's point of view and that of the Government that there be an absolutely clean sheet. Will the Taoiseach answer these questions? When did the Minister notify him of the unravelling of the Quinn-Anglo deal? Can he confirm that no member of his Cabinet was in any way involved in the decisions of a new golden circle? The Galway tent may be gone but its spirit seems to be alive and well.

Deputy John Cregan: Was any Fine Gael Front Bench Member involved?

Deputy Paul Kehoe: The tent is falling down on top of Fianna Fáil.

The Taoiseach: In regard to the second matter, I do not know any names. I am not involved in any names.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: The Taoiseach knows very well who these people are. We all have our suspicions.

(Interruptions).

A Deputy: Will Deputy McGinley put his suspicions on the record?

An Ceann Comhairle: This is Leaders' Questions. Deputy McGinley cannot——

The Taoiseach: In the interests of the seriousness of the question being raised, I wish to respond to the Deputy. Whatever about Deputy McGinley's prejudices towards me, when I

make a statement, I stand by that statement. I wish to make it very clear that I do not know the names of any people involved in this process, nor is it my function——

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Are they Irish?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach is trying to respond to Deputy Kenny's question.

The Taoiseach: If we are not going to have a civilised discussion, fair enough.

An Ceann Comhairle: If Deputy McGinley interferes again, I will have no alternative but to ask him to leave.

The Taoiseach: A meeting took place last March at which the governor indicated to me, as Minister for Finance, that a situation was developing in regard to the contracts for difference issue in Anglo Irish Bank. That had to be dealt with by the bank. It proceeded with that and Mr. Quinn made a statement on 13 July relating to it. It was indicated at that time that the matter had been resolved. I had no indication and no involvement whatsoever in names of any description. That was not my function. Nor do I have available to me information regarding the current investigation being undertaken by the Financial Regulator and the Director of Corporate Enforcement. That issue has arisen as a result of a due diligence that took place after the policy statement made in regard to recapitalisation.

In regard to the other matter, as I said, I received a telephone call in Japan from the Minister for Finance. His discussions with me at that time related to the need to proceed with the nationalisation on the basis of what was emerging in regard to directors' loans and other corporate governance issues which he said had been referred to the regulator. That is where it was at and there were no further details at that point.

Deputy Enda Kenny: What is the date?

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: There are many unanswered questions.

Deputy Paul Kehoe: He is hiding something.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach said he knew about the Quinn situation in March and that his understanding was that the matter was resolved with the statement on 30 July from the Quinn group. We now know that the so-called resolution of the Quinn issue involved an arrangement whereby Anglo Irish Bank provided €300 million to ten wealthy individuals, who in turn used the money to buy shares in Anglo Irish Bank. According to newspaper reports at the weekend, the loan arrangement that Anglo Irish Bank made with the ten individuals was on very favourable terms to the point where there was no security against the loan other than the shares. The net effect of this is that the taxpayer is left with a bill for €300 million following the nationalisation of Anglo Irish Bank.

There are a number of questions I would like answered about this arrangement. Did they Financial Regulator, the Department of Finance or the Minister for Finance know about the arrangement involving the ten individuals when the decision was taken to proceed with the bank guarantee in September? Were details of the arrangement included in and described in the PricewaterhouseCoopers report, which the Taoiseach did not receive and which the Minister for Finance did not read in full? Did the Taoiseach and the Government know about the arrangement involving the ten individuals when the decision was made to proceed with the nationalisation of Anglo Irish Bank? If the Taoiseach knew about it, why was the House not told about it?

[Deputy Eamon Gilmore.]

In response to comments made by Deputy McGinley, the Taoiseach said he does not know who are the ten individuals. I do not want to challenge the integrity or credibility of the Taoiseach but I find that difficult to accept. If this arrangement, involving ten individuals, was made and linked so intimately with the Quinn arrangement, and this led initially to the guarantee scheme and ultimately to the nationalisation of Anglo Irish Bank, I find it difficult to accept that the Head of Government that nationalised Anglo Irish bank would not know about the extent of that arrangement. The people of the country need to be told who these individuals are. When will we find out who they are? This is no longer a matter of commercial confidentiality and the confidentiality of the individuals. We now own the bank and we are stuck with the debt. Teaching assistants are being let go, children are being told they cannot get vaccinations, book grants are being abolished and staff of the State are being levied because of the financial and economic difficulties that arose from this. We need to know the names and identity of this golden circle. It is no longer a matter of commercial confidentiality. This is the rotten borough of Irish banking. What has been going on ranges from what might be mildly described as impropriety to illegality and criminality. It must be outed and we need to know who is in the golden circle. Who were these ten people? If the Taoiseach does not know, will he find out and tell the House?

Deputy Dinny McGinley: And tell the country.

The Taoiseach: I want to be clear with Deputy Gilmore. There is no reference to this matter in the PricewaterhouseCoopers report. Deputy Gilmore referred to arrangements that were the other part of the resolution of this unwinding of the CFDs that Mr. Quinn had built up in the bank. Regarding loans by Anglo Irish Bank to customers for the purchase of Anglo Irish Bank shares and the Government's knowledge of the matter, as Minister for Finance I became aware, from contacts between the Department of Finance, the governor and the Financial Regulator over the course of last year, that a large overhang of shares were held by the Quinn group and related persons in the family. This was considered by the bank and the market to be a source of instability and the institution was seeking a resolution of the issue. The details of this were a matter for Anglo Irish Bank and, as appropriate, the Financial Regulator. The Minister for Finance was advised in late July 2008 that a number of investors had invested in Anglo Irish Bank but the Minister was not advised of who the individuals were or the nature of the transaction. As a result of due diligence recently undertaken on behalf of the Minister, certain matters in connection with transactions involving the Quinn stake in Anglo Irish Bank and related loans to Anglo Irish Bank customers for the purchase of shares came to the attention of the Minister and these are now being investigated by the various regulatory bodies, including the Financial Regulator and the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement.

In January, the Government made clear that an important factor in the decision to nationalise Anglo Irish Bank was concern that corporate governance issues at Anglo Irish Bank could destabilise the bank and threaten the stability of the financial system. However, it would not have been appropriate for the Government to publicly disclose partial information that was, and remains, the subject of investigation by the responsible statutory authorities. As part of its normal operations, the annual accounts of Anglo Irish Bank will be published in the coming week. I understand there will be detailed notes in the accounts that will address the matter of loans issued by Anglo Irish Bank for the purchase of its shares as well as the transaction involving Irish Life & Permanent. The new board of Anglo Irish Bank is reviewing corporate governance practices of the bank and will put in place arrangements to guide the bank in the future. I am confident the new board will pursue the necessary changes in this regard.

In the midst of the ongoing investigations into corporate governance at Anglo Irish Bank, the Government's priority is to ensure the stability of the Irish banking system. Depositors and creditors with Irish banks have been and will be protected and the Government will ensure that actions that cause damage to the reputation of our financial system are fully pursued in accordance with the law.

Deputy Gilmore suggested that he found it difficult to believe me. I am telling the truth. This is an internal arrangement of Anglo Irish Bank that was understood at the time to be in compliance and that was found in due diligence to raise certain questions that are being addressed by the Financial Regulator and the Director of Corporate Enforcement. Those investigations must be completed as quickly as possible so that full details and facts can be provided by those with the statutory authority to do so. I will not get involved in rumour or anything else. I deal with the facts and the facts are as I have outlined. If Deputy Gilmore accepts my integrity, as he says he does, that is the situation and I have no reason to say otherwise. If I knew, I would tell him.

An Ceann Comhairle: I want to make it clear to Deputy Gilmore and to all Members that the House is not a court and a Member's disclaimer of the accuracy of a statement attributed to him or of a particular action attributed to him must be accepted by the House. There is no other way of doing business.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: I accept what the Taoiseach says. I am not trying to impute anything to him. I want to pursue further what the Taoiseach said in his reply. The Taoiseach said he knew in March about the Quinn overhang in Anglo Irish Bank. Did he know the full extent of it in March? The Taoiseach says he thought it was resolved in July. Given what we now know, did he know the full extent of how it was resolved — so-called — in July? The Taoiseach keeps referring to corporate governance, which is becoming a mantra in these discussions, and said the Government discovered corporate governance issues in Anglo Irish Bank. Corporate governance is becoming a code phrase. We do not know yet for what it is a code, but it is code for something.

Did the Taoiseach and his Government know about the arrangement involving the ten individuals when the decision was made to nationalise Anglo Irish Bank? If the Government knew this information, why was it not shared with the rest of us who were asked to approve the legislation?

The Taoiseach: As I explained to Deputy Gilmore with regard to the overhang of shares, I, as Minister for Finance, was informed, to ensure that the impact on the stability of the bank would be off-loaded and unwound. That was a matter which Anglo Irish Bank was proactive in seeking to achieve, as it understood the difficulty being caused. Others were gambling or suggesting——

Deputy Joan Burton: That is right. Those are the correct words.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: That is what he really thinks.

The Taoiseach: ——that the share price would go down. These were in hedge funds or whatever.

Deputy Joan Burton: They were gambling.

The Taoiseach: I am not having an argument about what words to use. I am trying to explain to people the context of what was going on and why it was important it be unwound. Part of that was the conversion of those contracts for difference to 15% of shareholding for the Quinn

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family. There was also the other question of other investors taking up the remainder. As I understand it, all of those ten were under the thresholds and the action was therefore not disclosable under law. It was under 3% of a shareholding.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach knew about this in July.

The Taoiseach: No. I am trying to explain the facts. The Financial Regulator obtained legal advice from Anglo Irish Bank's advisers regarding the fact that this transaction was in compliance, and this was accepted at the time. It was a matter between the Financial Regulator and the bank rather than one involving me as Taoiseach or the Minister for Finance.

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: The Financial Regulator knew about this.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach cannot be interrupted.

Deputy Joan Burton: Was that why he got eight months of extra salary?

Deputy Noel Ahern: The Deputy should be serious.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach cannot be interrupted. This is Deputy Gilmore's question.

Deputy Joan Burton: He got all that extra pay.

The Taoiseach: I would like to answer the questions raised.

An Ceann Comhairle: These interruptions cannot be tolerated.

The Taoiseach: The issue, as I understand it, was accepted by the Financial Regulator at the time on the basis of the legal advice furnished.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: Was that in March?

The Taoiseach: No.

Deputy Richard Bruton: Whose legal advice? Was it that of Anglo Irish Bank?

The Taoiseach: It was the legal advice of Anglo Irish Bank.

Deputy Alan Shatter: There was no independent advice.

Deputy Joan Burton: Was it Arthur Cox Solicitors?

The Taoiseach: The due diligence that arose in December raised certain questions which were referred to the Financial Regulator, who also referred them to the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement. As I have said in regard to this matter, it would not be appropriate to bring forward partial information which is still under investigation. We await the outcome.

What we are concerned with here relates to corporate governance, the loans of the directors and the Irish Life & Permanent back-to-back loan, and there is also the question of the unwinding of the contracts for difference with the investors and the Quinn family. Those are the issues of corporate governance arising now and they are under consideration and investigation by the relevant authorities.

Deputy Simon Coveney: Did the Taoiseach know about it?

Requests to Move Adjournment of Dáil under Standing Order 32.

An Ceann Comhairle: Anois, iarratais chun tairisceana a dhéanamh an Dáil a chur ar athló faoi Bhuan Ordú 32.

Deputy Finian McGrath: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to discuss an issue of national importance, namely, the laying off of 270 workers by Dublin Bus and the urgent need to support them; and the disgraceful closure of SR Technics, which was announced to the shock and horror of all employees, especially as Scandinavian Airlines, Gulf Air and LAN Chile wanted to keep their servicing at the Dublin base and work with the quality 1,135 staff. I call on the Minister and all parties in the Dáil to come up with sensible solutions to these matters.

Deputy James Bannon: I wish to seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, namely, the call for cuts in social welfare payments which, if initiated, would be an obscene move by a Government which, having driven people out of work, would then be depriving them of the basic means of survival.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Hear, hear.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I wish to seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, namely, the long delays being experienced by passengers at passport control at Dublin Airport since Christmas and the consequential damage to Ireland's trade and economy, and its reputation among visitors from other countries; and the need for the Government to take immediate action to resolve the issues at the Garda National Immigration Bureau that have led to the present difficulties.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: What is going on there is disgraceful.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I wish to seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, namely, that the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment immediately engages with the management and workers at SR Technics to prevent the closure of this critical aviation and engineering company; and if she will also urgently engage with all of the relevant State agencies and stakeholders at Dublin Airport, including the Dublin Airport Authority, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and all the airline carriers to ensure that the 1,200 SR Technics jobs are maintained and that the renowned centre of excellence in aircraft maintenance and engineering at Dublin Airport and other locations in Ireland is protected for the local and national economy.

Deputy Arthur Morgan: I wish to seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of urgent national importance, namely, the need to compel the former chairman of Anglo Irish Bank, Mr. Seán FitzPatrick, to appear before the Oireachtas Committee on Economic and Regulatory Affairs, for legislation to be enacted to empower the Oireachtas to order persons under scrutiny of any committee to make an appearance and to furnish any documents requested by the Oireachtas and to make it a criminal offence to refuse to co-operate with any such requests.

Deputy Terence Flanagan: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, namely, the need for the Minister for Education and Science to urgently revisit his decision to cut resource classes in schools, including St. Eithne's in Edenmore, Dublin, and make 128 special needs teachers redundant. This cutback is cruel and a disgrace, and it will only have a negative effect on young children trying to learn in our schools.

An Ceann Comhairle: Tar éis breithnithe a dhéanamh ar na nitheardaithe, níl siad in ord faoi Bhuan Ordú 32. Having considered the matters raised, they are not in order under Standing Order 32.

Order of Business.

The Taoiseach: The Order of Business today shall be as follows: No. 7, motion re: referral to joint committee of proposed approval by Dáil Éireann of the Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Regulations 2009; No. 8, motion re: referral to select committee of proposed approval by Dáil Éireann for the transfer of command of the Irish contingent currently serving in Chad with EUFOR TCHAD/RCA to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT); No. 19, Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill 2008 Second Stage (resumed); and No. 20, Employment Law Compliance Bill 2008 Second Stage (resumed). It is proposed, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders, that Nos. 7 and 8 shall be decided without debate. Private Members' business shall be No. 56, motion re: economic crisis.

An Ceann Comhairle: There is one proposal to be put to the House. Is the proposal for dealing with Nos. 7 and 8, motion re: referral to joint committee of proposed approval by Dáil Éireann of the Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Regulations 2009 and motion re: referral to select committee of proposed approval by Dáil Éireann for the transfer of command of the Irish contingent currently serving in Chad agreed to? Agreed.

Deputy Enda Kenny: It is an example of discourtesy to this House that we come in here every Tuesday and Wednesday, yet neither of the two Green Party Ministers attend.

Deputy Paul Kehoe: Here, here.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: They are conserving energy.

Deputy Enda Kenny: When they attend they do so because of what they see as a distasteful obligation.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy knows well that we cannot discuss that on the Order of Business.

Deputy Simon Coveney: They are out windsurfing.

Deputy Enda Kenny: This is on the Order of Business.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: They are out hugging trees.

Deputy Paul Kehoe: We wonder if they are part of the Government.

Deputy Enda Kenny: In respect of legislation with which the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Deputy Eamon Ryan, is dealing, has he made a decision in respect of the draft Bill to replace the foreshore licences which has been submitted by the Joint Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security?

I understand that due to a clerical error, barristers were given an extra €1 million in payment at the Moriarty tribunal. Under the legislation that determines these regulations, has the Government taken action to see that the money is recovered? As the Taoiseach is aware, if people have underpaid the Revenue Commissioners or an overpayment is made, they are very quick to make contact on the issue.

An Ceann Comhairle: That should be submitted by way of a parliamentary question.

Deputy Enda Kenny: In respect of the report detailing where an extra €1 million has been paid to the barristers involved in the Moriarty tribunal, have arrangements been made to recover it?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach should comment on the legislation.

The Taoiseach: I outlined the position regarding the Foreshore Acts to Deputy Kenny for two weeks in a row. The Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources was present here when I suggested that he consult with his colleague, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, on developing an appropriate framework for off-shore renewable energy resources through revision of the Foreshore Acts, taking account of provisions proposed by the committee and international best practice.

Deputy Enda Kenny: If the Minister was here he might be able to help.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: It has nothing to do with the sea.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Maybe he is trying to push the waves back like King Canute.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Government Chief Whip has been on the airwaves to indicate that the Government is contemplating legislation to provide for compellability of witnesses before certain Oireachtas committees in connection with the banking issue. Is such legislation being considered and, if so, when will we see it?

On the Bill to give effect to the so called “pension levy” in the public services, the Public Services (Financial Contributions) Bill is down for consideration on Thursday. Has the Bill been approved by Government and when will it be circulated?

I have a copy of a letter in connection with the so called “pension levy”, which was issued by the Secretary General of the Department of Health and Children to the chief executive officer of the Health Service Executive. It states that, in the case of the executive, this should lead to appropriations-in-aid in respect of deductions from its own staff. Appropriations-in-aid normally refer to regimens of charges. Is the Government contemplating additional charging in the Department of Health and Children and when is that likely to be brought before the House?

An Ceann Comhairle: That material should be addressed in a Dáil question, we cannot deal with it now. We can only deal with questions on legislation.

The Taoiseach: There has been comment in the media on the issue of compellability, an issue of interest and importance to people. If changes are to be made to compellability, they must be done carefully and subject to scrutiny. The Supreme Court has held that Oireachtas committees cannot use their compellability powers to make adverse findings of fact or opinion against a non-member of the Oireachtas; it advises the only appropriate vehicle for that is a tribunal of inquiry. The committee can only ask questions relevant to its terms of reference in the proceedings it is conducting and any changes to terms of reference would have to be carefully drafted and strictly adhered to. It is important to note that certain evidence is exempt from scrutiny, including anything that could prejudice investigation, apprehension or prosecution of offences. In this regard, it is noted that recent developments suggest the Director of Corporate Enforcement and/or the gardaí could be interested in investigating developments in the banks. In any changes to the terms of reference of committees’ remits, it is vital that no action which

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has the potential to interfere with existing investigations by, for example, the Director of Corporate Enforcement, ensues.

The Chief Whip answered a media query on the matter but a formal request to see how such an approach could be considered would need to be pursued.

I cannot answer the Deputy directly on the health issue, I am not sure what the reference is to. In the area of health, we are working to lower professional fees as part of the Bill. The child care supplement amendment and the pension levy will be incorporated in the Bill.

Deputy Pat Rabbitte: Irrespective of what happens with Mr. FitzPatrick, has the Taoiseach given any further consideration to the proposition advanced last week that an all-party commission of the House should be charged with examining recent events in the banking sector and making recommendations for the future conduct of banking? The House might have a valuable role to play in restoring confidence among the public on the future of the banking sector.

The Taoiseach: I noted the Deputy's comment last week. The question is whether there is an existing committee that could do that. I am not sure of the significance of the Deputy suggesting a commission as distinct from a committee of House. The Government sees the need to bring forward regulatory reform, to restore public confidence in banking supervision and regulation. The Minister for Finance is being asked to bring proposals to Government as soon as possible and those will be an important component in seeking to restore confidence.

There have been indications of behaviour with which none of us would concur which does a lot of damage to the reputation of the country. From my point of view, as a Member of the House, any constructive proposal that would emanate on an all-party basis to see how we can help to ensure the integrity and reputation of the financial industry can be restored would be looked at constructively.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The trade union Unite has written to the board of Irish Life & Permanent making it clear that by its failure to accept the resignation of the CEO of that body last week, the board was in effect putting the jobs of thousands of workers at risk.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy must confine himself to promised legislation.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: In the context of the need for a job creation strategy and the stabilisation of work,—

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is out of order and must find another way of raising this issue. We cannot go into that now.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: —can the Taoiseach indicate if the Government and Cabinet are coming forward—

An Ceann Comhairle: Does the Deputy have a question on legislation?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: If the Ceann Comhairle would allow me to finish, with respect.

An Ceann Comhairle: If the Deputy asks a question that is order, there is no problem.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Will the Government indicate the measures it proposes to bring forward? Will they require legislation? What redress of the ongoing failures of people at senior level within bank management—

An Ceann Comhairle: I cannot allow that now, Leaders' Questions are over.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I am asking about further legislation.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should name the legislation in that case.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I am asking about promised legislation.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should name the legislation.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I cannot name it as the Government has not told us what it is going to call it. It is promised legislation and, frankly, between the Ceann Comhairle and me, that is probably as much as the Government knows too. That is the problem in this House.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should ask about legislation.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I am asking, because there have been failures at the highest level of banking management in this State, when legislation will be introduced to curb the abuses at the most senior level within the banking institutions in this State?

An Ceann Comhairle: Is legislation promised?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: When will legislation be brought forward to protect workers in the instance I have given of Irish Life & Permanent?

I note on the published legislative programme, the National Pensions Reserve Fund (Amendment) Bill is listed as the legislation to give effect to the recapitalisation of the banks. Is that still the case in the context of the deal with the banks announced last week?

The Taoiseach: The legislation on the National Pensions Reserve Fund will be published by the end of the week. To answer Deputy Gilmore, I expect the pensions levy legislation to be published tomorrow. The Minister for Finance is working on the legislation on banking regulation. He will come to Cabinet with proposals and as soon as they are adopted, we will proceed as quickly as possible with a legislative base for those agreed positions.

Deputy Richard Bruton: Do these legislative proposals deal with banking regulation? The personnel in regulation simply do not understand what represents an abuse. The abuses are before their eyes but they are doing nothing about them. I do not want to engage in a lengthy process with lots of energy devoted to changing institutional arrangements when we need people who understand what they are doing.

In respect of the National Pensions Reserve Fund legislation, we have heard from Green Party Ministers, who I assume are bound by Cabinet responsibility, that those who have led us into these problems in the banks will not lead us out of them. Are they speaking on behalf of the Cabinet when they make those statements? It would be valuable for us to know that; these are Cabinet Ministers and I expect them to represent Government decisions.

The Taoiseach: The Minister for Finance will be introducing proposals soon on how to restore public confidence in the regulation and supervision of our banking system. That is a priority. The Director of Corporate Enforcement has two gardaí from the fraud squad working as investigators on the issues he is examining.

In regard to the four main banks, three people have resigned, or have indicated their retirement. Changes are taking place. There is a new board in one of the banks, which we discussed earlier. Directors have been appointed by the Minister to guarantee the public interest and

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more will be appointed when the recapitalisation programme is completed. Significant changes are taking place both at executive and non-executive levels. I am sure that trend will continue.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Does the Taoiseach accept the process of investigation of serious crime is being hampered by the absence of a DNA database and appropriate legislation? I remind him that the former Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform indicated to the House in January 2006 that he had received approval from Cabinet to publish the Bill and proceed. In 2007, the Garda Commissioner, having consulted the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, stated that this was a fundamental part of his policing plan for that year. We are now heading towards spring 2009 with no sign of the legislation. When will the legislation be published and processed?

The Taoiseach: I understand it is intended that it will be published this year, possibly in this session.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I have three questions. Last week, the Taoiseach mentioned that preparation of the estate management legislation was imminent. Was it discussed in Cabinet since then and is it likely to appear before the House in the next couple of weeks?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy can ask the three questions together.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I would like to get three answers so I will do my best.

Apropos issues raised today and happenings over the past couple of weeks, I refer to promised legislation and existing legislation, namely, the company law Acts and the Companies Act 1990, which is the important legislation. In view of the obvious strains, or the failure in certain quarters over recent weeks to interpret how the Act is supposed to operate, is it intended to introduce the company law consolidation and reform Bill at an early date? The normal procedure is that when some atrocity takes place in this country, we seek new legislation but since legislation is already in place, what is it intended to do in the proposed company law consolidation and reform Bill? When will it come before the House?

My last question is also very appropriate at this time. The Criminal Justice (Money Laundering) Bill has been on the Order Paper for long enough to be laundered itself. In view of the shifting of money and the movement of funds not only in this country, but in other countries, including throughout Europe, and the need to comply with EU law in this area, when will that Bill be resurrected and brought before the House?

The Taoiseach: I understand the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering) Bill will be taken in this session. The company law consolidation and reform Bill is a large one with, I understand, almost 1,000 sections. A lot of work has been done on it but it is not complete. I believe the Deputy has been advised in recent weeks that work is continuing on the multi-unit Bill.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Was it discussed at Cabinet today?

Deputy James Bannon: Does the Taoiseach realise there is much disquiet among the public that well paid judges are exempt from all levies? This is causing much havoc and disquiet among public servants. Some public servants have been charged the 1% levy since the middle of December——

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Bannon must ask a question which is in order.

Deputy James Bannon: —without the legislation being in place. It was promised that the levy would take effect on 1 January.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Bannon, irrespective of your reservations, we cannot go into that now.

Deputy James Bannon: People have been charged since 17 December.

An Ceann Comhairle: There is another way to raise that.

Deputy James Bannon: I have seen cheques to that effect, where deductions were made in December.

An Ceann Comhairle: It is a very good question and I strongly urge you to table it, but not as a Standing Order 32 matter.

Deputy James Bannon: The people deserve answers.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: Does the Taoiseach agree that all citizens should be treated equally? Half the farmers owed money under the farm waste management scheme are paid in full but the other half are not.

An Ceann Comhairle: That is not in order.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: It is a question on legislation.

An Ceann Comhairle: Then ask about it.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: The Tánaiste told us last Thursday that legislation was needed to pay the 40-40-20, if that is the way the money is to be paid. When will that legislation be introduced and when can farmers hope to get the money?

An Ceann Comhairle: Is legislation promised in that area?

The Taoiseach: It will be brought in this week.

Deputy Joan Burton: In the context of the National Pensions Reserve Fund (amendment) Bill and the Taoiseach's earlier comments, an area of great concern is the position of people who are wards of court and who have funds under management through the auspices of the court and through——

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot allow——

Deputy Joan Burton: The Taoiseach very kindly offered a degree of bipartisanship and this is a major issue for many families. Many of the funds have collapsed because of the collapse in equity. There is no clarity whatsoever in regard to which Department——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should ask the Minister for Finance about it and I have no doubt she is capable of framing a question which will elicit an appropriate reply.

Deputy Joan Burton: ——is addressing this issue.

In the context of the promised National Pensions Reserve Fund (amendment) Bill, will the Taoiseach make some kind of a note available because we are chasing approximately seven different Departments and organisations, none of which seems to know who is responsible?

An Ceann Comhairle: We must move on to the next question.

Deputy Joan Burton: I know this is an indulgence but will the Taoiseach co-operate? The families of those who got settlements of €1 million, but who are incapacitated, do not know what to do or where to go. The fund has collapsed.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy will have to ask the Minister for Finance about it.

The Taoiseach: I will have the Chief Whip follow up on that.

Deputy Joan Burton: Will the Taoiseach deal with it in the context of this?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach has answered the question.

Deputy Joan Burton: The Taoiseach referred previously to the Director of Corporate Enforcement who wrote the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Finance and the Public Service to say he has formed the opinion that prejudice, misconduct and-or illegality are present with respect to the company's — that is, Anglo Irish Bank's — affairs.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy knows very well we cannot go into that.

Deputy Joan Burton: He wrote that to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance and the Public Service. In the context of what the Taoiseach said about the compellability of witnesses, will he arrange to give the Whips, or certainly the Labour Party Whip, some advice as to how the Government and the Chief Whip intend to proceed so that the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Finance and the Public Service, which is the appropriate committee in regard to this issue, can put questions to people from Anglo Irish Bank? We seem to be at an impasse in that the committee can no longer ask any questions, partly because the director has sent this opinion to the committee.

An Ceann Comhairle: We must move on. This is not in order.

Deputy Joan Burton: The Taoiseach offered a bipartisan approach a few minutes ago.

An Ceann Comhairle: I will allow it if the Taoiseach can be helpful but I cannot allow this every day.

The Taoiseach: I outlined in a previous response our initial reaction to this question of compellability and how it might be approached. It is not without difficulty. I saw members of the particular committee raise this issue on television. The Chief Whip responded helpfully and suggested that if he received a request, we could sit down to see if there is a way through this. I am not sure there is. The matter must be looked at sensibly and intelligently. The Whips meet every week and they can sit down to see to where they can bring this from where it is at present. We have not had a request. I am sure that if what has been said constitutes a request by everybody to look at it, the Whips are the best way to do so.

Deputy Joan Burton: I thank the Taoiseach.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: Will the promised legislation on financial regulation improvements and changes include mutual societies and the urgent need to strengthen the accountability of the directors of mutual societies to their members?

The Taoiseach and I sat across a table in 1993 or 1994 to discuss TEAM Aer Lingus.

The Taoiseach: It was not a Labour Party parliamentary party meeting.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: We will consider the Taoiseach's application.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: Exactly.

The Taoiseach: The Deputy should not hold his breath.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I refer to the loss of 1,200 jobs in SR Technics which we did not have an opportunity to discuss last Thursday. Will the Taoiseach, along with the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, take some urgent steps to ensure that these jobs, which do not have to be lost——

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot raise that. I know how important it is to Deputy Broughan and his constituency and other the representatives but we cannot discuss it now.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: With regard to job losses, will the Taoiseach draw a line in the sand in this case — where there is no need for the jobs to be lost — and say that he will take decisive action to ensure these jobs are retained?

An Ceann Comhairle: That is not in order. The Deputy will have to find another way of raising that matter.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I sought a private notice question and an Adjournment matter on Thursday and today, but I am still waiting.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should put the matter down again.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: The Taoiseach wants to answer.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should submit the matter again. I call Deputy Stanton.

Deputy David Stanton: When will we have legislation to put a cap on spending at local authority elections?

The Taoiseach: I understand that legislation is to come to the House as soon as possible.

Planning and Development Regulations 2009: Referral to Joint Committee.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Pat Carey): I move:

That the proposal that Dáil Éireann approves the following Regulations in draft:

The Planning and Development (Regional Planning Guidelines) Regulations 2009, copies of which were laid in draft form before Dáil Éireann on 10th February, 2009, be referred to the Joint Committee on the Environment and Local Government in accordance with paragraph (2) of the Orders of Reference of that Committee, which, not later than 10th March, 2009, shall send a message to the Dáil in the manner prescribed in Standing Order 87, and Standing Order 86(2) shall accordingly apply."

Question put and agreed to.

Defence Forces Contingent in Chad: Referral to Select Committee.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Pat Carey): I move:

That the proposal that Dáil Éireann approves:

[Deputy Pat Carey.]

(i) the placing of the contingent of the Permanent Defence Force serving in Chad with the UN-authorised EU-led force, known as EUFOR TCHAD/RCA, under the authority of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), established under the authority of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1861 (2009) of 14 January, 2009;

(ii) the despatch, pursuant to section 2 of the Defence (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1960, as applied by the Defence (Amendment) Act 2006, of a contingent of the Permanent Defence Force for service with the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), established under the authority of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1861 (2009) of 14 January, 2009; and

(iii) the continued deployment of personnel with EUFOR TCHAD/RCA during the handover period and pending the completion of the withdrawal of EUFOR TCHAD/RCA,

be referred to the Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights in accordance with paragraph (1) of the Orders of Reference of that Committee, which, not later than 5th March, 2009, shall send a message to the Dáil in the manner prescribed in Standing Order 87, and Standing Order 86(2) shall accordingly apply."

Question put and agreed to.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill 2008: Second Stage (Resumed).

Question again proposed: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."

Deputy David Stanton: I want to mention again the philosophy we should take on board when dealing with older people. We should not see older people as a problem, but that philosophy appears to permeate this Bill and the thinking in it. I urge Deputies from all sides not to refer to older people or think of them as a problem that should be hidden away in a nursing home. We must look at other solutions and ways of enriching the lives of older people. Most people want to live at home for as long as they can and all the supports necessary for that should be put in place.

I want to discuss the situation with regard to charging long-term residential care patients whose income is from disability allowance, which is paid at a lower rate than the maximum rate of the State pension. When new price regulations came into effect in January this year, many people with disabilities in long-term residential care had to pay 75% of their allowance towards residential care. I understand that some 32% of people with an intellectual disability in Ireland are in full-time residential care. This could amount to more than 8,000 people. Some 70% of people with an intellectual disability who are in residential care are under 55 years and they receive a disability allowance, not a pension. When the Government introduced the new charges, it contended that these rates are maximum charges and should be based on the assessment of need. However, Inclusion Ireland argues that people's needs are not always independently assessed and the maximum charge is routinely applied. Many people with intellectual disabilities could spend 50 years or more, their whole lifetime, in residential care as parents are often not in a position to provide appropriate care at the level required to adult children with intellectual disabilities.

I realise the current philosophy is to help people with intellectual disabilities to live in the community, as much as possible. That is the way it should be and we should try to move in that direction as much as we can. However, this is not always possible. Many older people only

spend a few years in residential care because they are near the end of their lives. I suggest a different charging scheme could be implemented for people with intellectual and other disabilities which require them to live in residential care their whole lives. We need to consider this cadre of people who are separate to older people. The emphasis has been on older people, but I want to draw attention to the needs of people with intellectual and other disabilities who spend much of their time in residential care. We should tease out their needs on Committee Stage.

Inclusion Ireland noted that leaving people with an intellectual disability with just over €50 per week to spend after charges are deducted from their disability allowance does not promote inclusion in society. The charge has also been increased at a time when we still have no standards or independent inspection of residential services for people with an intellectual disability. I urge the Minister of State to take this matter on board.

Residential and inspection standards have been developed for older people living in residential nursing homes, and this is as it should be. Standards for residential services are vital, not just for nursing homes to prevent elder abuse cases, but also for people with disabilities in long-term care. I understand there are still no standards in place for residential institutions which cater for people with intellectual disabilities. The new charging scheme applies to these people, but the same standards do not. There is work to be done in that regard. Standards were due to come into effect in early 2009, but they are still not in place. This means there are no national standards or inspections available for these people.

The issue of funding is also crucial. Has the Minister or the Government ever considered some form of funding through the social insurance scheme for nursing home care? This could be funded through the PRSI system and could possibly replace the current private health insurance system. I understand the health levy amounts to a considerable sum and that it took in over €1 billion in 2007. The estimate for 2008 is €1,330 million. These funds currently are awarded to the Department of Health and Children and form part of the Vote of the HSE. Is there any stipulation with regard to how that levy is spent? Has the Government examined the possibility of raising it as a means for people to make a personal contribution towards future nursing home costs?

As I said previously, people needing nursing home care could sign their houses over to a relative while they are still fit and after five years that person would own the property and the State could not pursue nursing home charges on that property. There are, therefore, anomalies in the Bill. People who work hard all their lives and save will be hit, but those who do not, will not be hit. I look forward to Committee Stage.

Deputy Frank Fahey: I welcome the Bill and congratulate the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney, and the Minister of State, Deputy Hootor, on bringing it forward. It has taken a long time to get to the House and is a result of long and complex negotiation and discussion in which many were involved. It was worth waiting for as it puts right an anomaly that existed in this country for years. We will now have a situation that is fair to all citizens and this is long overdue. I pay tribute to the Minister and Minister of State for the amount of work they have done to bring forward the legislation and to change the old unfair system that caused so much concern and anxiety to people, particularly older people.

It is important to note that only one in 20 people over 65 years of age is a high dependency patient who will need long-term residential care. This amounts to 25,000 people currently. This low figure demonstrates that we continue to ensure that the majority of people are looked after by their families in their homes. Efforts made by primary health care workers and families to ensure older people are cared for in the community are worthy of mention. We should strive

[Deputy Frank Fahey.]

to ensure that it is only people in need of high-dependency care who will have to spend the rest of their days in a nursing home.

This legislation will guarantee security to people who will need high dependency care on a long-term basis. A more significant aspect of the Bill is that it will cater for people under 65 who need long-term care, for example, people with high-dependency needs as a result of debilitating conditions. We are aware of many young people in society in this situation who will require high dependency care for the rest of their lives.

The system which existed up to now was deeply unfair. It was unfair that people of the same means faced radically different costs for nursing home care. It was unfair because many people and their families had no option other than to sell the family home to pay for care. This particular issue was most unreasonable and caused much anxiety to people throughout the country, in particular when other people were in public nursing homes and were given a very good package in terms of care for the rest of their lives. This unfairness is dealt with in the legislation and from hereon no one will have to sell his or her home to provide for care in their later years.

Many families face serious situations where there is some doubt as to the mental capacity of their loved one who needs care and complex family and legal situations and financial arrangements exist which must be addressed. The legislation will deal with this problem for quite a number of families throughout the country and will provide the reassurance and legal protection to help the individual concerned and his or her carers.

I understand the State will continue to meet up to 70% of the total cost of long-term care for the population. If I have any concern about this legislation, it is as to what its overall cost will be. I would like to hear from the Minister of State or the Minister on what are the projected costs. As we have an ageing population there is no doubt that this will be a very costly scheme. This is an issue for which we must address if we are to provide a comprehensive care scheme as the Bill will do. I compliment this very good legislation which is rightly described as a fair deal.

I want to dwell on the question of the high-dependency requirements of younger people afflicted with brain injuries or who have developed Alzheimer's disease or suffered strokes. We have neglected these people in a serious way in the past and this neglect has cost us and is costing us a huge amount of money. Will the Minister tell us how many people in need of continuing care are holding down acute beds in acute hospitals? There is a term used for people in this situation. It is important to establish this number. I understand that at any one time there could be up to 600 people in this situation. Today, I checked with the Department and I was informed that an acute hospital bed costs €1,000 per day or €7,000 per week. I suggest there must be an alternative to this cost for patients who require high-dependency care.

I came across an example in Galway which is worth relating to the House and to the Minister. Great credit is due to the HSE staff in Galway and the nursing homes in the Galway area for their ability to address this issue. The HSE decided because of the number of acute beds being occupied in University College Hospital Galway and other places that it would look for the private nursing home sector to provide a service for these people. It went out to tender among nursing homes in Galway. The Village Care Centre in Craughwell, County Galway, which is not in my constituency, won the tender process and established a high-dependency unit with 12 beds. This unit has been hugely successful and I have visited it myself. The cost to the HSE of a bed in this unit is approximately €2,000 per week as opposed to a minimum of €7,000 if the people remained in an acute bed.

It is a specialist unit in a new facility and a range of services are provided and included in the cost such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, access to speech and language therapy and other very innovative activity-type services and supports for patients who need them. It was a revelation to me to see the private sector work in co-operation with the HSE in the public sector. The care centre is located in Deputy Ulick Burke's constituency and if he has not seen it he should visit it. It is run by Dr. Bhatti who is a pioneer in this area of health care.

This is a good example of the way in which proper services of a high quality can be provided while we can save a significant amount of money. If 600 people are holding down acute beds at €7,000 a week and these 600 people could be transferred out to the private sector for €2,000 a week then I recommend to the Minister and the Minister of State that it should be done immediately. It is one way to free up the acute beds we so desperately need to deal with waiting lists in our accident and emergency departments.

In recent times I have noticed much disquiet in the private nursing home sector about the system of referral from the HSE. While the first prerogative of the HSE is to ensure it gets value for money and the highest quality services, and this should be the bedrock of the system, there appears to be a problem. Many nursing home managers have contacted me in recent weeks on this issue. Whatever the problem, it should be dealt with and we will attend a meeting soon to discuss it.

In Galway, we have very high-quality nursing home provision throughout the county and in the city. I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to those in the private sector who provide these facilities. If anybody has the idea that it is a money-making exercise, it is not. From the knowledge I have of the people who run nursing homes, they put in a huge amount of effort to ensure that they provide a high-quality service and that they do so at the lowest possible cost. There is sufficient competition to ensure that costs are kept to a minimum and this is equally as important as the level of service provided, which is the most important requirement.

I thank the Minister of State and the Minister and I welcome the legislation. It is a fair deal which will allow many old people to be assured of high-dependency care in their later years. It is innovative and everybody involved should be thanked and complimented.

Deputy Ulick Burke: Ba mhaith liom mo chuid ama a roinnt leis an Teachta John Perry.

Cuirim fáilte roimh an Bhille seo, An Bille fán Scéim um Thacaíocht Tithe Banaltrais 2008. É sin ráite, tá beagáinín imní orm maidir le nithe áirithe a bhaineann leis. Tá imní orm más í aidhm na scéime daoine scothaosta a chosc ó chúram cónaithe fadtéarmach mura bhfuil géarghá acu do chóir leighis. Tá cúpla ceist agam le chur ar an Aire. An ndéanfaidh an Rialtas geallúint dúinn go gcuirfidh sé dóthain airgid agus áiseanna tacaíochta ar fáil ionas gur féidir le na daoine scothaosta seo fanacht ina dtithe féin agus i measc an phobail chomh fada agus is féidir leo agus go dtabharfaidh sé cúram dóibh? Fé láthair, is beag an cabhair atá le fáil do daoine scothaosta ar mian leo fanacht ina dtithe féin. An mbeidh dóthain airgid ag an rialtas áitiúil chun deisiúcháin a bhfuil géarghá leo a dhéanamh? An mbeidh deontas ar fáil a cabhróidh leis na daoine seo fanacht ina dtithe féin chomh fada agus is féidir leo? I dtaca leis an measúnú sláinte, an ndéanfaidh bord neamhspleách an measúnú chun a chinntiú go gcuirfear na daoine le mór-cleithiúnas isteach i dtimpeallacht cuí san ospidéal nó i dtimpeallacht leighis atá oiriúnach dá riachtanais agus cúram.

When the Minister introduced the first draft of this Bill in 2006, three issues of importance were announced. The aim was to make residential nursing home care for the elderly “accessible, affordable and anxiety free”. It is important to realise, in the first instance, that such care was not made anxiety free. Many people were concerned about the details in the Bill and this led to the belief, true or false, that they would have to sell their homes if they wanted long-term

[Deputy Ulick Burke.]

care in an institution. Another concern arose very often as to whether one was sick enough to obtain nursing home care. It is in respect of the care needs assessment and the financial needs assessment that most concern now arises.

The Bill states a “suitable person” from the HSE shall assess the care needs of the elderly but this reference is too vague. It would be far better if an independent person were to carry out the assessments. This should also apply to the financial needs assessment. There is a conflict of interest in that the HSE will be appointing a person to assess the medical or care needs of those seeking long-term residential care.

Our experience shows the system that obtained heretofore was very much hit and miss and unfair. It is hoped this Bill will eliminate the inequities of the past. If so, most people will welcome it. However, when we refer to a “suitable person”, there is a need for clarification. Since it will be a person in the HSE, there will be a risk that assessments will be unfair or, worse still, money-making exercises for the HSE.

We are told the implementation of this provision will cost €1 billion. I do not know on what this is based. We must realise that, over the next 20 years, or perhaps less, at least 10% of the population will be in need of long-term care annually. This percentage is increasing rapidly because of our increasing age profile and we must, therefore, ensure more resources are provided for the care of the elderly. If this is the case, we must evaluate the stipulation that a maximum of 80% of one’s income and 5% of one’s assets will be assessed.

The Bill states a “suitable person” will carry out the financial needs assessment. How is a suitable person to be found in every instance? It is accepted that the assessor will be found within the HSE unless he or she is to be totally independent. It is important that these issues be clarified, as a matter of urgency, by the Minister before the legislation is passed.

On the assessment of care needs, we are told the suitable person may be a registered medical practitioner, registered nurse or employee of the HSE. There is such variation here that questions arise as to an assessor’s suitability. We would have to be concerned about this.

Subsection 7(6) states:

A care needs assessment of a person shall comprise an evaluation of—

(a) the person’s ability to carry out the activities of daily living, including—

- (i) the cognitive ability,
- (ii) the extent of orientation,
- (iii) the degree of mobility,
- (iv) the ability to dress unaided,
- (v) the ability to feed unaided,
- (vi) the ability to communicate,
- (vii) the ability to bathe unaided, and
- (viii) the degree of continence of the person,

(b) the family and community support that is available to the person,

This list is very wide ranging.

All research carried out to date shows clearly that Irish people, in particular, do not have any notion about provision for long-term care while they are healthy and active. It comes as a shock to many that such provision might be required. This is why I asked the Minister of State the position in this regard.

Parallel to providing for long-term care in nursing homes, what provisions are we making for the retention in the community of those who require care? What supports are being provided for their retention for as long as possible in their homes or communities, in which they have lived all their lives? We have an opportunity to offer proper support to allow for this. I cannot see any aspect of the Bill that indicates this; it refers only to people's assessment. There is nothing so galling to an elderly person as to be told he or she is not sick enough to avail of nursing home support in the longer term.

By and large, the Bill is to be welcomed but I do not know whether any or all of the original three issues highlighted when the Bill was announced — accessibility, affordability and the provision of anxiety-free care — have been dealt with.

Deputy Olivia Mitchell: I very much welcome the opportunity to speak on what I regard as probably one of the most important pieces of legislation to come before us for some time. I recognise that provision has been made for a long reading time has been allowed and I hope that is for good reason and because the Minister will take on board some of the concerns and questions people have been raising.

When it comes to health generally, uncertainty causes great levels of distress and anxiety, especially for older people and their families. I accept there is uncertainty on almost all issues currently. We are beginning to see the fallout from the medical card issue. I am dealing at present with a constituent who lost her medical card at the age of 95 who is reapplying for it on means grounds. She can barely even see the form. I regret the distress that is being caused to her even if she gets the medical card.

As people get older uncertainty causes them much more stress than it does when they are young. Older people in particular like to plan for their financial liabilities, to provide for them and to know what their liabilities will be in the future. When people's circumstances change they have to deal with that but when the Government pulls the rug from under them it is difficult for them to cope. I accept that is not the intent of the Government's actions but it has been happening nevertheless.

In terms of private health insurance we have had the fiasco of risk equalisation, which was bound to be challenged and to fail. There have been repercussions and we have not seen them all yet. The resulting departure from the country by BUPA — a reputable company — was regrettable. The new Government proposal awaits the approval of the authorities in Europe but it may well fall foul of them also. That is adding to the uncertainty people face, especially the elderly, about whether they can afford to pay for private health insurance. The proposal is to add €60 to everybody's premium. I cannot think of any other sector or industry where the introduction of competition results in everybody paying more. That does not make sense. It appears that the subsidy will become a permanent one. I accept the Minister indicated the amount will not necessarily be passed on to customers but of course it will be. If the insurance companies do not pass it on that is an admission that they have been overcharging us all along by €60.

If those matters are causing uncertainty, the whole question of nursing home care and long-term care for the elderly will probably be even more traumatic for families in terms of expense and stress. Nursing home care and what will happen in the future in that regard is one of the sources of greatest concern to people calling my office.

[Deputy Olivia Mitchell.]

I welcome the Bill in the sense that the area is hugely problematic for all families no matter where they live. There is no doubt that changes are needed in a range of areas. I refer to how free beds were allocated, the way they were subvented, the inconsistencies in allocation and the cost variations across the country. In Dublin, nursing home costs have become almost impossible for families to pay. No matter what the courts might say, that families and dependants are not responsible, if the State does not provide nursing home beds then somebody has to pay. In many cases families are put to the pin of their collar to make the payments that are required. I welcome the attempt to provide some kind of certainty and security for people but many questions remain unanswered.

One wonders whether the scheme will ever be introduced. Last year we were told it would be introduced during 2008. Originally the scheme was to be introduced in January, then June and now I hear it is September. Is there any danger the scheme will not be introduced at all? I accept money was allocated for it in the budget but many proposals included in the budget have changed in the meantime. Perhaps the Minister will provide certainty on the matter.

Other issues remain to be clarified regarding who will benefit. There is a perception that everybody will benefit from the measure, that one's assets will be protected and that all one will have to pay is the 80% charge, and 5% of one's family home. Many people do not realise that the family home is the only asset that is protected. While there may be some fairness attached to that, the reality is that many assets consist of the family business or the family farm and that has implications. We may only be talking about 5% a year but in the context of a husband and wife in long-term care, 5% or 10% each year adds up to a significant burden on any business, especially in this day and age. I seek clarification on who is covered and what exactly is protected.

Issues also arise about putting pressure on older people to dispose of assets. We should be aware that not all families are as selfless as we might like them to be. Once it becomes clear that assets are not protected pressure could be put on older people to dispose of assets ahead of when they might like to do so. There is also potential to manipulate young people who are in the category of long-term incapacitated perhaps as a result of brain injury. In some cases they may have large assets and they could be vulnerable to manipulation. Those are people who might have to be protected.

Another issue of concern is that the introduction of the new scheme fundamentally changes the relationship between the patient and the nursing home because the Government is the monopoly buyer of all nursing home services. Whether it is done directly or indirectly, in effect, it is the Government that is making the decisions and it will decide who can have nursing home care and when patients will be able to avail of nursing home services. Assessment is an issue of concern also. I understand that social considerations are included but the reality is that medical grounds will and must be paramount.

Choice is being taken away from patients who may decide, for example, that they want to go into a nursing home because they do not feel confident about looking after themselves. In those cases people will not be eligible for the scheme and they will have to pay the full amount in the absence of a subsidy. In effect, it will become an all or nothing system. Perhaps I am wrong and there will be a subsidy at some stage for people who do not qualify for this scheme but as far as we can see it is an all or nothing system.

Unfortunately, not everybody will benefit from the scheme because it is capped in terms of resources. That means, inevitably — it is happening already — that services will be rationed and if that is the case there will be a queue. If one exempts those who might have social priority and replaces them with those who have medical priority it still does not guarantee that everyone

who needs admission on medical grounds to a nursing home will get it and avail of the scheme. That is happening at the moment, as long-term incapacitated people are being looked after by their parents at home. Families will still have to mortgage their homes to pay for the care of elderly family members.

The rationing of services undermines the rationale behind the scheme which is to give certainty, clarity and security about what will happen to older people in future. The Bill fails on that ground and the objective of the scheme is missed. The level of service is another issue. Will it extend to services currently available to patients in public beds? What will be the quality of the service? Will all the ancillary services and the good deal currently available to patients in public beds, which private patients have to pay for, be available to people who are subvented by the State in a private nursing home in the future?

Community care seems to be under huge pressure currently. The Minister must be aware of that. I tried to secure minor supports for a patient recently in order that she could be discharged from St. Vincent's Hospital and I was informed 50 patients were waiting to be discharged because the meagre services required to make it possible to send them home were not available. The provision of nursing home care is one part of this but people prefer to stay in their own homes and, without the necessary services, this legislation is only leg of the stool.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I welcome the legislation and I thank the Minister of State and her team for putting together a progressive Bill. It was brought about by necessity following the debacle that manifested itself in the health repayments scheme, which was unfortunate, as an unfair and inequitable windfall resulted for some people, even though the scheme was necessary because of the complications that had arisen regarding the way in which payments were made using the pensions of patients who had received an excellent service in many facilities. It was disappointing to witness the zeal and vigour of those who pursued the funds, which were technically, but nonetheless incorrectly, charged. They sought repayments, even though their parents, grandparents or other loved ones had received excellent care for a small charge. That was disappointing but it happened. It was unfair and unnecessary and it flew in the face of the quality service delivered to patients.

This starved the Department of much needed funding to provide the services envisaged in this legislation and other services required by the elderly on an ongoing basis. However, that should be consigned to history. All of us had to learn an exceptionally expensive lesson because of a minor, technical issue. While Deputy Mitchell welcomed the longer reading of the Bill, it is probably right and fitting that this be done to ensure technical issues do not arise in the future, which could cost the State a significant amount and could result in funds being given to people on an inequitable basis.

The legislation is a fair deal, as it has been titled in some quarters. It is equitable and it seeks to bring uniformity to a complex and complicated system. The difficulty for many people up to now was it was unclear how some people succeeded regardless of need, income, standing in the community and so on in accessing publicly funded facilities while others found themselves in private facilities. In many cases, those who entered private nursing homes quickly encountered severe financial difficulties because regardless of their means on entry, if they outlived their savings, their families faced an exceptional burden to keep them in the nursing homes. That system is still in place and, until the Bill is enacted, that inequity will remain.

Every Member will be aware of cases of people facing severe financial hardship who, without the support and assistance of their families and not-for-profit nursing homes, would have nowhere to go and would have been turfed out on the street when unable to care for themselves. The State owes a great debt of gratitude to families who have succeeded in supporting loved ones through difficult financial times and to community hospitals, nursing homes and

[Deputy Timmy Dooley.]

facilities run by voluntary organisations and religious orders which, despite their general charges, care for quite a number of people on a charitable basis.

The provisions of the legislation will give a clear understanding to those who require nursing home care about how to go about accessing services and it will ensure they will be treated in a fair and equitable way, primarily on the basis of need but also on the basis of financial capacity. That did not happen heretofore but it is important that happens into the future.

Medical need is critical because some people have not entered nursing homes on this basis. That will create strain for individuals in the future. It is important that dependency is assessed and it is not qualified on age grounds. In the past individuals who suffered a stroke when they were aged 62 or 63 were not considered eligible for subvention and other schemes because they had not reached retirement age and they were not facilitated in publicly funded care facilities run by the HSE. In other instances, people who suffered brain injuries and other illnesses at much younger ages and who required high dependency support were not covered. Thankfully, the Minister for Health and Children has decided to provide for such support in the legislation and that will provide great relief to the many families who support loved ones in their own homes or through their own financial resources but who are under great pressure.

In some cases I have dealt with, five or six family members clubbed together to support an elderly parent, even though some of them were in receipt of various social welfare payments, including the pension, and they were expected to contribute weekly to their parent's care in private nursing homes, which is extremely unfair. If a bed is not available in a publicly funded hospital or nursing home, the loved one must be cared for in a private facility, regardless of ability to pay or the support required. That is a phenomenal burden on families. Many families will welcome the implementation of the legislation as quickly as possible.

Good private and public facilities are provided in my constituency. St. Joseph's Hospital, Ennis, Raheen Community Hospital, Ennistymon Community Hospital and Regina House in Kilrush are publicly funded. A community hospital in Kilrush is operated by a voluntary, not-for-profit organisation, as is Cahercalla Community Hospital while Carrigoran House nursing home is operated by a religious order. They are supplemented by a necklace of private facilities, which have emerged in recent times following the provision of various incentives and which are welcome.

Increasingly, people are moving into what would be considered to be gradual care facilities. Some people are deciding to sell their homes and purchase apartments in retirement complexes, which is a worthwhile approach. While some people will need support as they grow older, they may not require the maximum level of support available in some of the publicly funded facilities. That pattern as it develops will provide a better capacity for elderly people to be cared for in a community environment where facilities are grouped together and adequate services are available.

I compliment the private service providers that are making imaginative proposals to potential patients starting with the basic living unit, to providing more assisted living units and ultimately full-scale nursing home care effectively within the same campus. That gives a great level of security to people advancing in years who do not want the burden of wondering where they will ultimately end up in the latter years of their lives. It is critical to provide that level of consistency, security, expectation and understanding to those people by providing a proper facility to assist them.

It would be wrong to discuss the fair deal and the attitude to providing services for older people without recognising the phenomenal service provided by the various day-care centres. I am particularly familiar with the ones located in Kilrush, Ennistymon, Raheen, Kilmaley,

Clarecastle, Miltown Malbay and perhaps one or two more. These facilities provide an excellent daily service. I am sure the Acting Chairman knows of one in Tallaght. These facilities provide an exceptional service for people who have chosen to and are capable of living at home. Without that service many of these people would more quickly need to enter full-time long-term or maybe in some circumstances short-term care, occupying a bed. I recognise the exceptional amount of work the Minister of State has done in trying to keep people living at home. She has actively provided assistance in that regard and in her support for day-care centres, which is greatly welcome. The more people we can keep out of acute medical facilities and elderly care units, the better the chance of managing patients well.

Some people believe that nursing homes or hospitals represent the answer to all our ills, but they do not. In many cases it is a traumatic event for people to find themselves in a nursing home or a hospital. We have the issue of hospital-acquired infection, which is a fact of life. Regardless of how well run a facility might be it is clearly understood that one might interact with infection while in such a facility. If the patient's condition allows it, the best place to be is at home. Support for day-care centres is essential.

The Minister of State has worked with some groups in Clare dealing with elderly people with Alzheimer's disease. In that regard she has attempted to assist the Clarecastle day-care centre and I have no doubt she will continue her efforts to bring about a satisfactory outcome to deliver a much-needed service in that area and assist the real effort being made by a group of exceptional volunteers who have only the best interests of the patients at heart. There have been some complications there involving a number of different organisations all of which are well meaning. Unfortunately they do not share a common goal about delivering that service. I hope that through the good offices of the Minister of State we can continue that dialogue with a view to getting a service in the best interests of the patients in that region. It speaks volumes when people are at loggerheads about a particular service. It is not necessarily that anybody is being territorial. They are simply trying to deliver what they see the best services possible to the patients they seek to assist. It is important that an effort is made to bring consensus and a common focus to ensure that those who most need the service are given it in an appropriate and adequate environment. I hope that support will continue.

I also hope we can advance as best we can the development of our primary care facilities. Far too many people enter a hospital in circumstances where if the proper primary care service were available it would not be necessary. There are aspects of primary care for the elderly such as caring for their feet — ensuring their nails are cut and that they get the services of a chiropodist. If these things are not dealt with at the appropriate time it can create greater complications particularly for elderly people who may have circulation problems. We need to develop the kinds of models I have seen, particularly at the east Clare medical centre and also in north Clare in the Ballyvaughan area where a number of doctors have come together to deliver a very appropriate service under the primary care model. That model has been piloted by some great HSE people in County Clare. They have worked very hard to try to deliver a model which could be rolled out throughout the country. If we continue in that way we can ensure that people can continue to live a longer and more fulfilled life at home with the services available in a primary care community setting based around the doctor. That, linked with the day-care centres and day care support, represent the way forward.

It is also important to look towards the development of home-care packages as mentioned by the previous speaker. It is important to assist people in getting out of hospital. The figures have been referred to here on many occasions. The cost of keeping a person in an acute bed in one of our major centres — many of them centres of excellence — is considerably higher than having a patient in a step-down facility in a private nursing home or one of the publicly funded ones after which, hopefully, they can be moved back to their homes in the community.

[Deputy Timmy Dooley.]

It would be very welcome to continue with the home care packages to help people to move from the main hospital back home through various steps. It would certainly ensure we got the best use of the beds available. There are great benefits in assisting people who are already in acute facilities and have no medical or nursing requirement to be there. For those people who are not able to go home and need some level of assistance, that assistance could be delivered either in a nursing home or even in an environment with fewer medical facilities. The sooner we can progress that the sooner we can assist in resolving the shortage of acute beds.

The Minister of State will be aware of the debate we had in this House last week on the Teamwork report on the transformation of the delivery of services in the mid-west region. Those changes are necessary to deliver a safer and better service to the people in the mid-west. One of the major stumbling blocks in rolling out that service will be the lack of availability of beds, particularly in the designated centre of excellence in Limerick. The only way we can help to release some of those beds is through the roll-out of the fair deal scheme so that more of the people, who do not need to be there and do not benefit from being in hospital, can get into nursing homes. Many of the nursing homes now available have bed capacity. It would be appropriate to expedite that.

I welcome the Bill, which is long overdue. It is a welcome outcome to a very difficult and sad situation where people sought to harangue or chase the State for a service delivered at a very meagre cost. This is how it was and we have to deal with it. This initiative must be financed to the point where the Department and the HSE are able to make beds available in acute facilities. This will be one of the positive effects. Most important, this initiative will give certainty to those people who require nursing home care and their families. It will give them a little bit of peace in the latter days of their lives and it is to be welcomed.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Charlie O'Connor): I call Deputy Kathleen Lynch who also has 20 minutes.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: I have been listening to other contributors to this Second Stage debate. We must remember that we are now in very changed times; the whole country knows that the economy is in a state of convulsion. The banking system has collapsed to all intents and purposes and this is the context in which the Bill is being discussed. We should remind ourselves that this Bill did not result from events in these chastened times; it comes from a time when we thought we would never see a poor day again. The economy going into free fall has taken us all by surprise. This Bill is two years in the making and two years ago Ireland was a very different country. Some people would say that it was like we were on a different planet. This is the context in which this legislation was framed. I worry that our attitude towards this legislation will be different now from what it was then because of how our circumstances have changed.

People refer to the elderly as if they were a group of people completely alien to us. With any luck, we will be the elderly and this legislation will cover us in the future. When a child is very young and someone comments that it will not be long before he or she is grown up, I reply by saying that with any luck they will grow up, be healthy, rounded adults and live into old age. Not everyone is blessed with that luck but those listening to us today, with any luck, will live to become one of the group of people we refer to as the elderly.

I am astonished that the first major piece of legislation produced by the Government dealing with the elderly — dealing with our lives in the future — is about how we can pay for their care in nursing homes. A campaign for active citizenship attempted to show that one could live healthily in one's old age and still participate. Two groups, the Senior Citizens' Parliament and

Age Action Ireland, are lobby groups on behalf of the elderly but I ask what part does the State play. When it comes to the elderly, the State has put itself in the position of being a bystander. This Bill makes us the middleman. We are now the banker. We will now advance loans which will be repaid when a property is disposed of. Is this the way the Government treats the elderly? Is that the way we wish to be treated when we reach that stage? Speaking personally, the answer is "No". That is not how I wish to be treated and it is not how I wish any elderly person I know to be treated by the State. It is outrageous.

I can understand the Minister's position. However, we had a Minister for Health and Children who did not read his brief, he made a mistake and, as a result, the elderly will have to pay. What we are doing is an outrage. We have sectionalised society. One section is called the public service and such people are to be treated differently with levies and income reductions to pay for their pensions, as if a pension was some kind of golden handshake one should not expect to receive. Everyone should have a pension and enough to live on in that glamorous state that is old age, but that does not seem to be the case and those who have a pension are to be penalised.

Children are dealt with as if they were separate elements of society but today we are dealing with the ultimate different section of society, the elderly. The reason the elderly are not cared for in their own homes is because of the cutbacks in Government funding for equipment and the disabled person's grant. If another survey of the elderly was conducted, they would state clearly and categorically, as they have in the past, that they want to remain in their own communities and in their own homes. Very few of them need to go into nursing homes. I do not wish to frighten the horses but it seems the average time anyone spends in a nursing home is about 18 months to two years. Deputy Perry will confirm this is about three years less than in other European countries.

Deputy John Perry: Yes.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: This statistic should frighten us all.

The people who gave us the Celtic tiger, who supported my generation and that of the Acting Chairman, the officials and the Minister, are those who gave us the wealth and higher standard of living we have enjoyed in the past few years. That same group of people scrimped and saved and put together a mortgage and bought a home. They paid their taxes and now they are expected to pay again. This is outrageous.

There are mixed messages in the community. Families are asking when the fair deal scheme will be put in place because they are desperate. I know of one particular family with a mortgage and small children and they are paying out €120 a week to support their mother, whom they love. When will the fair deal be put in place? That type of desperation should be considered and analysed far more deeply because it is very clearly a result of the position they have been put in and they can see no other alternative. However, there used to be an alternative. While the county homes had a bad reputation, they were places where the elderly could go and be cared for, but we allowed that to slip away from us. We did not continue to build on that system in order to provide for the elderly who could no longer look after themselves at home. We allowed that to slip away so we are now the middleman, the bag woman, the banker, and we will pay others to look after our elderly. Such people do an excellent job in the main.

However, we should ensure that the standards we would expect for ourselves are put in place under this legislation. I am concerned about one provision which is not in the Bill as I have personal experience of such circumstance. I refer to where the principal care giver should not be the owner of the nursing home, in other words, that a GP providing care for an elderly

[Deputy Kathleen Lynch.]

person in a nursing home should not be the owner of the nursing home. He or she should be completely independent of the home. This is an important point.

How we have treated our elderly will in the future create the same type of scandal as the industrial schools and that is why standards are important. The first important piece of legislation dealing with the elderly should not be about how we take money from them in order to pay for their care. Rather, it should relate to the type of care and standards.

Those who gather statistics tell me that our generation will be the first in which 80% of people will inherit. Farmers and shopkeepers inherited and they felt it to be their right, but inheriting was never the case from where I came. However, it is the case where I now live. Those who scrimped and scraped, paid their taxes and reared and put homes around their children are to be penalised a second time.

The notion of treating any sector of society differently because of age is repugnant to the Constitution and will be challenged. Those who lobby on behalf of the elderly will be reluctant to challenge it because there is no apparent alternative. The notion is repugnant to the Constitution in the same way that I cannot be discriminated against because I am a woman. While it occurs every day of the week, I have the protection of the law. Someone cannot be treated differently because he or she is of a particular age. The Bill is wrong and families should not need to clamour for it simply because there is nothing else.

We all know elderly people who should be at home. I am not saying otherwise. We all know families that, with a little bit of extra effort, could look after their parents at home. We know families that put themselves under significant strain to look after their elderly parents at home. This is what society is about, the good and the bad. When I see how vulnerable groups are treated, I despair. The elderly are not just dependent or do not just need care. Rather, they are vulnerable and we should ensure their protection and care, but we are not doing so.

The Minister of State can discuss the great things that occurred in the past ten years, but the manner in which we looked after vulnerable sectors of society was not part and parcel of it. In the past ten years, the incomes of those in their mid-60s and mid-70s did not increase by 20% and their standard of living did not increase by 50%. A good aspect of being in their position is that their standard of living will not now reduce dramatically.

We have an obligation to those who went before us, were lucky enough to survive to reach old age and contributed to ensuring that our standard of living and health care improved, allowing us to survive into old age. When we legislate for the elderly, we legislate for ourselves. With any luck, we will be there. This legislation is not good enough and someone with sufficient courage will challenge it successfully. Like now, we should have built on what we had. We forgot and left it to the private sector, as we did with health care and everything else. The State has become the bag man in the middle, which is not what a state or a republic is about. One group should not be set against another, but the Government is doing it.

It is good that we have encouraged women to return to the workforce, but we have not provided them with child care services or their parents with facilities to stay at home. This is not discussed anymore, nor is civic responsibility or the rights of citizens, the matter in question. There is no need to categorise people in different little pigeon holes. All that is necessary is proper protection and rights for each citizen, but the Government considers it right and proper to factionalise matters and to set one group against another. It is wrong that the Bill is part and parcel of the problem. A broad-ranging discussion on our treatment of the elderly is necessary instead of this narrow Bill.

The Minister of State, the Acting Chairman and I know of people aged in their early 70s whose houses will suddenly be signed over. We know it will occur because it occurred pre-

viously. Health authorities have been forced to do unthinkable things to families. One woman I know went into a nursing home. She has all of her senses, but she is not physically well. The HSE has insisted that her house be rented out. It has calculated how much rent it can earn. The woman is determined to return home, but she will not be able to do so if another family is living in her house. She knows this as well as we do. The HSE believes that she can get €1,100 per month from the house to go towards her care. People may be elderly, physically unwell and need to be minded, but they are not stupid. Sometimes, we treat them as if they are stupid.

When we legislate for a group for the first time, we should ensure that we will not need to revert to the matter quickly. It would take time and legislation with a broader scope than is to be found in this Bill.

Deputy John Perry: I welcome the opportunity to speak on this Bill and have listened to Deputy Kathleen Lynch's contribution. As the Deputy who first brought to public attention the fact that old people in publicly funded long-term residential care were being forced to pay charges that had no legal basis, I welcome this new legislation.

I broadly support the proposal, but I am concerned that the delay in making repayments in respect of long-stay charges remains a major issue. It is important to point out that the body dealing with the issue will not be accountable to the Dáil. Many of those who made claims have since died. It is appalling that, five years on, people are still awaiting payment. Perhaps the Minister of State will account to the Dáil in this regard and request a report from the legal firm handling the matter, as it will not give information to any Deputy who makes representations in respect of delayed refunds. It is an issue of concern for those who are still alive and the next of kin who have claims on the estates of the deceased. We should examine this matter.

As Deputy Kathleen Lynch mentioned, the money has gone. When the Bill was initiated two years ago, people and the economy had a great deal of money. Many people who have been paying in excess of €1,000 per week to live independently in private nursing homes had large shareholdings in banks, sometimes worth as much as €300,000 or €400,000. Their shareholdings have devalued to €35,000 or €40,000. They are penniless. Numbering among the people who attended the Anglo Irish Bank shareholders' meeting were senior citizens who, despite owning blue chip stocks in major financial institutions, now find themselves without any money. They were not availing of subventions. I know of a number of cases in which people had their own money, did not depend on their families and had private investments. They were retired bankers and civil servants.

Such people, who perhaps were paying fees for private nursing home care, now find their long-term plan is affected. This has caused great anxiety and the concern engendered by seeing their financial well-being diminished will have an impact on their longevity on this planet. This is very serious, is of great concern and forms the backdrop to this so-called fair deal. I raise this point because of my concern for those who were given assurances and comfort, when advised by accountancy firms and financial managers, that the best place to put one's money was into blue-chip financial institutions within the State, which were making billions per year.

Those who bought shares in banks were guaranteed that their houses were safe and that they would have plenty of money, both for their lifetimes and to leave to their relatives on their departure. All this is gone. Last week, I met a lady who invested €200,000 into the Bank of Ireland and whose shareholding now is worth only €4,500. The lady, who is retired, was advised to do so two years ago. While obviously it was her decision to take such advice, her shareholding now is reduced to only €4,500, from an initial investment of her life savings of €200,000. To where can she go? Such developments will greatly affect the nursing homes sup-

[Deputy John Perry.]

port scheme and forms the backdrop to the present position. As Deputy Kathleen Lynch noted, matters were different two years ago.

I broadly support the proposal that elderly people should pay some of their nursing home costs, based on their means. A degree of co-payment must be central to any sustainable approach to financing long-term care. The Minister's proposals contain some positive elements, particularly in respect of the introduction of a standardised assessment system for patient eligibility and subvention between public and private nursing homes. This legislation is formally entitled the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill 2008. However, in her speeches and press releases, the Minister prefers to entitle it the fair deal Bill. This mixed description on the Minister's part reminds me of when a person prefaces a sentence with expressions such as, "To tell you the truth", "In my honest opinion" or words to that effect. This always raises alarm bells for me as why should someone tell me they do not intend to tell me the truth? Similarly, the Minister's use of the term, the fair deal Bill, also rings alarm bells. While we may have many political differences on a wide range of issues, I generally give the Government the benefit of the assumption that what it does is fair by the standards it normally uses. Consequently, when a Minister tells Members that this is a fair deal Bill, which will make residential nursing home care accessible, affordable and anxiety-free, my concern is they may find out in time that it is anything but a fair deal.

This proposed legislation will replace a system that is bureaucratic and inconsistent. The current subvention system also is inequitable, complex and unfair, as people who need care face greatly differing costs, depending on whether they are in private or public nursing homes. A huge anomaly exists whereby 90% of the costs of public nursing homes is subsidised, while the State only meets 40% of the costs of care in a private facility. This new legislation also brings its own complexity. I congratulate the parliamentary draftsmen on their work in taking a political agenda and party political proposals and turning them into robust legislation that hopefully will withstand the assault of the legal profession. It is not difficult to anticipate some challenges when the legal profession starts its microanalysis of the sentences, words and punctuation contained in the legislation, particularly regarding the deferred contribution from the estate of a person resident in a nursing home.

I have serious concerns about this issue. An issue has arisen in respect of the difficulty in selling property, in that this Bill is based on properties that were valued at €300,000 but which sell for €150,000 at present. In many ways, a massive sub-prime property problem obtains at present. It clearly is an issue about which Members must be highly concerned. Regardless of the proposals in respect of values of 15% or 5%, the obligations to have been living together for three years or the concerns it will raise among families or the next of kin, in certain cases this will bring huge pressure on people in respect of the transfer of property. In many instances, this must have taken place five years earlier. However, while it may be a consequence of past colonial exploitation, to this day people in Ireland appear to have a problem in recognising the genuine difference between long-term family occupancy rights and ownership rights. This constitutes a major issue for families who have lived in a home for generations.

As for those who already are residents in nursing homes but who, under the needs assessment criteria in this new Bill, are assessed as not meeting the criteria for long-stay admission to a nursing home, the Minister should clarify the position. As for those who currently are in nursing homes but who may not need to be there, the Minister should confirm that such residents will have guaranteed access to the nursing home after the Bill is introduced, regardless of their needs assessment. This is an important point and I note the Minister of State's adviser has indicated her agreement in this regard.

According to a submission by Age Action Ireland, a survey carried out by the Department of Health and Children in 2006 found that nearly 9% of long-stay residents were in residential care for social reasons. Older people who live in nursing homes at present should have their care needs assessed and should the community services exist, they should be facilitated in a move back to the community, if that is their wish. This also is a major concern. On the other hand, if their preference is to remain, this Bill should accommodate it. The Minister has promised that no one in care will be worse off under the new plan. The Minister of State should use this opportunity to confirm that statement, in so far as it applies to people currently living in nursing homes. According to the same Department of Health and Children survey, more than 29% of all long-stay unit residents had low to medium dependency. Consequently, if one takes those two figures together, a large number of nursing home residents should not be there, were the rigorous needs assessment criteria in this Bill to be employed. These figures clearly demonstrates care needs assessment services and the range of facilities being provided are inadequate at present.

The care needs assessment principles outlined in the legislation appear reasonable, in so far as they go. The outcome of a needs assessment process is a report, which will be used to make a determination that a person needs care services or otherwise. The important point is that in this context, care services mean long-term residential services. However, the options available for the care of older people are more varied than such a black and white scenario. At one end of the scale, there is self-care through support by family and informal carers, complemented by an element of formal care in the home. All recent reports on the needs of older people have stressed the importance of maintaining at least 90% of people aged 75 and over in their own homes. As people age at home, they may come to need the support of some home care services. Every older person should have adequate support to enable him or her to remain living independently in his or her own home for as long as possible. It is important that people are assisted and supported in living independently at home.

This pertains to the major issue of home care supports, home care packages and day centres, as does the point raised previously regarding the essential repair grant that is being administered by the HSE. It should be funded to a level that will ensure that people have an option to make a simple conversion costing €4,000 or €5,000 to their house. This would be a massive investment, were such a fund not available and one would have no choice but to seek a long-stay or a short stay bed. Consequently, that link would be broken. I am certain that the arrangement which provides for the best quality of life for the majority of older people is to be at home.

The Bill deals with only one aspect of care for the elderly, namely, the provision of nursing home and other long-stay care facilities. Regrettably, this issue is being addressed in the wrong direction and at a greater cost than necessary. The Bill fails to recognise that the majority of elderly people prefer to remain in their own homes. That is the fundamental misunderstanding underpinning the legislation. Most people wish to live independently. My father in his 80s and would not move into a nursing home under any circumstances. A carer visits him in the morning and evening, thus allowing him to maintain his independence and remain at home.

In making this point, I do not mean to disparage the long-term residential care that is available. I am aware of several superb facilities in County Sligo, including St. John's Hospital and various private nursing homes. However, my father's choice is to remain at home. Elderly people wish to live in their own homes for as long as possible, where they are an integral part of family, social and civic life. People build their lives around their homes and have routines of social interaction with friends and family.

More supports must be available to elderly people who wish to maintain some degree of independent living in their own homes. The public health nurse has an important role to play

[Deputy John Perry.]

in this regard. While carers are doing a fantastic job, there is insufficient funding to enable public health nurses to provide vital services that would be of benefit to many elderly people. The service provided by carers must be complemented by an improved provision in respect of public health nurses. More nurses must be appointed and criteria introduced whereby elderly people would receive a certain number of visits in their home from the local public health nurse.

Where elderly people are no longer able to remain in their own homes, the next stage should be to facilitate their transfer to sheltered accommodation, with on-site care facilities as necessary. In some cases, people may not qualify under the needs assessment test for a place in a residential unit even though they cannot continue to live independently in their own homes because of the need for formal assistance in areas such as meal preparation, housekeeping, shopping and increased security. Sheltered care, incorporating carer and public health nurse visits and the provision of day centre services, would be of great benefit to many such older people. Moreover, it provides good value for money when compared with the cost of nursing home care at €800 or €900 per week.

Independent living is critical. This valuable option is a means of bridging the gap between remaining in one's own home and having to move to a long-term residential facility. Long-term residential care must be the option of last resort and we must do everything to provide alternatives. This Bill is fundamentally deficient because it deals only with the end game. Sheltered care provision has been readily accepted in other countries as a mainstream solution that fits neatly between living at home and moving to a form of institutional care. It has become a central plank of community care policy for older people in several European Union member states.

Long-term residential care should be seen only as a solution of last resort and where the previous options have been exhausted or are inappropriate for the older person's needs. The Bill must include an explicit written commitment to the principle of resident choice to ensure residents and their families can choose the nursing home that most suits their needs. Persons who have been assessed and who are to benefit from the scheme must be given a list of all nursing homes from which to choose, including public, private and voluntary facilities. The Government gave a commitment to the principle of resident choice in its policy document, *Quality and Fairness*. This must be explicitly enshrined in the legislation. It is critical that care is provided in the community so that family and friends can have easy access for visitation. There is no point installing somebody in a nursing home 20 miles from their family, friends and community.

The Bill deals only with options for long-term residential care, as well as the related problem of a valid and equitable system of charging for it. This makes for a very black and white scenario; one is either in or out of long-term residential care. The Bill must be modified to make specific provision for a three-stage classification of needs outcome in the needs assessment process in place of the simple Yes or No outcome currently provided. We must have comprehensive and meaningful information on the full range of care need requirements of older people. This information is critical to future service planning in this area and will help the State put its resources into the service provision options that best meet the full range of needs of older people.

If incentives implicit in the provisions of this Bill are unbalanced, there will continue to be an unnecessary and unwarranted proportion of older people in long-term residential care when they could be at home or in sheltered accommodation. Will the Minister bring forward programmes for care of the elderly in their homes and in sheltered accommodation? In order to provide for certainty and transparency in the provision of care services, it is essential that there be greater clarity in regard to funding arrangements for these care options. If this is not done,

the resulting gap in funding and services will lead to pressures to admit a disproportionate number of elderly people to long-term residential care. This is something we must avoid.

I urge the Minister to take on board the need to ensure that service provision and financial incentives attract older people and their families to the options of home care and sheltered housing facilities as the preferred option for elderly care. In particular, the financing model adopted for long-term residential care must not in any way discriminate against older people who wish to avoid such care. In this regard, I ask the Minister to consider the provision of income tax relief at the marginal rate for expenses directly incurred by families in the provision of home-based and sheltered accommodation care services.

Deputy Jimmy Deenihan: I compliment Deputy Perry on his interesting and well researched contribution. It was Deputy Perry who recognised the gap in the original legislative proposals, thus rendering an important service to many elderly people. He will forever be remembered for that.

The Minister of State, Deputy Hootor, has responsibility for issues affecting older people and is therefore well aware of the importance of this issue. The recent census showed that more than 460,000 people in the State are over 65 years of age. The demographics indicate that by 2036, more than 1 million people will be in this age category. This is a major challenge for this country. Irrespective of the merits of the Bill, this will come down to economics. We are looking very seriously at the economic position of the country and the affordability of all services. We will shortly have a debate on the levy on public service pensions. Care of the elderly and the affordability of nursing homes is important. These matters should not go unnoticed in the current debate.

The reason debate on this Bill has gone on for so long is that there are so many people interested in it. They may have aged relatives or parents. Furthermore, the age profile of the Members of this House is quite high. People are looking to their future. Since I came into politics 26 years ago, the age profile has increased considerably. It changed somewhat after the last election but it reflects the age profile of the country. This is a major challenge facing the country.

The cost of the implementation of this legislation has not been fully quantified. With the percentages that exist it should be possible to quantify what it would cost after this change. The introduction of a new income assessment system will help. There is a formula for how this would be composed but the figure of 20% gives rise to questioning of where that will come from. There is also concerned that there will be a queue for qualification. This will change the system as it is at present. People are in nursing homes for social and other reasons and not for clinical reasons but, following this Bill, there will be common assessment of clinical needs throughout the country. This could rule out some people who are in nursing homes at this moment. There will also be a common means assessment and some standardisation of means assessment across the country, which is good.

Deputy Perry and other speakers have made the point that we should start from the premise that the best place for an aging person is in his or her home. We should try to reintroduce a culture whereby old people are encouraged to stay for as long as they can in their homes, where they are most comfortable and feel most is secure. It is proven that if they are looked after properly, preferably by family members, they live longer. We all have personal experience of that. In some cases there is a rush to encourage older people to go to nursing homes and we must change that attitude in this country. It may be convenient for some but generally speaking people should be encouraged to stay at home.

[Deputy Jimmy Deenihan.]

Along with Deputy Perry, I agree with the home care packages, which are working quite well. There are enough not enough of them — there are 460 in County Kerry. No new home care package was allocated for the past six to nine months. They are effective if they are properly resourced. Another issue is the number of hours in home help services. This is an effective service because it provides an incentive for people to stay at home if they get necessary services such as cleaning and a hot meal every day, which is essential for older people. Also, it is a major source of rural employment. Large numbers of people are involved and it is a major service industry in itself. It is one of the most effective instruments that I have seen in rural Ireland, where local people — mostly female — are employed and encouraged to work and remain in their communities. It is an important part of supplementary income for families and the people availing of the service know the people who provide it if their families cannot provide the service. To reduce home help hours substantially is a retrograde step and it will force people to consider going into nursing homes in future. It is not economic for people to take on only a few hours of home help rather than the greater number of hours that were available before. This gave them a greater income from the service.

No doubt others have raised the following issues. There is concern about the assessment of means. Section 10 sets out the terms of the financial assessment. Under the terms of the Bill, the HSE is entitled to seek an assessment of means that will be conducted by a suitable person of the choosing of the HSE. If the HSE wishes to establish the market value of any item it is not bound by any valuation accompanying an application for State support. It is empowered to select a suitable person to conduct the valuation according to section 10(6).

A number of issues arise in respect of the financial assessment of means. It is not clear what is meant by a suitable person, nor who will conduct the assessment of means. Will it be a community welfare officer? This must be clarified. The Minister must clarify if the means test will be carried out by the HSE, State officials or an independent third party. If the discrepancy is found between the market value of an asset established by the HSE and the valuation submitted with an application for support, the HSE is not bound by this valuation. If there is considerable disparity on the values identified, this could have a significant implication for the applicant or the State. Under the current legislation there is no opportunity for the courts to find agreement on the issue. It is important that suitable provisions are agreed to deal with this eventuality.

Under section 10(4) it is not clear who is considered a suitable person or what is meant by “in such manner and by such means as it thinks appropriate”. An independent third party should be assigned responsibility to determine the estimated market value of an item. The

Minister of State should clarify who pays the valuation referred to in section 10(5) and whether this cost is incorporated into the repayment of ancillary State support. Section 10(7) states that any information or records requested as part of the assessment of means must be provided within 28 days from the date of the request, unless otherwise specified by the HSE. If information requested by the HSE is not provided within 28 days of the date of the request, the HSE may refuse to consider the application. I see difficulties with this because 28 days is a short period, especially for older people who, if living on their own, may not be able to access the information requested. If people seek additional time it should be granted to them. This clause should be clarified further. In some cases applicants may have to request documentation from local authorities and Government bodies and it may take longer than four weeks to obtain it. It is important that this requirement is reconsidered so that applicants are given reasonable time to collect necessary documentation.

Section 29(7) states that a person may not request a financial review unless 12 months have elapsed since the most recent financial assessment and that this must be, to the satisfaction of the HSE, a material change in the financial circumstances of the person.

Debate adjourned.

Private Members' Business.

Irish Economy: Motion.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: I move:

That Dáil Éireann:

believes that:

- the measures required to deal with the current economic crisis must be based on the principles of fairness and equity;
- those who contributed most to the crisis should be required to contribute most to a solution and that people should be asked to contribute according to their ability to pay;
- irresponsible lending practices by the banks and reckless speculation made a major contribution to the economic problems we are now facing and that the Government has failed to take required measures to remove senior bank executives and board members responsible for this and to adequately cap pay and remuneration packages; and
- measures should be taken to end the practice whereby people living and conducting business in this country can avoid paying taxes by a phoney tax exile status and to end the various tax shelters and relief schemes that facilitate tax avoidance by wealthy individuals;
- deplores the attempts to scapegoat public service workers and to create divisions between those who work in the public and private sectors;
- regrets the manner in which the negotiations with the social partners were handled by the Government and particularly the failure of the Government to table specific proposals on public service pensions until the eleventh hour, leaving no time to reach agreement;
- believes that the pension levy unilaterally announced by the Government is unfair in that it places an unacceptable burden on public servants on modest incomes, including those who are so poorly paid as to qualify for family income supplement;
- notes that no account is taken of the differing arrangements for pension and social welfare contributions in the public sector and that anomalies in the way in which the levy is structured will mean that some public servants on low pay will lose a greater proportion of income than somebody on higher pay;
- regards the decision to impose the levy on all income, including income which is not reckonable for pension purposes, to be fundamentally unjust;

[Deputy Eamon Gilmore.]

- recognises that public servants are willing to play their part in economic recovery and in the stabilisation of the public finances on a basis that is fair and equitable; and

therefore calls on the Government to suspend the introduction of legislation to impose the levy and to re-enter negotiations with the social partners with a view to reaching agreement on a fair and equitable set of proposals that would meet the adjustment of €2 billion already agreed between the Government and the social partners in the draft Framework for a Pact for Stabilisation, Social Solidarity and Economic Renewal.

I wish to share time with Deputies Shortall, Sherlock, Jan O'Sullivan and Morgan.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: Nobody in this House would deny that we are at the beginning of what may be the worst economic crisis in living memory. All around the country tonight, around kitchen tables, people are wondering just how they are going to get through it. How will they manage with less take-home pay, but the same bills? How will they pay their mortgage, and what will happen if they cannot? How will they keep their business afloat? How will their retirement be now that the pension they saved so long for has evaporated along with trust in the banks?

How will they cope now that they have lost their job? In January alone, 36,500 people found themselves asking this question for the first time. These are people who just 12 months ago had good jobs, reasonable incomes and hope for the future but now find themselves queuing along the street at the dole office. They are bewildered by their first ever experience of seeking assistance from the State, embarrassed and humiliated by their new fate.

My thoughts tonight, first, are with the 140,000 people who have lost their jobs over the past year. Those people have seen the doors close in SR Technics, Ericsson, Waterford Crystal and Dell, to name but a few. There are as many untold stories about businesses closing down, redundancies and reduced hours as there are new people signing onto the live register. I say this because now is the time for solidarity. Now is the time to recognise that what happens to our neighbours, our colleagues and our fellow citizens matters to each and every one of us.

There has been, since the start of the economic downturn, a deliberate attempt drive a wedge between those who work in the private sector and those who work in the public sector.

Deputy Emmet Stagg: Hear, hear.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: It has suited some people, including Ministers, to imply that public and private sector employees exist on separate planets and public servants were, in the insulting headline-chasing words of Minister of State, Deputy John McGuinness, “featherless but still plump State hens”. The implication is that public service workers are impervious to this recession while all the pain is being felt in the private sector.

This is rubbish. Of course, public servants are not indifferent to the plight of private sector workers. In many cases, they are married to them. They are their brother, their sister, their parents, children and friends. Now, more than ever, they find themselves struggling to support a household that in many cases has suddenly found itself with only one income. The real wedge is between those who were responsible for our current mess and those who were just getting on with their lives.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: Hear, hear.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: These people worked, reared a family and paid taxes until the rug was pulled from under them. This is a global financial crisis on a massive scale. The global boom — which made our own Celtic tiger possible — has now become a global bust and no country is immune from its impact.

Ireland is different. This economic storm is battering Ireland harder than our fellow EU member states because, by the time it arrived on our shores, we were already extremely weakened. For the past six years, our economy had been artificially propped up by a construction boom. Addicted to the revenue that concealed our economy's deep-seated weaknesses, Fianna Fáil again and again failed to intervene in runaway property speculation and unsustainable lending practices by the banks. It has failed to hold those in the golden circle to account and now working people are paying the price.

Working people are paying the price but not fairly, equally or according to their role in the crisis. The thousands losing their jobs every week did not inflate the property bubble and the children losing their special needs teachers did not cause it to burst. Those paying through the nose for health care, medicine bills and care for their elderly parents now that home help hours have been cut did not buy land banks for billions of euro in the hope that they would sell them on for even more billions. Public servants, just by doing their jobs, did not cause the problem in our public finances. They were not borrowing millions of euro from a bank to invest in the same failing bank. And yet, who is asked to take the pain and to “readjust”?

It is some irony that nurses, teachers, gardaí and county council workers are now being asked to pay more into a pension fund, half of which is to be handed over to banks, whose top executives are still paid in millions of euro. In their haste to take money from public servants to give to the banks, the Government chose to unilaterally impose a so-called pension levy on every worker on the State's payroll. No other adjustments were made and there were no changes to the cost of living, just to how much public servants would have in their pockets to pay for it.

As with any unilateral, late-night, back-of-an-envelope proposal, it was not thought through. It took two days for the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance to get their story straight on whether the levy was on gross income or net of tax. Now we know the levy is net of tax, we are left in the dark as to how much it will actually raise. One thing is certain; it is unlikely to be the €1.4 billion announced initially by the Taoiseach.

Most of all, this pension levy is unfair because it singles out one category of worker in our economy for a unilateral pay cut. It is unfair because it will be levied on income that will not ultimately be reflected in many public servants' pensions. It is unfair because it fails to take into account the differing contributions public servants already make to their pensions. It is unfair because it places a disproportionate burden on low and middle-income public servants.

It does not take an economist to work out that a clerical officer on €25,000 will find that she feels the pinch of €1,000 missing from her pay packet more than the Minister for Finance earning €250,000 would miss the €14,000 missing from his. She is paying an additional levy of 4% of her gross income towards her pension while he is only paying a levy of 5.6% on his. In some cases, lower paid public servants actually pay a higher levy than those on higher pay. How is it fair that a person on €39,000 will pay €2,120 when their colleague on €44,000 will pay only €1,858?

Despite what some would like to imply, the majority of public servants earn a modest wage. Nobody signs up to be a clerical officer or primary school teacher because they want to make big money. Most of those who have contacted me earn between €30,000 and €40,000 a year. They are working people who must pay for everything. Many have made considerable sacrifices to save up enough money to buy their own home at a crippling cost.

[Deputy Eamon Gilmore.]

These are not the cosy, cosseted elite that it suits some to caricature. Last week, I received an e-mail from a separated mother of four teenagers. She works for the HSE and earns €31,000 a year. The Government deems this family's income low enough to be eligible for the family income supplement but the same Government also wants to levy €1,480 from her take home pay. Another woman told me how, after her mortgage, child care, life assurance and petrol, she, her husband and their three children had €450 per month to live on, even before she is required to pay the pension levy.

A nurse in a hospital wrote to explain how, now that her husband was unemployed, all of her income was consumed by keeping her family afloat. Like many of the public servants who got in touch, she accepted the pay freeze. She accepts this, like she accepts the HSE staff embargo that has put her and her colleagues in the emergency department under great strain. She simply cannot absorb another pay cut.

There are many others, with hundreds of stories that reflect the high cost of living in Ireland, whether one works in the public or the private sector. There are stories about spouses or partners losing their jobs, the cost of medicine and about fear of not being able to make ends meet. There is even fear of losing the one's home.

Almost every single public servant who got in touch with me indicated that they appreciated the public finances were in trouble and they were willing to contribute to fixing the economy. They just wanted that contribution to be fair. Many said they would be willing to contribute more to their pension.

This is why, when the Taoiseach abandoned partnership negotiations, it was a missed opportunity. If public servants were willing to co-operate with a reduction in the public service pay bill and if the trade unions had agreed a €2 billion adjustment, why did the Government decide to effectively collapse the talks and unilaterally announce badly thought-out cuts and levies? As time goes on, it seems this Government is more concerned with public perception — with being seen to be tough — rather than taking the right and fair decisions.

What is fair about taking money from an employee on €15,000 but asking nothing of banking executives or super-wealthy developers? What is right about a move which does nothing to reduce the cost of living, or to restore consumer confidence, or a decision which offers nothing in the way of new jobs, and only vague promises about retraining? Our economy hinges on jobs. Job losses, business closures, the drop in consumer activity and the consequent loss of tax revenues have caused the critical problem in the public finances, not the other way around.

Every job lost in the economy costs the public purse €20,000 between social welfare payments and less tax revenue. That does not include secondary benefits such as rent allowance and mortgage relief. The cost to the Exchequer for January's job losses alone is therefore €730 million, more than half of what the Government hoped to raise in the pension levy. If unemployment rises to 400,000 by the end of the year, as the Taoiseach predicts it will, that will be another €2 billion.

This is why the fixation with cutting public expenditure alone will not solve this problem. The more jobs that are lost, the more that will have to be cut to pay for them, which in turn shrinks the economy, until we reach a point where there is nothing more that can be cut.

This is not to say that the public finances are not important, or that public servants have no role to play in our economic recovery. They do, and they have signalled that they are willing. Ultimately, however, saving jobs and putting people back to work is the only sustainable way out of this economic crisis. There is no public-private sector divide, just citizens who desperately want to know that their sacrifices will have a purpose.

I, and my party colleagues, have been arguing for some time that we need a national recovery plan, a road map which describes where we want the country to be at the end of this recession, and how we will get there. There must be a clear understanding that everyone will be required to contribute according to their means and that there will be no more hiding places for those who think tax is for the little people.

I am calling on the Government tonight to suspend the introduction of legislation to impose the pension levy on public servants and to re-enter negotiations with the social partners to reach agreement on a fair and equitable set of proposals that would meet the adjustment of €2 billion already agreed.

That is just the start of what must be a national effort. We in Labour are proposing a new national agreement for economic recovery, negotiated not just between Government and the social partners but involving the whole of society. Such an agreement should be framed over at least a three year period and would address jobs, pay, tax and public services. The time for incremental approaches, which only chip at the edges of these questions, is past. This would be a deal between citizens. There would be no room for scapegoating, no room for finger pointing and no place for those not willing to put their shoulder to the wheel.

There will be no room for the kind of reckless, arrogant behaviour that has destroyed our banking system and the reputation of our country with it. The first principle of a national agreement should be a cleaning out of the boards of the banks. If people in that golden circle are found to have committed a crime, let them account for their actions before the courts.

This is a time for pulling together, for working together, for unity among working people in the public and private sector. It is a time for understanding each others fears and risks, for refusing to be divided and for determining that we can come out of this recession to a better place.

I disagree with the Taoiseach when, in the Four Seasons Hotel, he told Dublin businessmen that the future might not be as good for our children as it has been for us. That is defeatist talk. The future can be better for our children if we are all willing to make it so. Better, not measured in material things and consumer goods, but by the quality of their lives, by the fairness of society and by the sustainability of both our economy and our environment.

I commend this motion to the house.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: There are umpteen aspects of the proposed pension levy that are worthy of discussion tonight: the way the levy was presented to the social partners at the 11th hour; the way the public service has been singled out by Government and some of the media; the anomalies within the proposed system; the way that those who are actually to blame for the economic mess will be unaffected by this proposal; the fact that most public servants already make very significant contributions to their pensions and their pay is reduced to take account of their pensions. I want, however, to focus on fairness because fairness is at the heart of this.

The Government has made great play of the fact that “we are all in this together”. Clearly this is not the case. If we are all in this together, then why is the public service alone being asked to clean up the mess left by Fianna Fáil, the financial institutions, and property developers? If we are all in this together, then why have the executives and boards of those banks engaged in fraudulent accounting not been removed and referred to the fraud squad? If we are all in this together, then why does Brian Goggin still get a salary of almost €2 million, and how come he does not have to pay a levy while a public service worker earning one eightieth of his salary must pay €1,000? If we are all in this together, then why is the Government not touching the 6,500 self-administered pension schemes in the private sector that attract huge tax breaks? The

[Deputy Róisín Shortall.]

truth is that unless a national consensus can be reached on how our economic difficulties can be solved, there is no prospect of recovery for this country.

I want to read into the record one of the several hundred e-mails I received from public servants in the past week. For me this one best sums up the unfairness of this levy. It states:

I work mornings in Dublin City Council earning the princely sum of €20,000 a year and my husband is a cleaner in the VEC. We have a mortgage of €1,500 a month, we have no car, we do not go on holidays, all our furniture has been donated to us — because all our money goes on our mortgage for our three bedroomed house, courtesy of the greedy property developer who pushed the prices up so high that it is now a noose around our neck. We have a young child and if this pension levy goes ahead we will lose out on around €300 a month, which means we cannot afford our house.

I know that a lot of people are losing their jobs but how is our family losing our house going to help anyone? I have never claimed one penny from this country and neither has my husband, we are responsible, decent, tax-paying citizens and we do not deserve this.

For this family and many like it, the levy is unfair and downright reckless because it takes no account of ability to pay. Yes, civil and public servants have, in most cases, secure pensions but a secure pension in the future does not necessarily mean that they can afford to make extra contributions now. Yes, civil and public servants have, in most cases, secure employment but they have based their mortgages and outgoings on this employment, and security is worthless if the wages do not pay the bills.

Picking on easy targets is not the act of a leader; it is the act of a bully. The Labour Party motion urges the Government to call a halt to this proposal and to go back into talks with the social partners. An agreed, unified and fair approach is the only way forward for the country. There is now an onus on Government to work to achieve that consensus because it is only through consensus we will see recovery.

Deputy Seán Sherlock: I was raised with the notion that the taxation system should be progressive, based on equity and one's ability to pay. This is not a pension levy; it is a levy on income. It is completely and utterly contrary to any canons of taxation and to the republican — I use that in the widest sense of the word — ideals to which we subscribe in this great little liberal democracy of ours. I wish to reflect the anger of one person in north Cork who wrote to me and whose voice is reflective of thousands of others. I wish to read into the record an e-mail I received from him. It states:

I am appalled at the proposed levy of 7.5% being imposed on me by the Government. I am a committed public servant who works hours far in excess of those required by my work contract, for nothing. In December 2008 alone I worked forty hours overtime for which I neither claimed nor was given payment. During my twenty-three years of public service I have worked about ten hours a week overtime without pay, on many occasions I have worked far more than that. Last year my conditions of employment were varied and I was obliged to pay Eighty Euros additional tax per week. I did so without complaint. This year in January an employment levy was imposed on me that took an additional Twelve Euros plus per week. Now in February 2009 I am being told to pay an additional Ninety Euros pension levy for which I will receive no benefit whatsoever! My deduction prior to the imposition of any of these additional taxes were as follows: PRSI [approximately] 3.25%, Superannuation plus Widows and Orphans 6.5%, Notional service 7.28% totalling 17.03% plus VHI of [approximately] fifty Euros as my PRSI contributions entitle me to nothing while my wife and I are

both alive. I recently put two members of my family through third level college and received no grants whatsoever. My weekly deductions after this levy is applied will total approximately four hundred and sixty Euro per week. I have always felt that it was my duty as an Irish citizen to give a contribution above and beyond that called for by my work contract. I have done so willingly and have even enjoyed doing so. I paid my taxes and did so without complaint. I felt that I was doing what every loyal Irishman or Irishwoman should do and that every other working Irishman or Irish woman was doing the same. Now, however, I feel that I am being singled out as a soft target because of my position as a public servant and that my contribution to Irish society and the country has been demeaned. I would not object as vehemently if the load were spread out evenly among all contributors. However, if and when we get back on our feet in this country, I will still be paying this levy, whereas if it were income tax I would be treated in exactly the same way as other taxpayers and when taxes were reduced all round again I would also benefit. [This] is not to be the case, however, and I will remain a victim of this unjust imposition for the rest of my working life. You will understand why I feel that my commitment and dedication are not appreciated, why I feel that I am being singled out as a scapegoat for the economic collapse and why I will not feel in the future that I should go that extra mile, as I and many others do every week of every year without acknowledgement or expectation of it. This is taxation without consultation, a punitive measure directed at a section of Irish society that has contributed to Irish economic growth without receiving a commensurate reward.

The Government must seriously rethink its strategy on what I call this income levy. We are all willing to share the burden but if we are to spread the burden, it must be done on the basis of equity and fairness.

Deputy Jan O'Sullivan: Of all the people I have met in the past week and who have sent e-mails to me and every Member of this House, there is not one who is not willing to play his or her part in sorting out the mess the country is in but they are not willing to be used and abused to turn this country into a two tier society, those who pay and those who do not pay. That is the bottom line in this regard.

I refer to those who are paying. I have an article from the *Irish Independent* about a mother of six who was jailed for debt. She was thrown into Mountjoy for a debt of less than €1,000 because she could not pay it. That mother of six, struggling to pay a mortgage with her husband, was thrown into Mountjoy with nowhere to hide but those who made billions on the back of this country and the property bubble and whose huge gambling debts are being paid for by the taxpayers and those rich people whose companies are part of the so-called bad debts of the banks can walk away scot free while the people of this country are left to pay.

There has been much talk about delinquent bankers in the press but there has not been enough talk about those people who are responsible for the so-called bad debts in the banks. Many of those people have money which is hidden. They have companies behind which they have hidden and they are getting away scot free.

The banks should be forced to go after all those so-called bad debts. Those people should be named and shamed. The ten people referred to earlier, and about whom the Taoiseach said he did not know, should also be named and shamed because they are as responsible as the Government and the bankers for the children with special needs who are losing their classes and for the young people who will not get a life saving vaccine. Those people are morally responsible and they should not be able to go away and hide.

In fact, the entire golden circle, who stashed their gains where they cannot be seen, should be named and shamed and they should be forced to pay these so-called bad debts. This woman

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who was sent to Mountjoy had nowhere to hide so why should those responsible for the huge debts to the banks be unidentified and free to go away and enjoy a lavish lifestyle? That is basically the source of the anger among the people.

An attempt is being made to pit public against private sector worker. We must not fall into that trap because this is not about public versus private. The nurse who is struggling to pay a mortgage and the family described by Deputy Shortall are on the same side as the Dell workers in my constituency who are losing their jobs. They are the ones being asked to pay. Thousands of people who are well able to pay are being allowed to get away without doing so. That is basic inequality and that is the two tier society into which we are being asked to buy with this levy.

Many people in the public sector pay towards their pensions — in fact, I believe practically everybody pays towards their pensions. Not everybody has job security. I know many people in the health sector, for example, who are temporary, who are on contracts, who have no security in their jobs and who do not know if they will have a job in six months time. Those people are also being asked to pay. Somehow or other they are being tarred with this brush of having security and of not being willing to play their part. Everybody I know is willing to play their part as long as it is done fairly and in a way that people can see they are not being scapegoated while others are being let off the hook.

That is why in this Labour Party motion we ask that the Government go back and negotiate again with the social partners and that it present us with a full, complete plan on how we will get out of this mess, how we will create jobs, how we will get the rich to pay and how we will ensure everybody can see they are getting fair play. If President Obama can cap the higher incomes in his country, I do not see why we cannot do so.

We need a total change of culture. Looking at the northern European countries, there is a much smaller divide between the well off and the less well off yet they are successful economies and societies with excellent health and education services.

We need to bring about that kind of society where we narrow the gap between rich and poor instead of what seems to be happening here where the less well off people on €15,000 to €20,000 per year are being asked to pay this levy while the rich get off scot free. We need to bring about a fairer Ireland and close that gap between rich and poor. We need to cap higher incomes and see the likes of Mr. Goggin and others in the banks having their incomes capped rather than simply a percentage taken off. We need to channel all the anger to change the culture of greed, access and privilege to one of solidarity and fairness.

Deputy Arthur Morgan: I thank the Labour Party for sharing time with me and for giving me an opportunity to contribute to this very important debate. I express Sinn Féin's support for this motion.

Deputy Arthur Morgan: I thank the Labour Party for sharing time with me and giving me the opportunity to contribute to this important debate.

I begin my contribution by expressing Sinn Féin's support for the motion. The Government decided to amend its original amendment to include the words “ the principles of fairness and equity”. These are principles Fianna Fáil and the Green Party easily forget. However, it is the motion as put forward by the Labour Party that we are here to discuss. I affirm Sinn Féin's total opposition to the pension levy. We have consistently stated that any measures to address our public finances must be done on the basis that those who have the most, pay the most. Instead, all we have got from the Government is a punitive, mean spirited and fundamentally

unjust attack on working people in the public sector, while the pals of Fianna Fáil in senior management in our banks and other institutions continue to get off scot free.

Through the pension levy, which is in reality a pay cut, the Government has asked public workers to pay for the boom from which they never really benefited. While the Minister for Finance has, by his own admission, spent nearly all of his time on our banks, thousands and thousands of workers throughout the country have been let go. It is not just all his time the Minister has spent on the banks, he has spent all our money on them too.

For the past five months there has been one revelation after another on corruption and fraud within our banks, one botched Government initiative after another to try to restore confidence to our financial institutions, and interview after interview that demonstrate that the senior management in our banking institutions are on a different planet and are incapable of changing their ways.

We heard again today of another scandal involving Seán FitzPatrick fraudulently moving money from Irish Nationwide and Anglo Irish, but nothing has been done by the Government to seize the money embezzled by Mr. FitzPatrick and there are no signs of criminal proceedings being brought against him. Compare that with the example just given by Deputy Jan O'Sullivan. Despite all of this, Mr. FitzPatrick still had the brass neck to refuse to come before an Oireachtas committee to answer questions from public representatives on these matters.

These banking executives will have to be dragged here, undoubtedly kicking and screaming, and made to account for their criminal behaviour. Today, I called for legislation to be introduced to compel the likes of Mr. FitzPatrick to appear before the Oireachtas or to face imprisonment. Enough is enough. People are sick and tired of the bankers getting away with it while ordinary people are being made to pay.

The claim by the Minister for Finance last week, when he handed €7 billion of taxpayers' money to the banks, that bonuses had been done away with is nonsense. Bonuses are not gone, they have simply been put on pause for 12 months. The banks will then be free to use whatever is left of the €7 billion to start paying themselves outlandish bonuses again. All we are getting for the €7 billion set to come out of the pockets of ordinary workers is a token 25% holding on the board of directors. We have already seen how ineffective the Government can be from its 25% holding on the board of Aer Lingus.

While the Government may claim that the corporate malpractice which was endemic in our banking system is rooted firmly in the past, there is no evidence to indicate change to our regulatory system. It is wrong to suggest that was then and that things have changed now. Most of our banking executives are still in place and the culture of crony capitalism, which was championed by Charlie McCreevy with his deregulation dogma, still forms the basic structure of our financial system.

While we are preoccupied with the banks, the real problems affecting the people are being ignored. We have all received hundreds of e-mails, numerous telephone calls and visits to our constituency offices from public workers who are dismayed at what is happening. The pension levy has demoralised thousands of our public sector workers and has shocked the country at this time of crisis. What Fianna Fáil and the Green Party have effectively done is to reduce the people on modest incomes to the point where they are struggling and to make already struggling families even poorer, not to mention the thousands of workers who, for a variety of reasons, have been unable to qualify for a State pension, but who must still fork out hundreds of euro every month to a pension they will never receive.

I recently received an e-mail from a woman who will now double her contribution to her pension because of this levy, but will not avail of that pension because she spent a number of years raising her family at home. These are ordinary people with modest salaries, not like the

[Deputy Arthur Morgan.]

former Financial Regulator, Mr. Patrick Neary, who got a golden handshake of €630,000 for standing by while our financial system was almost destroyed through corruption.

Ordinary workers are right to feel disgusted at the Government's decision to make them pay for its mistakes and those of its friends. Apart from the damage the Government has done to my constituents and constituents of every Deputy in the House, this proposal will prove futile. The so-called €2 billion the Government has announced it will save will be completely wiped out if our unemployment continues to grow at the same rate as it did in January.

The cutbacks so desperately sought and that the Government is now implementing will do nothing to stimulate the economy or to create jobs. It is investment and planning that will create and stimulate job creation and retention, not cutbacks. It is job retention and creation that will address the public finance deficit. My colleagues and I in Sinn Féin accept that there is some wastage in the public sector, but we do not accept that it is low and middle income earners who are the cause of the difficulty. Rather, we see the outsourcing which has grown with the culture of deregulation promoted by Charlie McCreevy as the real waste. When we finally get a clear picture of how much money is being used to subsidise these corporate raiders operating on the back of our public services, it will become clear that privatisation is the biggest waste of public money of all time.

It is important to point out that this blunt object which is being used to divide public and private workers and which will lead to a reign of psychological terror on our public servants did not just happen in the past three months. The psychological war against our public servants began a long time ago, when the likes of IBEC, Ministers, certain parts of the media and, unfortunately, Fine Gael, began kicking lumps out of our public services. These forces have used the economic crisis to attack public sector workers and services.

It is opportunistic in the extreme for Fine Gael Deputies to claim they are opposed to the levy when their own leader said only last September that the public service is "bloated and inefficient". That is language very similar to language used by the Minister of State, Deputy John McGuinness, when speaking to Deputy Gilmore. The Fine Gael spokesperson on finance also used similar language and called for radical reform. We all know what he meant by that with regard to public services. It is disingenuous of Fine Gael, the Government and certain parts of the media to claim that no reform of work practices in the public service has taken place over the past ten years. What Fine Gael and IBEC are really after is not an improvement in work practices but cutbacks.

We will continue to oppose the pension levy. We will also support public sector workers in their national day of protest. We will continue to be the one party on this side of the House to call for a job creation strategy based on realistic and achievable proposals.

The effort to divide public and private sector workers did not happen by accident. It is a strategy devised to separate the working movement across the country. Never was it more important for workers to unite, whether public or private sector. As sure as night follows day, the private sector will be next to face the onslaught. This should not be accepted. It is disingenuous of the Government to take all this taxpayers' money and pour it into the bottomless pit of the banks without any control or regulation of that sector. Doing that is scandalous. It is time to put an end to this and end the attack on low and middle income families. It is time for the Government to work its way out of the economic mess created by itself, the bankers and speculators. It is time we produced a plan to work together to do so.

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I wish to share my time with the Minister of State, Deputy Michael Kitt.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: I move amendment No. 1:

To delete all words after “Dáil Éireann” and substitute the following:

- “— affirms that all measures required to deal with the current economic crisis must be based on the principles of fairness and equity;
- supports the proposed pension-related deduction as a reasoned and measured step which is necessary to help restore balance in the public finances;
- recognises the need to apply this measure without delay to assure all concerned of Ireland’s resolve to tackle the financial position facing the country in an expeditious and determined manner;
- acknowledges the extensive efforts of the Government to secure solidarity among the social partners and support for specific actions and the fact that the Government is acting within the framework agreed with the social partners; and
- expresses its confidence in the Government’s measures to stabilise the banking system, reform the tax system on the basis of the report due from the Commission on Taxation, and to place the economy on a sound footing for the future through the implementation of the framework for the restoration of sustainability in the public finances over the medium term as set out in the Addendum to the Stability Programme Update and the economic strategy of ‘Building Ireland’s Smart Economy’ published in December 2008.”

It is no exaggeration to state that this country is now fighting for its economic future. Unless we demonstrate the will to restore stability to our finances, there will be no economic recovery. The world is looking on. We need to persuade international markets and opinion that we are capable of taking the decisions now to put our house in order. If we cannot do that, we are in danger of losing all the gains we have made in the past two decades.

There are three inescapable facts that we must all face: this year we will have to borrow €4,500 for every man, woman and child in the State; more than one quarter of all our current bills, including pay, will be paid for by borrowed money; and the interest on the money we need to borrow will use up one third of all the income tax receipts we expect to take in this year, dead money that should be going to meet our public service needs.

Nothing will make these facts go away. No amount of e-mail campaigns or protests will change them. The problem is that we have an €18 billion hole in the public finances. We are experiencing an international recession of unsurpassed severity. Every major world economy is suffering or will suffer this year. Our problems have been compounded by unhelpful exchange rate movements and by our reliance in the recent past on the domestic market and the housing sector as the driver of growth.

Yes, mistakes were made, as other Governments worldwide made mistakes. Of course, if we could have foreseen the extent of the international crisis, things might have been ordered differently. However, as I stated here two weeks ago, I do not recall much of a clamour from the Deputies opposite for less spending, lower social welfare increases, higher taxes or higher levies. On the contrary, the Opposition fought tooth and nail against every tough decision made in the recent budget.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: We did not cause the problem.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: It is about responsibility for problems. Problems are about the responsibilities——

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The responsibility rests over there.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Allow the Minister to speak.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: ——that all of us owe to this country, to do our best in difficult circumstances.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: It is also about competence.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Over there.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Throughout the month of January, we sought to reach an agreement with the social partners on an approach to manage the challenges we now face. We did achieve agreement on the scale of the problem facing us and on the need to take urgent and radical action to restore stability to the public finances. We were criticised for engaging with the social partners. The Deputies opposite argued that it was a waste of time, that it was outsourcing decision-making and now the same Deputies want us to re-enter talks with the social partners. This is proof if ever it was needed that the Opposition is more interested in political mischief than the future of this economy.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: That is nonsense.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: What is the Government interested in?

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Unfortunately, the unions were not in a position to agree to our proposals for addressing the difficulties and in the end, the Government, as we said we would, took the decisions that we believe are in the best interests of this country. We know the pension levy will impose a burden on public service workers and their families.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: It is not a pension levy.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Many of my constituents are public service workers and I know the challenges they face. I know how hard they have to work. However, it is in everyone's interest that we deal responsibly with the problems we face and protect this country's future prospects.

The steps we are taking now, together with the framework for recovery published before Christmas, plan a way forward to restore us to the path of growth. That is our position. What is the position of the Labour Party, which tabled this motion? Its position just a month ago was that there was no time to wait, no time for talks with the unions.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: That is not so.

Deputy Arthur Morgan: That is nonsense.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: That is just not true.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Yet in the motion it has tabled, it wants to go on talking, amending and fine-tuning. The truth is the Labour Party has no alternative proposal. Putting our finances in order to inspire investor confidence and——

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: The Government is not doing very well at that, is it?

Deputy Brian Lenihan: —cutting our cost base so that we are in a position to compete when the world economy recovers are strategies beyond a party whose only plan is to borrow and tax our way out of this downturn.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: Where did the Minister get that?

Deputy Róisín Shortall: The Government has done more damage to confidence than anybody else.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Nothing has changed for the Labour Party since the 1980s. After a brief two and half year period of grown up political behaviour in the 1990s, the Labour Party has returned to a position of economic delinquency.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: That is cheap rubbish. You are the Minister for Finance.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Who is the delinquent?

Deputy Brian Lenihan: The Labour Party tabled this motion.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The Minister should be on this side of the House.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Allow the Minister to speak.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: A few months ago, its former leader, Deputy Quinn, told an interviewer it was not his function to outline a way forward for this country.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: He is correct.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: A couple of weeks ago, Deputy Gilmore refused to outline an alternative to the expenditure measures proposed by this side of the House.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: That is not so.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Then belatedly, last Saturday, in a column in a daily newspaper, a strategy emerged——

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Is that what the Minister spends his time doing, reading the newspapers?

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Nearly two thirds of the Labour Party's proposed €2 billion in savings are, in effect, tax increases which will impact widely on a weakened economy. Several of the actions proposed by the Labour Party have already been taken into account by the Government and are in the 2009 Estimates and the revenue pencilled in for some of the measures is highly speculative. For example, where does one obtain a figure of €186 million for lowering the pension cap tax relief from €150,000 to €100,000?

Deputy Róisín Shortall: From a reply to a parliamentary question three months ago from the Minister.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: Perhaps the Minister did not read that either.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: All the Minister to make his contribution.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: The real figure for this saving is now estimated by my Department at €85 million.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: See no evil, hear no evil.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: From where is the figure of €175 million for full tax rates on tax exiles plucked? As I understand it, if someone resides outside the country one cannot levy tax on him or her. I took the opportunity in last year's Finance Bill to abolish the rule that anyone could maintain that he or she was not in Ireland on one day because he or she left before midnight. This rule was abolished in the Finance Act last year. Now we are speaking about people resident outside Ireland being taxed inside Ireland. Further questioning, I understand, has led to the revelation that this tax could be levied on a passport. I do not believe such a revenue practice has ever been successfully implemented in any part of the world. How does the Labour Party propose to get over the legal difficulties involved in taxing people twice?

Deputy Burton refers to the fat cats. Let us look at the fat cats.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: You are the Minister for Finance.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Are we talking about the 1% of all income tax earners whose income is more than €200,000? These earners contribute 20% of the total tax yield. Are we talking about the 3% who earn more than €150,000? They contribute 28% of the tax yield. Are we talking about the 9% who earn more than €100,000 because they contribute 47% of the entire tax take.

Let us consider the income levy we introduced in the budget. This is levied on all income. Those earning more than €50,000 pay 52% of the yield. Those on the minimum wage pay no contribution to the levy. This is a highly progressive income tax system. Those with high incomes pay most.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Except those who do not pay any.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: Those who get compensation rather than salary.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Those on low incomes pay least and those on the minimum wage pay nothing at all. That is not to say that we will not have to raise taxes. The Government has already indicated several times that we need to broaden the tax base and that increased taxation will have to form part of our return to fiscal stability. Equally we have said and many commentators agree that now is not the time to increase taxes further. We will await the advice of the Commission on Taxation which has been examining our tax system for more than a year. Its report, which is due in early autumn, will inform our decisions for next year's budget.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: We will not hold our breath.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: It was and is open to the Labour Party to make a submission to the commission.

We have no intention of returning to the bad old days of tax rates of 65%. We have more ambitions for this country and its citizens.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The Government does and we know what they are.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: We do not want to mire us all in mediocrity——

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: Another cheap piece of nonsense, “mire us all in mediocrity”.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: ——and to treat the past 20 years as some kind of aberration.

A great deal of the contribution from the other side of the House is to suggest that the past 20 years were some kind of aberration and that we can return to the land of happy misery. This is not the case.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Who was in control?

Deputy Brian Lenihan: We need to make firm decisions now to lead this country out of the financial difficulties it is in.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: Your golden circle destroyed the country's reputation.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Allow the Minister to make his contribution.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Resorting to platitudes about change and getting the economy moving again will not do it. We need to have a plan——

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Yes, the Minister needs a plan.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: ——and the plan is to save €2 billion this year and a further €4 billion next year.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: That will be fun.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: That is a tough plan, something the Opposition will not address. Of this €6 billion, we have already identified €3 billion.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: A big plan.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: That is not a plan.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: This is our plan to return the country to growth. This is a battle for our economic survival, as I pointed out already.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: When will the Minister get the economy moving?

Deputy Brian Lenihan: We will get the economy moving when we establish order in our finances, restore our cost competitiveness and re-establish the international goodwill we threw away in the Lisbon treaty result and everybody knows this and knows it well.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: The Government has taken €2 billion out of the economy.

Deputy Liz McManus: Why does the Government not reduce fuel bills?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Allow the Minister to speak.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: The Government is fully aware of the importance of investment for Ireland's future economic well-being. The goal must be to maintain our position as an attractive destination for investment. This is why the Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal published in December shows our determination to meet the severe short-term challenges we face and to introduce the changes which will ensure that Ireland emerges from the global downturn in a position to benefit strongly from revived international growth.

This document sets out clearly the measures we are taking to support a return to sustainable growth and jobs in the medium term, with specific steps to do the following: maximise the potential for growth by building on our strengths in innovation and research and development; address the huge market for environmental and energy-related products, services and inno-

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vation; invest in critical infrastructure and support more employment-intensive activity; and reform the Government's programme to have a more efficient and effective public service supported by good regulation.

We have already taken steps to implement these measures with increases in tax credits which will increase Ireland's attractiveness as a location for research and development activity.

Protecting jobs and supporting those who become unemployed is of fundamental importance. The Government will continue to work to help minimise the impact of the credit crisis and the severe downturn in global markets on employment prospects. Access for unemployed persons to search for job opportunities, training and employment programmes is vital to this task. The relevant Ministers and their Departments are working with all relevant parties to ensure people will have more options when new job opportunities arise. We will bring forward other measures in these areas to ensure we will obtain the maximum impact from resources available and that innovative approaches are used to maintain people in employment in addition to assisting those who have lost their jobs.

It must also be pointed that the Government is maintaining the largest capital investment programme in Europe. Our spending on capital is over 5% of GNP. That is the appropriate stimulus package for a country facing the difficulties it is experiencing. We are determined we will continue to invest in roads, public transport, schools and social housing. This is a major investment to support future development and it provides a necessary stimulus for the economy.

There is no doubt that the pension-related deduction in public service pay is difficult. I can assure Deputies that the Government did not take the decision to introduce this measure lightly. We know it calls for a measure of sacrifice but it is worth calling for it so as to avoid a worse fate. The pensions-related deduction is not seeking to single out the public service. The deduction is a reasonable and reasoned measure to deal with the serious imbalances which have emerged in the public finances. There was simply no alternative but to make savings in the pay and pensions bill given its relative size. The Government believes the fairest way to do that is to ask public servants to make a higher contribution towards the cost of their pensions, which, in the current economic climate, have become a very valuable asset. Public servants enjoy significantly better pensions than the majority of workers in the private sector.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: That is debatable.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Public pension benefits, in particular, are secure. It is entirely reasonable that a deduction should be made to reflect this reality.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: That is debatable.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: What about those who do not have any pension?

Deputy Brian Lenihan: For many of those private sector workers who have pensions, the turmoil in financial markets over the last year has seriously affected the value of their pension schemes.

The greatest tragedy of this recession is joblessness. Every day, workers in all our communities are losing their jobs. Each day last month, 1,000 workers became unemployed. Many others are maintaining their jobs only by taking large cuts in their pay. Public servants have secure jobs and will continue to retain relatively generous pensions at a time of great upheaval in the Irish economy. The deduction decided by the Government is a reasonable contribution by the public service to the measures now required to tackle our budgetary problems.

On the issue of banking, raised by Deputies opposite, the Government is tackling the problems surrounding the financial system. There is no question but that the inappropriate and highly suspect actions of certain individuals and institutions have significantly undermined our reputation as a financial services centre. The public is understandably outraged by these actions. There is also no doubt that our regulatory system has proven inadequate, as it has in many other countries. A reputation that has taken us years to build up has been significantly impaired in recent years and months. It is my intention to bring forward proposals for reform of the regulatory system as a matter of urgency. A new chief executive of Bank of Ireland will be appointed within three weeks and a cap will be imposed on the new executive's salary.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell: How much?

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: What sort of cap?

Deputy Brian Lenihan: The salary will be capped at a figure that is well below the figures mentioned by the current chief executive.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: Does the Minister remember the concept of regulation with a light touch?

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Remuneration in banks is an important issue. It is the Government's belief that current levels of remuneration at senior banking level are not commensurate with the size of our economy or the institutions therein. As I announced last week, total remuneration for all senior executives in the banks benefiting from state capital — AIB and Bank of Ireland — will be reduced by at least 33% and no bonuses will be paid to these senior executives and no salary increases will be made in regard to 2008 and 2009.

The report of the remuneration oversight committee is expected shortly. The committee's role is to consider the remuneration plans of all six institutions covered by the Government guarantee. I will be writing to the chairman of the committee, Mr. Eddie Sullivan, to ask him to examine whether an overall cap on executive remuneration can be introduced for the banking sector, in the light of the significant Government support that is now being provided to the sector and the pay restraint that is now a feature of other areas of the economy, including the public sector. The banking sector will need to play its part in reducing our cost base to ensure our competitiveness in the years ahead.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I will believe it when I see it.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: Ireland is facing major economic and budgetary problems that must be dealt with. The Government recognises that the future prosperity of the country will be determined by the actions we take now. The step we are taking regarding the public service levy cannot be judged in isolation. It is part of a series of measures to restore order to our finances, enhance our competitiveness and enhance our position for investors in other countries in addition to our own.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: It has nothing to do with competitiveness.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: This is essential if we are to progress as a country. The public service provisions and services are part of the competitiveness we must observe as a community and nation.

This is not a matter in which we have options. Were we to believe the Labour Party, we would believe there are other options. I analysed them earlier and pointed out——

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: No, the Minister did not.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: —how they are illusory, how they relate to tax exiles who cannot be taxed because they do not live in Ireland, how they rest on inaccurate figures—

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: They cannot be touched, nor can the Minister's golden circle who destroyed this country's reputation.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Allow the Minister to conclude.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: I know the Deputy comes from the constituency of Galway West but I have never visited the famous tent I hear so much about from the Deputies opposite.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: I did not—

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The Minister was evicted also.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: The Minister could not get in because it was so crowded.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: I missed something in those glorious 12 years that perhaps the Deputy did not miss; I do not know.

We will act fairly and firmly in the national interest.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: The tent is gone, anyway. It blew away.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: We have a strategy to deal with the problems we face. The strategy will ensure that Ireland will effect a real reduction in the very substantial borrowing we must undertake this year. It would be a brave person who would predict what will happen in 2011 and 2012—

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I hope the Minister will not be around in the Department of Finance.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: —but it is essential for the survival of this country—

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: The Minister sounds like old Hanrahan: "We'll all be rooned".

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: " 'We'll all be rooned,' said Hanrahan, 'before the year is out.' "

Deputy Brian Lenihan: —that firm decisions be taken and implemented at this stage. That is the task facing anyone in Government. If the Labour Party wants to check out figures on any particular options, the doors of my Department are open. My officials will advise them on those figures at any time.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: What about five or six years ago? Why did the Minister not extend that invitation then?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Deputy Durkan will have an opportunity to contribute later.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: We will take the decisions that are necessary for the future welfare of the country. We will not shirk from making very difficult decisions. Of course I acknowledge the difficulty of the decisions and, above all, the tremendous contribution that our public sector workers make. I acknowledge the long hours for which they work and the hard sacrifices they make.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The Minister has a funny way of showing it.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: I know they will go the distance with us and that we will be able to restore financial soundness and lay a foundation for economic recovery in the future.

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael P. Kitt): I compliment the Minister on what he has said tonight and on providing the bank guarantee.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: It is a very small standing ovation, Michael.

Deputy Michael P. Kitt: I compliment him also on his support for the process of ensuring stability in the banking system and allowing banks to get on with their business. What he said today about the placing of a cap on the salaries of bank executives and the steps he intends to take is very welcome.

Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal, published last December, was a good basis for the negotiation that started with the social partners, as was obtaining their views on the financial adjustments required in light of the end-of-year Exchequer returns. It is important to point out the financial projections were submitted to the European Commission and that a very good discussion took place with the social partners. There was an endorsement of the need to adhere to the financial plan submitted to the Commission.

The most important point made by the Minister for Finance and the Taoiseach was on the savings of €2 billion required in 2009. The unions decided they were not in a position to agree on the full-year saving of €1.4 billion through the introduction of a pension levy but I do not believe the engagement with the social partners was a failure. There was general agreement on the need for the €2 billion adjustment and there was agreement on the overall framework. There is a definite link between the economic renewal strategy published last December and the contribution to be made by the public service to achieve the €2 billion adjustment. That is an important point.

As one who believes in social partnership, I am pleased we had that process, which was about engagement and sharing the issues to be discussed. The process went very well. Social partnership has shown us that major challenges face the economy. It also shows us the direction in which we should be going. For that reason, the partnership process has been very important.

I understand ICTU and other social partners have indicated that they are available to continue discussions on a range of issues based on the framework agreement. I hope we can continue to discuss the issues involved, which are very important. One such issue is support for enterprise. The Minister for Finance referred to that tonight and on many occasions previously. He emphasised the need to stabilise the financial and banking sectors and employment projects. I was pleased to hear the announcement last week on the allocation of an extra €75 million for school buildings and another €75 million for building insulation and energy efficiency projects. That development is especially welcome and the great interest in those projects is encouraging. The insulation of internal and external walls and ceilings is being progressed throughout the country. Measures on heating, boilers thermostats and ancillary areas are also welcome.

I attended a useful meeting last Thursday with representatives of the trade union, IMPACT. My two Fine Gael colleagues in the constituency also attended. While the representatives were critical of some aspects of the pension levy, they were more critical of Deputy Varadkar of the Fine Gael Party who has advocated laying off 10,000 public servants. They described him as a

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maverick. They were certainly not happy with some of the proposals he made. I have attended a few such meetings at which queries are raised about the pension levy proposals.

I look forward to a response from the Labour Party to the Minister's interesting point about the proposal on tax exiles that it made. One aspect of the pension levy that has been welcomed is the fact that it does not apply to people on pensions, contrary to a rumour that circulated initially. The deductions are charged in a graduated way and are less for those with lower incomes than for individuals with higher incomes.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: Does it apply to people who have their pensions paid?

Deputy Michael P. Kitt: On average, the deduction will be 7.5%. I said at many meetings I attended that we would like to hear whatever proposals other parties, Independent Deputies or other stakeholders have to make on the issue. We can discuss these matters in a co-operative way. One issue raised at many meetings is the divide that has been promoted between the private and public sectors. I very much regret that this element has entered into the debate. IMPACT represents people who work in both sectors and it has said that clearly at meetings it held in Ballinasloe, Galway city and Roscommon over the weekend. At every meeting it stressed strongly that it does not want to see that trend emerging.

Many people in the private sector have lost their jobs while others have taken cuts in salary or reduced working time such as a three-day or four-day week. It is good to know that people are making an effort to retain employment. It is most important that we seek to preserve employment and create jobs wherever we can. I have given examples of where that is happening. Three industries in Tuam have been secure for many years. I refer to Transitions Optical, Valeo Vision Systems and Logstrup, a Danish company. They are on short-time work but they are confident about the future. In fact, Transitions Optical employed 25 people on a permanent basis as recently as one month ago. That is a strong effort which is aided by the Tuam Chamber of Commerce to try to ensure that we have employment into the future. I am happy that small industry has always been a strong feature of the economy in Tuam and that the picture is replicated throughout many other villages and towns in County Galway.

If we can use some of the €8.2 billion we are borrowing for infrastructural projects, for example, to provide more water and sewerage schemes, we will be able to make more progress on the provision of necessary infrastructure that will, in turn, create jobs. We have good infrastructure in many towns. There is a tremendous roads programme throughout the west and the rail corridor is coming into Athenry. We need to concentrate on the water and sewerage programme. I am pleased that my Department has an extra 19% in the Estimate for that infrastructure in 2009.

Many public servants, including nurses, teachers and civil servants employed after 1995, already make a payment towards the cost of their pension. The Minister referred to that aspect. It is important to point out that the pension levy attracts tax relief. Many of the figures quoted in the media overestimated the amount to be paid by individual public servants. An issue arises in regard to people employed in the fire service with whom I often have occasion to deal. I pay tribute to them because they have a difficult task. They have raised the issue of their link with Garda pay and pensions and that is worth examining.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: They have some chance in the current environment.

Deputy Michael P. Kitt: I would like the issue addressed. We know why the link arose between pay and pensions and that changes came into play after 1995.

I hope we can confront the challenges facing us. We are facing a global recession and difficult decisions must be taken. The Minister for Finance has shown he has the courage to do that. He has certainly put his best foot forward in terms of stabilising the public finances and that is the most important issue that faces us. If we do not make these decisions, it is possible we might not be able to borrow money to pay current salaries and if that is the case, we can forget about future pensions. I commend the Minister on his actions. I hope he will be successful in the work he has to do in the future.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell: I wish to share my time with Deputies McCormack and Durkan.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell: I am delighted to speak on the Labour Party's Private Members' motion on the pension levy. I specifically wish to speak to the Fine Gael amendment. The Minister for Finance referred to the pension levy as being fair. However, for something to be fair people are entitled to get a return on what they are paying. It is akin to another income tax on the low paid. Many young married public servants whose partners stay at home will only qualify for the contributory old age pension and they will not receive a benefit from their contribution to the pension levy. A Minister of State said last Sunday on RTE that the Government would tweak the levy but the Minister did not mention this in his contribution. What is meant by "tweaking"?

I refer to another anomaly. A public servant on a low income will pay a higher contribution after tax than somebody on a high income. When this proposal was announced, the Taoiseach said the Government would save €1.4 billion but, after tax relief, that amount will decrease to approximately €800 million. The overall package announced by the Government will save probably €1 billion and not €2 billion as it claims. The Government parties are portraying themselves as the great saviours of the economy but the principal measure proposed is grossly unfair and unbalanced. Low paid workers in the public and private sectors are having difficulties making ends meet. Companies such as Dell and Banta in my constituency are closing with many job losses. Many other jobs are being lost in the private sector, particularly among the low paid.

The pension levy is grossly unfair and I would like the Minister to outline his proposed tweaks. A Minister of State cannot go on the airwaves saying the Minister will change the levy while the Minister makes no mention of changes when he comes into the House. It is extremely important that this issue be clarified by the Minister tomorrow night.

The recapitalisation of the two main banks will cost €7 billion and it is intended to improve the flow of credit to small businesses, mortgage holders and mortgage applicants and to ensure people's houses are not repossessed. However, it also appears the funds will result in business as usual for the banks. The chief executive officer of Bank of Ireland said he would earn the paltry salary of €2 million this year. However, last week the Government introduced cutbacks totalling €7 million affecting 127 special needs children and his salary is approximately one third of that amount. How does the Minister expect public servants to think that is fair? A cap on salaries should have been introduced. The Minister said the salaries of bankers would reduce by 33% in 2009 but the guarantee scheme extends to September 2010 and he provided €7 billion to the banks last week. The Minister has told bankers that after this year, they can take whatever salaries they want. He said nothing to the contrary in his contribution.

Deputy Brian Lenihan: The Deputy must not have been listening.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell: The Minister stated a cap would be introduced but he did not specify what it would be. He must speak in absolute figures because the people are entitled to that.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: It is time for that.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell: It is time for fair play. The Minister also said that Opposition Deputies were clamouring about Government expenditure over the past number of years. Criticisms have been made about money wasted on PPARS, e-voting machines and e-government. Millions of euro have been squandered on systems that are not even functioning.

During the good years, the Government should have set up a sinking fund, similar to those adopted by fund management companies. The National Pension Reserve Fund will be raided to the tune of €4.5 billion to recapitalise the banks while approximately €3 billion of taxpayers' money will be borrowed to fund the balance. Meanwhile, a punitive measure will be introduced for the low paid in the public sector who will not receive a return, which is grossly unfair.

The Minister needs to outline his five-year economic plan. People need a road map because we are currently subject to government by fits and starts. When proposals are made, they have to be reviewed and amended. The pension levy should be reformed. Fine Gael put forward tough but fair measures, including a pay freeze in the public sector and the provision of generic rather than branded drugs, which would save €200 million.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: Fine Gael opposes the Government's proposal to introduce this so-called pension levy for public sector workers. It is an income tax, as it is a levy on the gross income of all public service workers. The motives for introducing the levy were not above board. They were more political than aimed at revenue raising. Approximately 350,000 people are engaged by the public service compared to 1.7 million in the private sector. The Government assumed the public sector was a soft target and it would be more politically correct to penalise these workers than others.

I attended public meetings of concerned public service worker earlier this week, comprising mainly local authority, HSE, and fire service staff and gardaí or their spouses. They are very angry and I do not know why the Government does not recognise this. They are not only angry about having to pay the levy but also about the unfairness of placing this tax burden solely on them. Speaker after speaker at these meetings said he or she was willing to play a part in sharing the burden if it was spread fairly. Deputy Sherlock read a letter from a constituent into the record, which highlighted this issue. The constituent, who is a public servant, said at the end of the letter he was willing to play his part if everybody else was asked to do so. We have all received such letters from concerned citizens about this.

We are in the sorry state we are in because of the mismanagement of the State finances by Fianna Fáil and its partners in Government over recent years and not because of international factors, which is the spin put on this by the Fianna Fáil press office. Fianna Fáil has been in Government for 19 of the past 21 years and it has mismanaged the taxpayer's money to fund pet projects such as voting machines, which cost €60 million and a few million euro a year to store but which are now being abandoned altogether, the Bertie bowl, which cost €200 million but was never built, and PPARS, which cost several hundred million euro but was never used. Fianna Fáil has become arrogant over the past 15 years in office and its Ministers are out of touch with the ordinary people. They felt there was no harm with a few million here and there, with support for the developers, speculators and bankers without minding the rest. That was a very dangerous mentality for the country.

I will give an example of the unfairness of this tax. A person in the public service earning €40,000 a year will pay a 7.2% levy amounting to €3,250 per year leaving a net salary of €36,750. However, a person on €300,000 a year will only pay a 9.6% levy of €28,750 leaving a net salary of €271,250 a year. How could that be fair? The Government is penalising the family person on ordinary wages, who will not qualify for a medical card or higher education grants. This is the person being penalised all the time, without any penalty on bank executives earning €2 million to €3 million a year who get a golden handshake when forced to leave their positions and a pension of €150,000 a year perhaps five or six times what the ordinary nurses, teachers gardaí and others in the public sector earn. Those are the people the Government wants to penalise.

Fine Gael is opposed to this so-called pensions levy on public sector workers. We have made proposals for how the Government could raise the necessary €2 billion. Our deputy spokesperson on finance, Deputy O'Donnell, and our spokesperson in finance, Deputy Bruton, have outlined them for the past month. Before the Minister left the House he said his door was always open. It has not been open since this crisis began. However, now that the Government is in "Queer Street" it wants to open the door; it wants to take everybody in and claim it is an all-party thing. We are willing to play our part, but we will not be sucked into taking the blame for the Government's mismanagement in recent years.

Tomorrow night we will have a vote on this motion, but that is not the important part. The important part will be when the legislation comes before the Dáil later this week. That is when people will be called upon to give an account of themselves. Fianna Fáil backbenchers and other supporters of the Government have been down in their constituencies talking out of the sides of their mouths outlining all that they will do. Let them stand up and be counted on Thursday when we vote on the legislation. People will not be fooled any longer; they know what is going on now. The Government has much to answer for having brought us into the sorry state in which we now find ourselves.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I congratulate the Labour Party on tabling this opportune motion at this time. I also congratulate Fine Gael on its amendment. This debate contributes to focusing on a serious issue facing the country. However, I must compliment the Government for its imagination and ingenuity. Government Members point across to this side of the House and ask what we are doing and why we are not suggesting how to lambaste the public and private sector in coming years.

A year and a half ago the ship of State was sailing before the winds. Everybody on board was happy. The captain and crew were dancing around the deck and they were laughing all the way to the bank. All their friends were with them clapping them on the back and telling them how good they were. They repeatedly said they had tested the economy and the fundamentals were sound. The captain and the crew celebrated on the basis that the engine room was perfect. The fundamentals were sound. The oil pressure was right and nothing could go wrong. Away they headed.

Then all of a sudden the ship came to a juddering halt — the Minister's own words. Everything fell around on deck. The captain and the crew are in a dazed state. What are they doing now? They are calling on the passers-by and asking them to do something. What would one have done? They failed to recognise that when they were cruising wildly before the storm the Opposition in this House called on the captain and the crew on countless occasions to take stock of what they were doing and because the fundamentals were not right there was a grave danger that they would come unstuck. Now that the ship is well and truly placed on the rocks and holed below the waterline, they come along and say, "Help us to bale it out. Help us to do something. Help us to beat the public over the head." To which we reply "No."

[Deputy Bernard J. Durkan.]

I reject the notion that the Opposition should be expected to lambaste or flog the unfortunate public who have done no wrong. The private sector has it coming to it as well because it is also going to get it shortly. It does not know it yet. As my colleagues have said, this is not a pensions levy — it has nothing to do with pensions. It is an income levy. It is the first step in beating down the people who allegedly were the cause of the problem. The public sector was certainly not the cause of the problem. The Government was the cause of the problem. It allowed some sectors to inflate costs to such an extent that nobody could stay on board. I do not know why in God's name the Government could not understand that.

At this stage the public sector is being blamed. The question is whether it has done wrong. The answer is “no.” People in the public sector were merely trying to survive and who can blame them for that? They did not ask for an increase in the number of personnel in the public sector. They did not ask for a 33% increase in the number of personnel in the HSE, which is half-public and half-private. Nobody stood up and asked for more people. The Government brought them, sat them down and said: “Listen, this is a great economy. The fundamentals are right. Come on in and join the club.” However, now the public sector will be hammered because the Government has gone off course.

The problem is as follows. Those in the public sector will undoubtedly be the victims in the first instance. However, what will happen next year? What is the Government now promising? It is promising €4 billion in cuts next year. Who will take the hit there? Are the guys on the Government benches for real? Have they studied the impact that would have on the economy? There is no possible way that can happen without bringing the country to a halt.

What will happen is as follows. First the people in the public sector, who are going to take this lambasting now, will find themselves between a rock and a hard place. They will need to take this hit on top of the 1% or 2% levy and need to pay their mortgages. They cannot change their mortgages, which are fixed. They have many more set payments and have set out a budget for the next 12 months. When this thing suddenly comes looming at them from across the horizon, where do they have to go? Sadly many people will be forced out of their homes. They will hand back the keys and the houses will be left empty. If Ministers opposite think it is bad now, it is going to get worse. They are creating problems and adding to the problem. They are kicking the people when they are down — and they did not cause the problem in the first place.

I have listened to those on the Government side for the past five or six years shouting about the high-wage economy. We all heard them on this side of the House. We have job losses all over the country at present, including some in my constituency. I cannot understand what economics the Government has been reading, where it got its inspiration and how it has led the country so far so wrong. This has happened because those on the Government side kept telling everybody, “It's all right. It'll be all right on the night. Sure, we never let ye down yet. Weren't we good for ye all the time. Didn't we win two elections in a row?” They never said they bought them at a massive cost to the country. There was irresponsible bargaining in the run up to the two elections in 2002 and 2007. Nobody can claim that a year and a half ago it was not clearly obvious to everybody what would happen. It could not continue as it was. Lo and behold, at the end of the day having got elected, the Government first proposed to hammer the public sector and then tried to divert blame on to all of the public representatives as if they were responsible for the dirty tricks it did to the people.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Jack Wall): I ask the Deputy to move the adjournment of the debate.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: In doing so I make this plea to the Government. I ask that before long they would resign *en bloc* if possible.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Debate adjourned.

Adjournment Debate.

Hospital Accommodation.

Deputy James Bannon: I thank the Ceann Comhairle for allowing me raise this important matter, namely, the need for the Minister for Health and Children, to ensure that after a wait of 12 years, a full complement of appropriate services for secondary care facilities is provided under phase 2B of Longford-Westmeath hospital, Mullingar, County Westmeath, and to ensure patient safety and best possible outcomes.

We have heard many times that the Government is committed to ensuring the delivery of best quality health services in an effective and efficient manner. The Minister for Community, Gaeltacht and Rural Affairs, Deputy Ó Cuív, said those very words when speaking in the House last December on behalf of the Minister for Health and Children. How efficient is it to string along a hospital such as Longford-Westmeath hospital for more than 12 years with phases and sub-phases of the development being delivered piecemeal? With an ever-extending deadline, it is open to debate.

As a former Member of the other House and as a Member of this House I have repeatedly raised the issue of this hospital but the bottom line is that the people of the midlands and myself are being ignored regarding the provision of essential health facilities. In common with the rest of the BMW region, Longford-Westmeath has been consistently overlooked by this Government in terms of health and infrastructural development. Despite the setbacks, Longford-Westmeath hospital has been deemed one of the best performing hospitals in the country and the doctors, nurses and staff provide a very fine service under difficult circumstances. However, if the facilities are not available, patients' lives are put at risk and preventable fatalities can occur.

At the risk of boring the Minister of State, I will once again set out the key moments in what has been a 12-year struggle to see phase 2B of Longford-Westmeath hospital completed in the interests of patient care, safety and best possible outcomes. More than 12 years ago, €57 million was ring-fenced for new facilities at the hospital and a shell of the new building was opened in 1997 by the then Minister for Health, Deputy Michael Noonan. In 2003, despite the completion of the development control plan, the project was threatened by recommendations of the Hanly report and assurances from the current Minister that facilities would not be withdrawn fell on stony ground. In 2005, the Minister instructed the HSE to delay the development of the new facilities at the hospital, thereby threatening the safety of every man, woman and child in Longford-Westmeath. In 2006, €14 million was announced under phase 2B stage one but we should not lose sight of the fact that this was just one quarter of the original €57 million ring-fenced for the project over six years earlier.

In a supposedly new initiative, this was nothing more than the original amount being drip-fed but it was being heralded as a major boost for the hospital instead of being seen for what it was, a catch-up exercise to provide 45 beds in an already constructed unit. This was a long

[Deputy James Bannon.]

way from the initial promise which is on the record of this House and of the other House and on the record of the health board. The promise was to provide an operating theatre, an intensive care unit, a cardiac care unit, an acute psychiatric unit, an adolescent psychiatric unit, pathology department, occupational therapy unit, dermatology unit, an on-call accommodation and staff changing facilities and an optician unit.

Another delaying tactic was decreed by the Taoiseach, Deputy Cowen, under the value for money analysis that any project in the health sector costing more than €30 million could not proceed without a cost-benefit analysis being carried out. This was another stalling measure by the Minister and by this Government. Once again they are putting the health of the people of Longford-Westmeath under threat. Cancer services were withdrawn from Longford-Westmeath hospital last year in what was a major blow for the area and this left 600 patients forced to travel long distances to access treatment that should be available locally. I know of patients who leave their homes at 6 a.m. and do not return until 7.30 p.m.

The bottom line is that much has been promised but bar the drip-feeding of a small amount of the costing of the original project, nothing has come of the commitments. It is now more than time for the delivery of the full €57 million plus ring-fenced for this project to ensure safe and efficient delivery of services and best outcomes for the people of Longford-Westmeath and the midlands. I want a positive answer tonight and not another broken promise from the Minister.

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): I am replying to this matter on behalf of my colleague, the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Mary Harney.

The Midland Regional Hospital at Mullingar forms part of the Dublin-midlands hospital group and provides an extensive range of acute services to the population of Dublin-midlands and in particular the Longford-Westmeath area. Stage 1 of the phase 2B capital development at Mullingar commenced in 2006 and is scheduled for completion shortly at a cost of €23 million. This phase of the project includes fit-out of the existing ward shells to provide a new paediatric ward; a new day surgery-gynaecology ward, a new obstetric ward and a new medical ward, incorporating an acute stroke unit; refurbishment of the existing paediatric and obstetric wards to provide surgical and medical wards and a palliative care unit; an extension of the existing facilities to accommodate an interim special care baby unit adjacent to the new paediatric ward.

I understand these works are completed and that the ward areas are now fully occupied. In addition, approval was granted for the refurbishment of two further wards in the existing hospital — a medical-surgical and a delivery-gynaecology ward. This work is due to be completed at the end of the month. Completion of this phase of the project will see the bed complement increase from 215 to 244 and will enhance the range and level of services provided.

With regard to stage 2, phase 2B of the project, the HSE is required, in drawing up its capital programme, to prioritise the capital infrastructure projects to be progressed within its overall capital funding allocation under the national development plan, taking account of the NDP targets for division of capital investment between the acute and primary, community and continuing care programmes. The executive is finalising its capital proposals and consultation is ongoing between the HSE and the Department of Health and Children. Details on individual projects will become clear when the capital plan for 2009 has been finalised and approved.

Deputy James Bannon: Have we assurances?

Agricultural Colleges.

Deputy John Cregan: I wish to preface my remarks by saying that I was elected as a Fianna Fáil Deputy and I am supporting the Government. I do not wish to sound hypocritical tonight and say that I have supported cuts in the current economic world recession and that I will not support them in my own constituency. It is important to put this on the record of the House.

I wish to raise the issue of the Salesian College in Pallaskenry, County Limerick. This college was established in 1919 and it has played a significant role in educating young farmers since then. There are six agricultural colleges in the country and Teagasc is recommending that the number of colleges should be reduced from six to two, leaving one in Kilkenny and one in Cavan. I refer to the geographical location of Pallaskenry. As well as having excellent education and training facilities, the college attracts young farmers from many counties throughout Munster. Driving, most of the young farmers can get home to south County Galway, County Clare, north County Cork or north County Tipperary within one and a half hours. As well as furthering their education, many of them are committed to working on their families' farms. It is important that we maintain the presence of a college in Pallaskenry in the heart of the Golden Vale where one third of this country's milk is produced.

I want to be fair to Teagasc, which I admire for its work, and its officials in my county in particular. They have a job to do and, in the current economic climate, their budget has been reduced by €10 million. While I accept this fact, there is room for compromise and the retention of a third college, which should be the Pallaskenry Agricultural College. The cost of the subsidy to Teagasc is approximately €400,000. However, it is vital that, alongside Teagasc, every effort be made to save the college. It has operated for many years and played a considerable role in the education of thousands of young farmers, both boarders and those who attended on a day to day basis. It has stood the farming community throughout County Limerick and adjoining counties well.

We will not always be in this economic situation and I am sure that it will improve. When it does, it will be important to have given the young people in question a solid education. Many of them have an opportunity to diversify within the various courses on offer in colleges such as that at Pallaskenry, but they will not be in a position to travel to the two remaining colleges. With the greatest respect to Teagasc, the outreach centres throughout the country that it has suggested will not replace our fine colleges.

I appeal to the Minister of State, the Department and Teagasc for a review of the situation in favour of a more sensible one. Teagasc might not be able to provide the full subsidy required, but I appeal to it. Closing the Pallaskenry college would be a backwards step. It is a fine facility and is not falling down or does not need a significant capital injection. It has excellent staff who have been tried and tested for many years. The college would be a considerable loss to those we are trying to encourage to take up farming. Many of the young people in question have the foresight to want to attend college, better themselves and get diplomas. I appeal for a review of the situation.

Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Tony Killeen): Gabhaim buíochas leis an Teachta Cregan as ucht an deis a thabhairt dom an cheist a fhreagairt tábhachtach seo. The Government fully recognises the importance of agricultural education and training for the development of the agriculture and food industries. This is reflected in the programme for Government's commitment to invest in our agricultural colleges and to restructure the environment through which they are supported.

[Deputy Tony Killeen.]

Responsibility for the provision of agricultural education and training, including decisions on investment in training facilities, rests with Teagasc. Due to its important role in supporting the Government's strategy for the agrifood sector, it receives substantial Exchequer resources each year to enable it to provide first class training, research and advisory services. The total funding provided by the Department for non-capital purposes has increased significantly in recent years, from €82 million in 2000 to an average of €137 million in the years 2007-09. While this year's allocation to Teagasc of €135 million is inevitably somewhat less than the previous two years due to the necessary curtailment of public finances, it is nevertheless a substantial amount and an indication of the Government's continuing commitment to supporting the agrifood sector and recognition of the important role of Teagasc in that regard.

I am glad to say that, in recent years, we have also been able to provide substantial extra funding to Teagasc for capital development purposes. In the period from 2000 to 2005, a cumulative total of almost €50 million was allocated, comprising €27 million from the Exchequer and €23 million from retained proceeds from the sale of assets, to enable Teagasc to implement major capital development programmes in upgrading training, research and advisory facilities. Since 2006, Teagasc has commenced a further major capital investment programme with a particular focus on the development of research centres of excellence.

Currently, Teagasc delivers its education and training programme through a network of eight colleges, 80 local Teagasc centres and the Teagasc e-college. It is entirely a matter for Teagasc and its board to prioritise its activities and to allocate its resources accordingly. In this regard, a review of college infrastructure undertaken for Teagasc by an outside consultancy body was finalised last year and agreed by the Teagasc authority. Arising from this review, the authority will be making decisions on priorities in terms of future capital expenditure. A €4 million investment has already been undertaken in an extension to student facilities at Teagasc's Kildalton College, which is due for completion in May. Furthermore, Teagasc intends to upgrade student facilities at the College of Amenity Horticulture in the National Botanic Gardens later this year. This will facilitate the accommodation of students from Warrenstown Horticultural College following the decision of the Salesian order to discontinue the provision of horticultural education at Warrenstown from June 2009.

Within the various colleges and at a local level, Teagasc provides a wide range of education and training courses targeted at young people planning to embark on careers in farming, horticulture, the equine industry or forestry and adult farmers wishing to acquire a skills set or training in a particular area. Further education and training courses are available in agriculture, horticulture, forestry and horses at the agricultural and horticultural colleges. In addition, higher level education courses in agriculture, horticulture, agribusiness, agricultural mechanisation and equine studies are provided jointly with institutes of technology.

All of Teagasc's education and training programmes are accredited within the national framework under the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. I was pleased to see that there was a significant increase in college enrolments in the current academic year, which augurs well for the future of the Irish agrifood sector. Teagasc will ensure that education and training are provided in the most effective and efficient manner in the years ahead.

I am satisfied that Teagasc, with the major capital investment programme it has undertaken in recent years and the ongoing support of the Department, is in good shape and well positioned to provide the innovation and technology transfer necessary for the sustainable development of agriculture, the food industry and rural communities through their integrated research, advisory and education and training programmes.

Special Educational Needs.

Deputy Mary Upton: I thank the Ceann Comhairle's office for the opportunity to raise this matter. I was shocked by the content of the announcement early last week and the way in which it was made. It was wheeled out in the midst of the hot debate on the economic climate, almost as if it were being buried beneath it. It would have escaped under the radar were it not for the teachers, parents and pupils who will be most seriously affected by the unilateral decision. There was no debate, consultation or reference.

Approximately 120 classes throughout the country will be affected. When I analysed the figures more closely, I found that 20 of the 77 classes in the greater Dublin area are in my constituency of Dublin South-Central. It is a considerable depletion of resources in an area that badly needs all of the resources and educational supports that it can get. Most significantly, nine of the 20 classes are in Ballyfermot. As far as I can see, only one primary school in Ballyfermot has not been affected by the decision.

Other schools in the Dublin 8, 10 and 12 areas will also lose classes, including Crumlin, Inchicore, Drimnagh and the south inner city. Overall, the total area has been disproportionately hit by the Minister's decision. That there was no consultation or discussion with teachers or parents prior to the announcement is unforgivable. Given that no reference was made to an appeals procedure, there seems to be no way back, no moratorium and no possibility of combining classes with other schools that might be located within the area.

Having spoken to some teachers both last week and today, it appears as though the magic figure of nine was dreamed up from somewhere. Perhaps it was known to a select few but clearly not to the teachers in the aforementioned schools, who are now losing these classes. As far as I can ascertain, they were never officially informed of the necessity to have nine pupils to justify retention of such a class.

I wish to mention St. Catherine's national school, Donore Avenue, which is an atypical example. Its position differs slightly from the other schools because it is a Church of Ireland school. It is the only such school in the area and a child who is in a special class at that school and who wishes to stay within the Church of Ireland ethos for his or her education has no choice. However, I believe choices were available in the area. Mater Dei national school, Basin Lane, James's Street primary school, Scoil Treasa Naofa and Francis Street CBS are all in a catchment area with St Catherine's. Moreover, there are two schools on Mourne Road and two Loreto schools in Crumlin, the Oblate primary school, Inchicore, and a school in Goldenbridge. There are three Dominican schools in Ballyfermot, two De La Salle schools, two Mary Queen of Angels schools and one St. Louise school. Such schools could be bracketed together in subgroups and one could put some effort into ascertaining how they could be co-ordinated and perhaps the classes could be spread around. While this is a matter for the Minister, it is something of which account must be taken.

According to the 2006 census, the last year for which there are data, Dublin South-Central is one of the areas of lowest educational attainment in Ireland, historically. The resources that were in place to help to address this situation are now being pulled from under their feet without explanation, alternatives or consultation. I urge the Minister of State, together with the Minister for Education and Science, to reverse this unfair decision. The service should be restored to the schools for the benefit of those students who so badly need it. I believe this was a very shortsighted decision. While there may be a short-term gain of a small amount of money, this is not about money. The €7 million in question is a drop in the ocean relative to the impact it will have on the educational achievement of these children.

Deputy Seán Haughey: I am taking this Adjournment matter on behalf of my colleague, the Minister for Education and Science, Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.

I thank the Deputy for raising this issue as it gives me an opportunity to clarify the position. It is of great concern to me that there has been so much misinformation and misrepresentation of the notification to a number of schools by my Department that they were no longer entitled to retain teachers in classes for pupils with mild general learning disabilities. The first and most important point to make is that all pupils with a mild general learning disability have, and will continue to have, additional teaching resources to support their education. I also assure the Deputy that schools in Ballyfermot were not specifically targeted.

All primary schools have been allocated additional teaching resources to enable them to support pupils with high incidence special educational needs, including mild general learning disability. Each school was given such additional teaching resources under the general allocation model of learning support and resource teaching introduced in 2005. I emphasise that such additional teaching resources have not been withdrawn from any school. Schools can decide how best to use this allocation based on the needs of the pupils. Most pupils with a mild general learning disability are included in ordinary classes with their peers and are supported by their class teacher. The curriculum is flexible in order that teachers can cater for the needs of pupils of different abilities. This policy of inclusion has widespread support within the educational community. This approach is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Schools can use their resource and learning support allocation to give pupils special help if they need it. This might be done with a teacher working with a group of pupils or on a one-to-one basis for a few hours each week.

Before the general allocation model was introduced, some schools grouped pupils with a mild general learning disability into special classes. Deputies are aware that allocations to schools typically increase or decrease depending on pupil enrolment. In the case of classes for mild general learning disability, the normal pupil-teacher ratio that applies is 11:1. My Department, however, allows for a small reduction in this number and permits a school to retain a teaching post where it has a minimum of nine pupils in the class. The rules also provide that a teacher would no longer be allocated where the number of pupils fell below nine. In the schools in question, the number of pupils dropped below this minimum and the schools no longer qualify for the teaching posts in these classes. This was the sole criterion for selection of schools in this regard.

In 2005, when the general allocation model was introduced, schools with additional teachers in classes for mild general learning disability were allowed to retain the teachers for these classes. Effectively, such schools received a double allocation. The number of these special classes has decreased over the years and schools have integrated the pupils into age-appropriate mainstream classes.

All the other primary schools in the country that do not have classes for pupils with mild general learning disability cater for these pupils from within the general allocation model. Surely, commentators do not suggest that three or four pupils with a mild general learning disability should be kept in a class of their own, when they could benefit from the interaction of other peers with support from their teacher?

There has been unprecedented investment in providing supports for pupils with special needs in recent years. There are now approximately 19,000 adults in our schools working solely with pupils with special needs. There are more than 8,000 resource and learning support teachers in our schools, compared with just 2,000 in 1998. More than 1,000 other teachers support pupils in our special schools. A total of 76 classes for pupils with mild general learning disability are being retained where there are nine pupils or more in these classes.

I wish to take this opportunity to emphasise that priority will continue to be given to provision for pupils with special educational needs. The establishment of mild general learning disability classes pre-date many of the developments in special education policy in recent years and we now have a system for providing schools with supports for pupils with high incidence special needs through the general allocation model.

The natural sympathy we all have for pupils with special needs and their parents makes it all the more important that we do not cloud facts with emotion. The parents of all children with mild general learning disability need to know that their children in mainstream classes are getting a quality education delivered by committed class teachers and supplemented by additional support from the resource and learning support teacher. This happens every day in schools nationwide.

I thank the Deputy for giving me the opportunity to clarify the position regarding this matter.

Schools Building Projects.

Deputy Michael Ring: I thank the Ceann Comhairle for selecting this matter for the Adjournment debate. On 7 March 2008, together with other public representatives, I visited St. Joseph's national school, Bonniciconlon, County Mayo, to meet the board of management and its chairman, as well as the teachers, parents and pupils, regarding the school's condition. It is not right that parents are obliged to bring their children to such a substandard school, in which a health and safety issue exists. Moreover, it is not right to have teachers trying each day to teach children in a professional manner in such poor conditions. I was highly disappointed that no announcement was made in recent weeks in respect of this school, which has been waiting for a long time for funding from the Department of Education and Science. As long ago as 2000, the school was obliged to raise funds for itself. Although the Department has spent more than €54,000 on architects' fees, to date there is no sign of either the funding or the approval for a new school.

In recent years, the Government had an opportunity to provide such funding when money was plentiful. If the Department does not have the requisite funding and is not prepared to undertake this project, it should try to attract investors who would be prepared to build a school and to do a deal with the Department by selling the school back to it. It is not right to have children, parents or teachers operating in such conditions. I have visited the school. I call on officials from the Department of Education and Science and the Minister to inspect the school. It is not right to have parents and children in such conditions. Given the current economic climate, it is important to stimulate employment in County Mayo and throughout the State. We need this type of investment in our education facilities. As well as providing badly needed school educational facilities, it would help the local community by creating employment. St. Joseph's national school is part of the delivering equality of opportunity in schools, DEIS, programme. Its pupils and teachers are further disadvantaged by the conditions in which they are obliged to learn and work.

I hope the Minister of State will not merely deliver the standard reply from the Department of Education and Science. Instead, I hope there will be an announcement, if not tonight then in the coming weeks, that the construction of this school will be put to tender and the necessary funding provided so that the area will receive the school it has sought for years. It is unacceptable that an area that has suffered disadvantage for many years should not receive its share of the national cake. This community is entitled to a new school.

I ask the Minister of State to present this case to the Minister, Deputy Batt O'Keeffe. It is not the largest school in the State but it is of great importance for the pupils, teachers and local community. The working conditions are unacceptable, the building being rat infested at one

[Deputy Michael Ring.]

time. There is a health and safety issue to be addressed. I call on the Minister and the Government to provide the necessary funding for a new school in Bonniclon.

Deputy Seán Haughey: I am replying to this matter on behalf of the Minister for Education and Science, Deputy Batt O’Keeffe. I thank the Deputy for raising this issues as it allows me to outline the Government’s strategy for capital investment in education projects and to explain the current position in regard to the school to which the Deputy refers.

The modernisation of facilities in existing building stock and the need to respond to emerging needs in areas of rapid population growth represent a significant challenge. The Government has shown a consistent determination to improve the condition of school buildings and to ensure the appropriate facilities are in place to enable the implementation of a broad and balanced curriculum. The emphasis, however, will continue to be on new schools and extensions to provide additionality in rapidly developing areas.

All applications for capital funding are assessed in the planning and building unit of my Department. The assessment process determines the extent and type of need presenting based on the demographics of an area, proposed housing developments, condition of buildings, site capacity and so on, leading ultimately to an appropriate accommodation solution. As part of this process, a project is assigned a band rating under published prioritisation criteria for large-scale building projects. These criteria were devised following consultation with the education partners.

Projects are selected for inclusion in the schools building and modernisation programme on the basis of priority of need. This is reflected in the band rating assigned to a project. In other words, a proposed building project moves through the system commensurate with the band rating assigned to it. There are four band ratings, of which band one is the highest and band four the lowest. Band one projects, for example, include the provision of buildings where none currently exists but there is a high demand for pupil places, while a band four project makes provision for desirable but not necessarily urgent or essential facilities, such as a library or new sports hall.

In the case of St. Joseph’s national school, Bonniclon, the brief is to provide accommodation for a long-term projected staffing of a principal and two mainstream class teachers plus ancillary accommodation. The project, which was assigned a band rating of 2.2, is at an advanced stage of architectural planning and planning permission has been received. However, given the competing demands on my Department’s capital budget, it is not possible at this stage to be precise about when this project will go to construction.

The progression of all large-scale building projects, including this project, from initial design stage through to construction is dependent on the prioritisation of competing demands on the funding available under my Department’s capital budget. These projects will be considered in the context of the Department’s multi-annual schools building and modernisation programme. The allocation for school buildings in 2009 is €581 million. This represents a significant investment in the schools building and modernisation programme. This level of funding, at a time of great pressure on public finances, is a sign of the Government’s commitment to investing in school infrastructure and will permit the continuation of progress in the overall improvement of school accommodation. Under the recovery plan announced recently by the Taoiseach, a further €75 million has been allocated to the schools building programme for 2009.

I thank the Deputy again for affording me the opportunity to outline the current position regarding the school building project for St. Joseph’s national school.

The Dáil adjourned at 9.05 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 18 February 2009.

Written Answers.

The following are questions tabled by Members for written response and the ministerial replies as received on the day from the Departments [unrevised].

Questions Nos. 1 to 15, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 16 to 50, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 51 to 59, inclusive, answered orally.

Proposed Legislation.

60. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Transport when he will introduce legislation to ensure the mandatory testing of all drivers involved in serious road collisions; the reason there has been such a delay in introducing this legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5826/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): The current position regarding the testing of drivers for alcohol at the scene of a collision is that a member of An Garda Síochána may require a driver involved in a collision to provide a preliminary breath specimen. This discretion is provided in acknowledgement of the fact that urgent medical attention may be required for seriously injured victims and must take precedence over breath testing. In addition, a Garda may request a blood or urine sample from a driver who is in hospital following a vehicle incident where the Garda believes that person was intoxicated.

There is no suitable technology currently available for the testing of drivers for drugs at the scene of a road traffic collision.

However the Road Traffic Acts provide that where a member of the Garda Síochána is of the opinion that a person in charge of a mechanically propelled vehicle in a public place is under the influence of a drug or drugs to such an extent as to be incapable of having proper control of that vehicle, he or she may require that person to go to a Garda station and further require that person to submit to a blood test or to provide a urine sample.

A Road Traffic and Transport Bill, which inter alia proposes measures to put in place the mandatory testing for alcohol of drivers involved in road traffic collisions, is currently being drafted. The intention is to bring the Bill to Government as soon as possible and, subject to Government approval, to publish it in the coming months.

EU Funding.

61. **Deputy P. J. Sheehan** asked the Minister for Transport his views on the complaint being considered by the EU Commission on unfair State aid for State transport companies; the contact his Department has had with the EU on this matter; when he expects a ruling to be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5933/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The European Commission informed my Department in July 2007 that, as a result of a complaint received by them, it had decided to initiate a formal investigation procedure into whether the Exchequer capital and current funding provided to CIÉ contravenes European Union law.

My Department submitted to the European Commission a detailed response to the issues raised and outlined how the compensation paid to Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus in respect of their public service obligations complies with the requirements of Regulation 1191/69 under Article 73 of the Treaties.

Since submitting the detailed response, the European Commission has been in contact with my Department requesting responses to third party comments on the matter. Third party comments were received by the European Commission as part of the standard process of formal investigation procedures of this nature. Responses to these comments have been forwarded to the European Commission.

Officials have been in contact with the European Commission recently and I understand that the investigation procedure is ongoing.

Ministerial Appointments.

62. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport the process of selecting a chief executive for the Dublin Transport Authority; the progress to date; when he expects the Dublin Transport Authority to be fully operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5930/09]

106. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Transport when he will appoint the new chief executive officer for the Dublin Transport Authority; the estimated date for the full operation of the DTA; the annual running costs of the organisation; when he plans to introduce the Public Transport Regulation Bill to transform the DTA into a national transport regulator; the impact this will have on transport planning for the greater Dublin Area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5805/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 62 and 106 together.

My Department is proceeding with preparations for the establishment of the Dublin Transport Authority (DTA) as soon as possible during 2009. A key part of those preparations is the recruitment of a Chief Executive Officer and the necessary recruitment process is now underway.

The Public Appointments Service initiated the recruitment process for the CEO on 23 January last and the closing date for receipt of applications is 19 February next. The timing of the appointment of a CEO will obviously depend on the outcome of this process.

My Department has had very productive discussions with the Department of Finance on the administrative budget and staff numbers for the DTA, on the basis of which it was agreed to proceed with the recruitment of the CEO. Final decisions on funding and staff numbers will be taken following consultation with the new CEO and the Authority.

The Government has recently approved the General Scheme of the Public Transport Regulation Bill which contains proposals for a new bus licensing regime which will replace the Road Transport Act 1932 and the provisions of the Transport Act 1958 that relate to the provision of bus services by the State bus companies. It is proposed that responsibility for bus route licensing and public transport services contracts nationwide will be assigned to the DTA under the Bill, which will also provide for the amalgamation of the Commission for Taxi Regulation into the DTA. The Bill will also provide for the renaming of the Dublin Transport Authority as the National Transport Authority given its proposed national focus in relation to commercial bus licensing, future bus and rail subvention and the regulation of small public service vehicles.

In the light of the recent Government approval of the General Scheme of the Public Transport Regulation Bill, the Bill will now be drafted and published as soon as possible.

Section 12 of the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 requires the DTA to prepare a long-term strategic planning framework for the integrated development of transport infrastructure and services in the Greater Dublin Area. The proposed Public Transport Regulation Bill does not contain any proposals to alter the provisions of that section.

Road Safety Strategy.

63. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Transport the progress to date on the National Road Safety Strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5941/09]

99. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Transport the actions under the Road Safety Strategy 2007 to 2012 which have missed their deadlines; the reason these key deadlines have been missed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5827/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): I propose to take Questions Nos. 63 and 99 together.

The Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012 was prepared by the Road Safety Authority, approved by the Government and launched in October 2007. Its overall objective, through a combination of education, enforcement and engineering actions, is to save lives and prevent serious injuries, thereby bringing Ireland in line with best practice countries in road safety terms.

The Strategy is being successfully implemented across a range of agencies. We have seen a sustained reduction in the number of people killed on our roads. 2008 saw the lowest number of road deaths on record at 279, despite the fact there has been a 40 per cent increase in the number of drivers and a 70 per cent increase in the number of vehicles on our roads. Of course it is important to maintain the momentum in Road Safety measures, as each fatality and serious injury is a tragedy for families, friends and communities. According to the European Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) programme, which is run by the European Transport Safety Council, (ETSC), Ireland is now ranked in the top ten best performing EU countries for road safety performance.

Action 83 of the Strategy requires the Road Safety Authority (RSA) to report to me by the end of the second quarter of each year on the implementation of the 126 actions in the Strategy, all of which identify the lead agency responsible for implementation and a target implementation date. The Authority has confirmed that all actions in the Strategy identified for completion in 2007 have been completed in full. These include publication of a revised Rules of the Road, road safety awareness events, integration of RSA enforcement activity with An Garda Síochána, Customs and the HSA, and publication of various consultation documents including one on compulsory training for motor cyclists.

[Deputy Noel Ahern.]

The report for the year 2008 will be presented to me in June of this year. However it is clear from communication with the RSA that substantial progress has been made on the annual Actions and those specifically for 2008. More than half have been completed and substantial progress has been made on the majority of the rest.

It is of course the case that work has already begun on other actions in the Strategy which have a longer timeframe for completion, for example in the case of my Department the introduction of a lower blood alcohol level for drivers (Action No. 76), with target date of 2nd Quarter 2009. This will form part of the Road Traffic and Transport Bill, which I hope to see published in the coming months, as will provisions relating to mandatory alcohol testing of drivers at collisions (Action No. 75) and to driving under the influence of drugs (Action No. 78).

It may the case, over the course of an ambitious and challenging Road Safety Strategy, that some of the target dates are missed, even where work on the Actions themselves is underway, but we must not lose sight of the underlying achievement: road fatalities are falling and substantial progress is being made on all the key issues in relation to the safety of road users.

Marine Safety.

64. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Transport the progress to date in relation to ensuring low polluting fuels in maritime operations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5969/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): Issues relating to pollution from ships are continually under review at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and at EU level. It is most desirable owing to its international nature that measures relating to shipping should as far as possible be applied internationally. This ensures for instance that States which apply measures in the interest of ship safety or the prevention of pollution would not be at a competitive disadvantage.

There have been two significant developments in 2008 aimed at ensuring low polluting fuels usage in maritime operations. Firstly, my colleague the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government made the Sulphur Content of Heavy Fuel Oil, Gas Oil, and Marine Fuels Regulations, 2008, which give effect to the EU Sulphur Directive, 1999/32/EC as amended by 2005/33/EC. For protection of human health and the environment these Regulations prohibit the use or marketing of marine fuels of sulphur content above prescribed levels. From 1 January, 2010, the tolerance level for marketing of marine gas oil will become stricter, from the existing 1.5% sulphur content to 0.1%. From that date, the use in inland waterway vessels or in ships at berth, of marine fuels with sulphur content which exceeds 0.1% will be prohibited.

Secondly, in October, the IMO, to which Ireland is a Party, adopted a revised Annex VI to the MARPOL Convention, on Prevention of Air Pollution from Ships. The revised Annex VI introduces significant changes to permissible emissions into the air from ships, including sulphur emissions, with provision for a gradual reduction in allowable ship emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and sulphur oxides (SO_x).

This revision will bring in global standards that will significantly reduce harmful emissions from ships, principally through use of low polluting fuels. It will enter into force internationally on July 1, 2010. My Department is preparing Regulations to give effect to the revised Annex i.

Driving Tests.

65. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Transport when he will introduce legislation

necessary for the proposed graduated driver licence system; the type of GDLS he favours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5828/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): The Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012 outlines a range of measures to be considered in relation to a Graduated Driver Licensing System (GDLS). The driver licensing regulations, which were made in October 2007, providing for the introduction of a learner permit to replace the provisional licence and some other measures, were the first step in the introduction of a GDLS. A progressive roll-out of appropriate measures is envisaged as the most practical approach for implementing a GDLS.

On 13 January 2009 the Road Safety Authority (RSA) launched a consultation process on a GDLS and published a consultation paper. This contains a number of possible measures and the RSA also welcomes other suggestions from the public. The consultation process runs until 13 March 2009, following which the RSA will consider responses and bring forward in due course proposals for my consideration. It is too soon to say what the timeframe for that will be or whether new legislation will be required.

Road Safety.

66. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding his Department's obligation to prepare guidelines for local authorities in relation to the setting of speed limits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5949/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): Following the metrication of speed limits in 2005 the Minister for Transport issued guidance to Local Authorities on the setting of special speed limits in accordance with Section 9 of the Road Traffic Act 2004. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide advice and guidance to Local Authorities in relation to the making of special speed limit bye-laws by county and city councils. These Guidelines set out principles to guide local authorities in setting speed limits with the intention of contributing to the establishment of uniform and standard application of appropriate speed limits on a country-wide basis. These Guidelines were revised and issued to Local Authorities again in December 2008.

The Government's Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012 sets out two related actions (a) to prepare and publish technical/engineering guidance for the setting of speed limits generally and (b) to audit and report on the appropriateness and consistency of speed limits every two years. Work on these Actions is now in hands and in concluding that work regard will be had to Action 30 of the recently published Smarter Travel Plan to "address the twin objectives of road safety and emissions reduction through the enhanced enforcement of appropriate speed limits", as there is clearly scope for a co-ordinated approach.

I should also point out that the speed limits that may be in force on any road are maximum speed limits and driving safely means that a driver must drive at the speed that is suitable for the conditions, for example, weather, visibility and the driver's own level of experience.

Aviation Policy.

67. **Deputy Bernard Allen** asked the Minister for Transport his plans for the reform of aviation policy; the timeframe for the separation of regional airports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5914/09]

73. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Transport his policy in relation to the independence of Cork Airport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5874/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 67 and 73 together.

Ireland's aviation policy as set out in my Department's current Statement of Strategy is to promote regular, safe, cost effective and competitive air services linking the country with key business and tourism markets. Within the European Union, Ireland has consistently supported market liberalisation measures, which have to date, served as the platform for the rapid expansion of aviation generally. We have also sought to influence the emerging EU and wider international framework for aviation to ensure that it continues to promote competition and innovation in the market-place. The introduction of the EU-US Open Skies agreement and the conclusion of a more liberal agreement on a bilateral basis with Canada illustrates our commitment to supporting liberalisation measures.

Our approach to the encouragement of air services is complemented by our policy on the development of airport infrastructure within the country. The main objective is to ensure that the three State Airports have sufficient capacity to respond to the needs of a competitive airline sector and to provide vital international access. The opening of Terminal 2 at Dublin Airport in early 2010 will allow Dublin Airport to respond to foreseeable demand, cater for a range of short haul and long haul services and will ensure that the airport continues to be an efficient gateway to the Ireland of the 21st century.

In addition, the six regional airports have a role to play in facilitating access to the regions. My Department provides financial support for airport development and operations as well as PSO services connecting Kerry, Galway, Knock, Sligo, Donegal and Derry to Dublin.

The further key components of our strategy are to ensure that our aviation safety and security policies comply with, or exceed, the highest international standards and that the policy framework for air navigation services ensures that the requirements of airlines for efficient routings and the avoidance of delays are met as far as possible without compromising safety.

The global economic downturn and the reduction in consumer demand for air travel are currently having a negative impact on the airline industry globally. From an Irish economy perspective, the overarching priority is to maintain the highest possible levels of connectivity between Ireland and key markets around the world and my Department will continue to closely monitor developments in the aviation sector that impact on that objective.

As to the separation of the three state airports, I announced on 22 December last that I would be deferring a decision on separation until 2011. I made this decision following consideration of the business plans in the light of changed economic circumstances especially in the aviation sector, the views of the three boards, as conveyed to me by the chairmen and consultation with my colleagues in Government.

In conjunction with the deferral of separation, I requested the Chairmen of the three airport authority boards to agree new governance arrangements for Cork and Shannon. I considered that, pending a decision on separation, the boards and management of Cork and Shannon Airports should have a stronger role in respect of the day-to-day management, development and promotion of their respective airports, with appropriate accountability to the DAA. I have met with each of the boards in recent weeks and am pleased that all three have now agreed revised governance arrangements along these lines.

I should add that these governance arrangements will provide an opportunity for Cork Airport to realise the potential provided by the very substantial investment in the airport in recent years. Shannon Airport will also be in a strong position to reap the benefits of US pre-clearance facilities, due for introduction at the airport in mid 2009.

Capital Projects.

68. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Transport if funding for capital projects has been transferred from his Department to other Departments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5986/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Exchequer capital allocation for my Department in 2009 was reduced by €182 million as part of the Government's recently agreed expenditure controls and economic strategy. This amount will contribute to overall reductions in capital expenditure and to other measures such as labour-intensive spending on schools building projects and energy-saving measures.

Smarter Travel Policy.

69. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Transport his Department's work place travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6000/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): My Department instituted its first Workplace Travel Plan in September 2007. Among the measures contained in that Plan were a dedicated website to facilitate staff in lift sharing; provision of bicycles in each office location in Dublin to service inter-office travelling needs and to facilitate those who might wish to sample commuting by bicycle; the establishment of bicycle users and walkers groups; provision of information to staff on timetabling of public transport services; awareness raising in relation to walking distances to the Department's offices from suburban areas; and promotion of the annual travel pass scheme.

In delivering the Plan, an undertaking was given to regular review. Such a review has been undertaken recently and it is envisaged that my Department's second workplace travel plan will be launched shortly. At this stage, some 75% of my Department's staff travel to work either on foot, by bicycle or by public transport.

70. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Transport the funding provided to An Taisce in respect of the green schools travel module for each year since inception; the amount requested for each such year; his views on the future of this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6007/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): An Taisce's Green Schools Travel Module was supported, on a pilot basis in the period 2005 to 2007 in the Greater Dublin Area, by the Dublin Transportation Office. €154,909 was paid in 2005, with €295,301 and €187,633 paid in the succeeding years.

The pilot programme, which peaked at 50 schools and 20,000 pupils in the Greater Dublin Area in 2007, produced encouraging results with an average 10% decline in car use for school journeys in the participating schools. This decline was replaced by an 8% increase in walking/cycling and 1% increases in reliance on public transport and mixed mode travel.

In 2008, I indicated that I wished my Department to make up to €2 million available on an annual basis, up to and including 2012, to the Green Schools Travel Module through the DTO. €1,448,864 was paid in 2008 and enabled the Module to operate in 317 schools.

I consider that the Green Schools Travel Module is a key educational support towards achieving significant modal shift by the year 2020 in line with the Smarter Travel Policy. The Module increased its reach from about 20,000 pupils in 2007 to some 75,000 in 2008 and I envisage that by 2012 it can reach about 265,000 pupils on a nationwide basis.

National Development Plan.

71. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport the degree to which that portion of the national development plan which is relevant to his Department is expected to proceed on target and within cost; the extent to which cost reduction has been identified to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5875/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): All transport infrastructure projects identified for development under the National Development Plan are proceeding. A number of road and public transport projects have already been completed, others will be completed on or ahead of schedule this year and many more are under construction or at planning. The implementing State agencies have indicated to my Department that there is a general downward trend, in the cost of land purchases and procurement tenders in recent times.

National Roads Authority.

72. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Transport the details of the meetings he and his departmental staff have had with the National Roads Authority in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5873/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I met with representatives of all the relevant agencies, including the National Roads Authority (NRA), on 13 February 2008 to discuss Transport 21 issues. In addition, I met with the Chief Executive of the National Roads Authority (NRA) and with senior officials and Board members to discuss a number of policy issues ranging from the Dublin Port Tunnel to the NRA's national roads programme on four separate occasions between April and December.

More generally, my Department maintains regular contact with the NRA in relation to policy and funding issues in respect of the national roads programme element of Transport 21.

Question No. 73 answered with Question No. 67.

Light Rail Project.

74. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Transport if he will report on the most recent meeting of the group preparing contingency plans for the upcoming big dig for the major infrastructural works necessary for Metro North, Dublin rail interconnector and the LUAS link-up including all relevant stakeholders, residents', community and local business groups; the regularity with which the Dublin City Manager has briefed him on the upcoming big dig; the progress made on preparations for the big dig; when contingency measures will commence; when he will bring the public information campaign to inform the general public of what to expect with the big dig infrastructural works and in particular when the bus gate at College Green, Dublin will commence; the way he envisages it will operate for pedestrians and cyclists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5807/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): As I have indicated previously, pending the establishment of the Dublin Transport Authority, the Dublin City Manager chairs the Dublin Transport 21 Implementation Group which co-ordinates and oversees the investment programme in Dublin. The Group comprises the chief executives of the principal implementing agencies, an Assistant Secretary from my Department, the Fingal County Manager, the Director of Traffic and representatives of the Garda Síochána and business associations.

Two sub-groups have been established and the business community is represented on both.

- The Contingency Planning Group, which is chaired by an official from Dublin City Council, is overseeing the preparation of a traffic management strategy for the Transport 21 construction phase, focused particularly on the city centre. This strategy will take account of other construction activity by local authorities, public bodies and private developers.
- The Communications Group is preparing a co-ordinated communications strategy for the construction period of major Transport 21 projects, such as Metro North and the Interconnector. The theme of this strategy will be “Dublin is open for business”.

I understand that the Contingency Planning Sub-Group meet monthly. Significant progress has been made in the preparation of a contingency plan, which includes traffic measures such as the provision of Park and Ride Sites, enhanced public transport services, Real Time Information installations for bus stops, dedicated breakdown towing services, a bus gate at College Green and improved traffic light control at specific junctions. In addition, a detailed Scheme Traffic Management Plan is currently being finalised by the RPA in conjunction with Dublin City Council. This will be finalised in time for the Public Inquiry on Metro North and will become a public document at that time. It will, amongst other things, address the needs and concerns of both pedestrians and cyclists, with particular emphasis on maintaining their safety and service amenity levels (such as the avoidance of excessive crowding on pedestrian routes) throughout the duration of construction works.

I hold regular quarterly meetings with the Transport 21 implementing agencies, An Garda Síochána and business organisations in Dublin to identify the principal concerns of the business community and to review progress on traffic planning for the construction phase of Transport 21 projects. I last met with the Dublin City Centre Stakeholders Group on 29 September 2008. The next meeting of the Group is scheduled to take place in the first week of March, 2009.

In addition, earlier this month, I met with the Dublin City Manager to discuss progress on preparatory work for Transport 21 projects in the city centre.

It is planned that contingency measures will commence later this year. The College Green Bus Gate is planned to come into operation during the summer and Dublin City Council will publish details on its operation in the coming weeks.

An extensive public information and awareness campaign will commence following the conclusion of the Metro North Public Inquiry by An Bord Pleanála, which is scheduled to commence on 2 March 2009.

Dublin Port Company.

75. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Transport if he asked the former chairman of Dublin Port to resign at his recent meeting with him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5983/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Minister is not answerable to the Dáil in relation to his diary engagements or private meetings.

Question No. 76 answered with Question No. 58.

Cycling Policy.

77. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Transport if he has received and reviewed the new report by Dublin City Council's roads and traffic department, Cycle Collisions in Dublin City 2002 to 2006; if he will introduce measures to enhance the protection and safety of cyclists here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5822/09]

108. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Transport if his Department will implement the recommendations of the Dublin City Council report that found that almost three quarters of cyclists killed in Dublin were hit by left turning heavy goods vehicles. [5842/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): I propose to take Questions Nos. 77 and 108 together.

Under the Road Safety Authority Act 2006 (Conferral of Functions) Order 2006 (S.I. No 477 of 2006) research and analysis into the causes of collisions is a matter for the Road Safety Authority. The recent report on cycle collisions will of course be taken into account by the RSA as part of that work.

The Road Safety Strategy Action (No. 82) to develop a national cycling safety strategy by the Road Safety Authority has been amalgamated into the National Cycle Policy Framework, which will be published in due course under the Smarter Travel Plan.

78. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Transport when the National Cycling Policy will be published; the key proposals the strategy will contain; the amount of money he will allocate each year for the national cycling strategy over the next three years; the estimated cost of implementing the national cycling strategy; the targets for new cyclists for 2009 and 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5821/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I intend to publish a National Cycle Policy Framework shortly. The Framework will be not only a comprehensive response to current difficulties faced by the cycling community in terms of road priority and safety issues, but will also prove to be a springboard to creating a culture of cycling in Ireland. I will address the overall cost of the new policy framework and the funding to be allocated to it in 2009 when it is published.

The National Cycle Policy Framework will aim to increase the modal share enjoyed by cycling from 2% in 2006 to 10% by 2020. It would not be reasonable to set specific targets for increases in modal share in the short term, as suggested in the question. However, progress can be measured when the results of the 2011 Census are available.

Marine Safety.

79. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport the action taken by his Department since 2005 in relation to reports from the Marine Casualty Investigation Board; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5989/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): Since its establishment in 2002 the MCIB has published 114 reports containing 467 recommendations. In the four-year period 2005 to 2008, the MCIB published 46 reports regarding 55 craft incidents, which resulted in 42 fatalities and 7 injuries to persons. On receipt of the reports my Department examine each of the MCIB's recommendations with a view to addressing any shortcomings in either the statutory basis of maritime safety policy or in relation to Safety regulation enforcement arrangements.

For example, as part of the ongoing work to enhance maritime safety within specific sectors the Merchant Shipping (Fishing vessel) (15-24 metres) Regulations came into effect for new vessels on 1 October 2007. This represents a phased approach aimed at improving safety measures across all categories of fishing vessels.

To further heighten Safety awareness my Department recently issued Marine Notice Number 5 of 2009 to remind fishing vessel owners and operators in this category of the application dates

contained in the Regulations and encouraging them to make their application for survey in sufficient time to the Marine Survey Office. My Department regularly issues Marine Notices, bringing particular information or advice, arising from MCIB reports, to the attention of the specific maritime sector or sectors.

For the leisure sector new measures have centred on lifejackets, licensing requirements, enforcement and increased safety awareness. There are regulations containing national requirements governing all types of pleasure craft relating to the carrying and wearing of lifejackets, age restrictions on the operation of pleasure craft including personal watercraft and controls on the use of alcohol and drugs while operating such craft. It is now compulsory for all children up to the age of 16 years to wear a lifejacket/personal flotation device (PFD) while on board a pleasure craft and for everyone on board small pleasure craft, under 7 metres, to wear a lifejacket/PFD.

The MCIB recommendations make a significant contribution to the development of maritime safety. Where measures have yet to be implemented they serve as part of the overall input into the ongoing development of the maritime safety agenda.

Nevertheless, seafarers have to take personal responsibility for their safety when they decide to take to the water. By taking simple measures such as wearing a lifejacket and following other sensible precautions, individuals can contribute to the enhancement of safety generally and to saving lives.

Question No. 80 answered with Question No. 58.

End-of-Life Vehicles.

81. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Transport the number of Irish and foreign registered car write-offs on roads here which have been identified to date; the action he will take to reform the national vehicle driver file to address the dangerous problem of car write-offs; if he will introduce a compulsory reporting system for car write-offs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5830/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): As I indicated in replies to previous similar questions voluntary arrangements with insurers have been put in place whereby my Department receives regular notifications of write off instances. Since this commenced in June 2008 some 21,427 vehicle write offs have been notified and the relevant records on the NVDF, which contains data on some 2.5 million vehicles, have been updated with this information. Once recorded on the NVDF further activity in respect of these vehicles, including renewal of motor tax, is not permissible. These voluntary arrangements are operating satisfactorily and I have no immediate plans to make them statutorily compulsory.

Provision of write-off data in relation to foreign registered vehicles at the time of registration is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners.

Road Safety.

82. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Transport the obligation of his Department to prepare an audit of the appropriateness and consistency of speed limits; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5947/09]

111. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Transport when he will publish the new guidelines for the setting of speed limits by local authorities which was a key action under the Road Safety Strategy 2007 to 2012; the reason the deadline for this action which should have

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been published by the third quarter of 2008 was missed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5825/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): I propose to take Questions Nos. 82 and 111 together.

The Government's Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012 sets out two related actions (a) to prepare and publish technical/engineering guidance for the setting of speed limits and (b) to audit and report on the appropriateness and consistency of speed limits every two years.

Work on these Actions is now in hand and in concluding that work regard will be had to Action 30 of the recently published Smarter Travel Plan to "address the twin objectives of road safety and emissions reduction through the enhanced enforcement of appropriate speed limits".

Following the metrication of speed limits in 2005, the Minister for Transport issued guidance to Local Authorities on the setting of special speed limits in accordance with Section 9 of the Road Traffic Act 2004. These Guidelines set out principles to guide local authorities in setting special speed limits with the intention of contributing to the establishment of uniform and standard application of appropriate speed limits on a country-wide basis.

Local Authorities were requested to examine the position in relation to speed limits in their cities and counties and take whatever action they deemed appropriate. These Guidelines were revised and issued to Local Authorities again in December 2008.

I should also point out that the speed limits that may be in force on any road are maximum speed limits and driving safely means that a driver must drive at the speed that is suitable for the conditions, for example, weather, visibility and the driver's own level of experience.

Park and Ride Facilities.

83. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for Transport when he will direct the relevant agencies and authorities to invest in park and ride facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5920/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): My Department supports park and ride as having a role to play in encouraging commuters to switch to public transport. The provision of dedicated park and ride facilities at railway stations is a matter for Irish Rail, and at Luas and proposed Metro sites it is a matter for the RPA. Local authorities also have a role in providing commuter park and ride facilities. Good progress has been made in recent years in the provision of park and ride facilities.

Iarnród Éireann have begun a network-wide programme of expanding or developing new car parks, with the assistance of Exchequer funding, to cater for record demand. Within the past year car parks have opened/been extended at eight train stations, namely, Leixlip Louisa Bridge, Mallow, Ennis, Tullamore, Arklow, Limerick, Hazelhatch and Gormanston, resulting in over 1,350 extra car parking spaces. New car parks are also due to open over the next eighteen months at Portmarnock, Newbridge, Rush and Lusk, Donabate, Laytown, Portarlington, Carlow, Wicklow and Gorey and at Limerick Junction over the next year. I understand that Iarnród Éireann is currently examining a number of other locations for their suitability for expansion. To date Exchequer funding of €21 million has been allocated for the car park extension programme.

Besides existing park and ride facilities on the current Luas network, the RPA is planning further facilities on the Luas extensions and the Metro to open at the same time as these lines.

My officials have also held discussions with local authorities in Dublin and in the regional cities with a view to identifying and progressing bus-based park and ride facilities in their areas and as part of my recently launched “Smart Travel — A Sustainable Transport Future” I will be asking local authorities to fast track the development of such facilities.

Aviation Policy.

84. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Transport if he will report on the recent decision to reject a takeover bid by an airline (details supplied) for Aer Lingus; if he will publish a white paper on national aviation policy in view of the recent turmoil in the sector as a result of that airline’s takeover bid and the challenging global aviation environment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5817/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Government’s aviation strategy is to facilitate the development of as wide a range as possible of competitive, safe and reliable air services for the benefit of business and tourism. In this context, at the time of the Aer Lingus IPO, the State retained a 25% shareholding in Aer Lingus to protect our strategic interests in a number of ways. Firstly, having a shareholding at this level acts as a block against a hostile takeover. The value of the State’s shareholding in this regard has already been demonstrated and has ensured that the aviation market in Ireland will continue to be served by at least two strong competing airlines thus ensuring consumer choice and competition.

Secondly, the shareholding also ensures that the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company cannot be changed without the approval of the State. This, in turn, means that the safeguard measures relating to a disposal of Heathrow slots cannot be changed by other shareholders. Also, the provision whereby the State can appoint three directors to the Board cannot be changed by other shareholders.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government recently rejected Ryanair’s Cash Offer of €1.40 per share for the State’s 25.1% shareholding in Aer Lingus. The Government took the view that the Ryanair Offer greatly undervalued Aer Lingus. The implications of the proposed takeover for competition in the Irish airline sector was also a major consideration. The cornerstone of Irish aviation policy is, and has been for many years, to encourage competition. Because we live on an island Irish consumers depend very heavily on air transport. The virtual monopoly that would have resulted if the Offer had been accepted would not have been in the best interests of Irish consumers. The Offer by Ryanair did not include any remedies to address the negative impact the takeover would have had on competition. The Government will continue to exercise its shareholder role in Aer Lingus with a view to protecting Ireland’s strategic interests.

The global economic downturn and the reduction in consumer demand for air travel are currently having a negative impact on the airline industry globally. From an Irish economy perspective, the overarching priority is to maintain the highest possible levels of connectivity between Ireland and key markets around the world and my Department will continue to closely monitor developments in the aviation sector that impact on that objective.

I am satisfied that our strategy for aviation is appropriate and that a major review along the lines proposed by the Deputy is not warranted at this time.

Light Rail Project.

85. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding Metro North; if he will confirm that there have been no changes to the route or underground nature of the service provided in the long-standing Metro North plans; when construction works will commence on the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5806/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Good progress continues to be made on the Metro North project. The Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) has made an application to An Bord Pleanála for a railway order and, subject to the grant of an enforceable railway order, preparatory works such as utility diversions will commence later in the year. The first round of tenders for the Public Private Partnership (PPP) contract are due to be submitted to the RPA at the end of this month.

The RPA has made no changes to the route of Metro North, either underground or on the surface, as outlined in the railway order application to An Bord Pleanála.

The start and completion dates of Transport 21 projects, which have not yet commenced, will be determined by the outcome of the statutory approval and procurement processes and the funding allocation available during the current difficult economic climate. My priority for public transport is to deliver additional capacity across all modes as quickly as possible and major projects, such as Metro North, will be particularly important in this regard.

In accordance with the requirements of the Government decision on Transport 21, Metro North will be submitted to Government for a final decision on the project on the completion of the tender process.

Rail Freight Services.

86. **Deputy Kieran O'Donnell** asked the Minister for Transport his proposals to increase the use of rail freight and the role the proposed freight forum will have; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5994/09]

87. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Transport when he will establish the industry and stakeholder forum for the development of freight that was proposed in the new Smarter Transport document; the persons he will appoint to this forum; the remit of the forum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5824/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 86 and 87 together.

I propose to establish a forum on the movement of goods, as set out in the Smarter Travel policy paper, later this year. My Department is currently undertaking preparatory work on the membership, tasks and timescales for the forum. The forum will address both economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability matters associated with the movement of goods by air, sea, rail and road.

The realistic potential for rail freight and its role within an integrated freight transport strategy will be among the matters explored by the forum.

Iarnród Éireann continues to pursue a policy of growing its rail freight business where opportunities present and of returning the rail freight business to profitability. In that context, Iarnród Éireann has made progress in recent years in growing the rail freight business in areas where it holds a competitive advantage over road haulage, e.g. large volumes or trainloads over longer distances.

Rail freight is fully liberalised since 1st January, 2007, and while no applications have been made for entry to the market to date, any expressions of interest would be welcomed.

Taxi Regulations.

88. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport if he reviewed recent proposals from the Joint Committee on Transport on reforming the regulation of the taxi industry including the legal opinion prepared by a person (details supplied) for the Committee

on the possibility of introducing a cap or moratorium on the issuing of taxi licences; if he will reform the regulation of the taxi sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5799/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Under the Taxi Regulation Act, 2003, the Commission for Taxi Regulation is the independent public body responsible for the development and maintenance of the regulatory framework for the control and operation, including licensing, of taxis, hackneys, limousines and their drivers. However, the Commission does not have any remit or statutory power under the Taxi Regulation Act in relation to the control of the number of licences issued.

My Department has received a copy of the opinion of the Senior Counsel on taxi deregulation referred to by the Deputy. The proposals contained in the Senior Counsel's Opinion are being examined by my Department's legal advisors. I am expecting to receive shortly from the Commission of Taxi Regulation the economic review into small public service vehicles sector it has commissioned, together with the views of the Oireachtas Committee on Transport in that regard. When the Commission's review and deliberation of the Oireachtas Committee are completed and published, I will consider any recommendations relevant to my statutory obligations.

Private Transport Services.

89. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Transport his views on whether the granting of licences to private bus companies at the expense of Bus Éireann has systematically undermined the public transport system. [5840/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): There is no basis for the presumption that the granting of licences for the provision of public bus services to private operators has undermined the public transport system. On the contrary, the presence in the market of over 600 services being provided under licence by private operators contributes significantly to the overall level of transport service available to the public.

Congestion Charges.

90. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport if he will rule out the introduction of a congestion charge within three years as he suggested at the recent launch of the Deloitte review of Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann in view of the ongoing public transport deficit in the greater Dublin area; if he is currently reviewing any other fiscal measures including road pricing systems such as currently operate in the Netherlands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5802/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I will not rule in or out the potential fiscal measures needed to reduce congestion in the Greater Dublin Area. Although I expressed an opinion that congestion charges might ultimately be needed to help free up road space for alternative transport, I am not considering or proposing any specific measures at this point in time.

The Government's approach to this issue is set out in Action 11 of the new smarter travel policy framework which I launched recently. It states that fiscal measures would be needed to act as a disincentive to unnecessary car travel.

In relation to emissions, the Government has already introduced fiscal measures by ensuring that the VRT and Motor Tax systems, from July 2008, are entirely based on CO₂ emissions with

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rates considerably varying between models on the basis of their emissions. Some reductions in CO₂ emissions are likely to emerge even in the short term from this change.

I believe that further research on the optimal measures needed will be warranted after we see the recommendations of the Commission on Taxation Report due later this year.

Departmental Expenditure.

91. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Transport the cost to date regarding the implementation of the State Airports Act 2004; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5975/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Some €333,000 has been paid by my Department to consultants for the costs associated with business planning and other aspects of the implementation of the State Airports Act 2004. This work included provision of advice to the Department on the financial and other conditions necessary to facilitate separation, the preparation and evaluation of business plans and on resolution of certain issues identified in the business planning process.

I took account of this advice in reaching my recent decision to defer separation to 2011, having regard to the impact of changed economic circumstances on the State airports.

EU Directives.

92. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Transport his views on whether the EU's Road Transport Working Time Directive should be applied to all self-employed transport workers; his further views on double jobbing in the taxi industry and calls for the return of the 40 hour availability rule for taxi workers and on EU proposals to reform the Working Time Directive; if he will make recommendations to this effect to the Road Safety Authority or the EU Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5811/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I understand that the Road Safety Authority is consulting employer and union interests concerning proposals by the European Commission to amend the EU Road Transport Working Time Directive 2002/15. The consultation was placed on the RSA website on 4th February 2009 together with supporting documentation. The Road Safety Authority will be reporting to my Department on the outcome of the consultation in March and decisions will be taken on an appropriate national position on the Commission's proposals. I do not intend to pre-empt the outcome of the RSA's consultation.

My Department does not have responsibility for the general Working Time Directive which is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Regarding double jobbing in the taxi industry and an 'availability' rule, the Commission for Taxi Regulation was established under the Taxi Regulation Act 2003. I understand from discussions between my Department and the taxi industry representatives that they are developing proposals in that regard and when submitted to my Department, they will be referred to the appropriate authority for consideration.

Light Rail Project.

93. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Transport the estimated start and completion dates for Metro West, Luas line BX and D, and the Dublin rail interconnector; if he has produced alternative public transport provisions for the newly regenerated district around Broadstone if Luas line D does not proceed on schedule; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5808/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The start and completion dates for projects which are yet to commence construction, including Metro West, Luas Line BX/D and the DART Underground, will be determined in each case by the outcome of public consultation, the statutory planning approval process, the public procurement process and the availability of financial resources.

Indicative completion dates for major projects can be found on the Transport 21 website.

The proposed new DIT campus in the Grangegorman/Broadstone area will be adequately served by public transport, including the proposed new Luas line D.

Road Network.

94. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Transport if he will report on the recently announced Regional and Local Roads Programme 2009 and the National Roads Programme 2009; the road building, maintenance and upgrade projects which will not proceed in view of the €240 million reduction in the national roads budget for 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5813/09]

275. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport his priorities for the development of the roads capital programme over the next five years in view of the prevailing or anticipated economic climate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6188/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 94 and 275 together.

As Minister for Transport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme element of Transport 21. The implementation of individual national road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Act, 1993 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

My Department's allocation for National Roads Projects in 2008 was €1.657 billion. In 2009 the allocation is €1.449 billion.

The upgrading of the major interurban routes connecting Dublin with the Border, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford is on target for completion, as promised, in 2010. Work is now completed or well underway on the whole major inter-urban network. The M1 to the Border was completed in 2007 and, by the end of this year, over 70% of the routes will be open to traffic.

The Government has already made it clear, under Transport 21, that priorities for the roads investment programme after the completion of the major interurban network in 2010 will be the Atlantic Road Corridor as well as the improvement of other key national primary routes and the targeted improvement of certain national secondary routes.

Because of financial constraints the NRA has not been able to proceed with some of its planned work in 2009. This work will proceed in later years as funding becomes available.

As regards regional and local roads, road grants totalling €607.5 million were allocated to local authorities on 2 February 2009. Expenditure of these grants is now a matter for each individual authority.

Question No. 95 answered with Question No. 58.

Smarter Travel Policy.

96. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport the degree to which funding has been put in place to meet the requirements of his recently announced proposals to transfer

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500,000 motorists to public transport and bicycles with particular reference to specific targets and timescales; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5879/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Smarter Travel Policy is a long-term vision that stretches from 2009 to 2020 and is estimated to cost, over its lifetime, €4.5 billion.

The action period of 12 years is very ambitious. The wide-ranging nature of the individual issues and the fact that the change needed will be incremental year-on-year means that it is not possible to assign precise deadlines to each action.

The funding for the policy will be a matter for decisions by the Government in the light of prevailing economic and Budgetary parameters. In the present circumstances, the focus will be on making progress from within existing resources.

Notwithstanding this, intensive work has started on delivering actions in 2009. The National Sustainable Travel Office has been established. The proposed National Cycle Policy framework will be launched shortly. In the near future I will also be announcing a sustainable travel demonstration fund to support innovative projects in this area. This year up to 150,000 school children will be reached through the Green Schools Travel initiative. In all, I will be increasing the funding for sustainable travel projects from €3 million in 2008 to €14 million in 2009. This is in addition to other investments under Transport 21 in 2009. These infrastructural improvements will support sustainable travel targets.

Light Rail Projects.

97. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport when the feasibility studies for light rail systems in Cork, Limerick and Galway as proposed in the new Smarter Travel document will be published; the person or the agency currently undertaking these feasibility studies and their remit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5819/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Action 12 of my Department's sustainable transport policy document Smarter Travel, which I launched recently, refers inter alia to completing and acting on feasibility studies into Bus Rapid Transit systems and/or Light Rail systems in Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. These studies derive from a commitment which we made in the 2007 Programme for Government, to carry out feasibility studies into Luas-style Light Rail Transport systems in these cities within two years. I have since asked that these studies should include consideration of Bus Rapid Transit.

The responsibility for carrying out these studies rests with the relevant local authorities. I expect all of these studies to be completed within the original timeframe, and I expect them all to be published by the local authorities.

Proposed Legislation.

98. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Transport when the Harbours Bill will be introduced into Dáil Éireann; if he will ensure that the Bill is amended to protect and enhance the role of worker directors and local representatives in the governance of the national ports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5833/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): The Harbours (Amendment) Bill 2008 is currently at Committee Stage in the Seanad. The primary purpose of the Bill is to give effect to certain aspects of the Ports Policy Statement, which was launched in January 2005 and is available to view on my Department's website.

One of the key recommendations of the Ports Policy Statement was the need to enhance port company performance through reform of the board structure. These recommendations are the basis for the provisions on board structure, which are contained in the Harbours (Amendment) Bill 2008. There will be ample opportunity to debate these proposals and other related matters during the passage of the Bill through the House.

Question No. 99 answered with Question No. 63.

Question No. 100 answered with Question No. 58.

Public Private Partnerships.

101. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Transport the number of public private partnerships his Department is currently involved in and for which infrastructural projects; the value of each of these PPPs; the breakdown of the public and private financial contribution to each partnership; if he is currently looking to undertake new PPP arrangements and the projects in relation to same; if Metro North is a key project in this regard; if he is seeking the backing of a Middle Eastern consortium for a new PPP; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5812/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): As Minister for Transport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme element of Transport 21. The implementation of individual national road projects, including Public Private Partnership (PPP) schemes, is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Act 1993, in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

In addition, the allocation of funding in relation to the construction or maintenance of such projects is a matter for the NRA under section 19 of the Act (as amended by the Roads Act 2007).

The NRA's current PPP programme comprises ten national road improvement schemes. Four of these have already been completed:

- M50 Second Link Bridge;
- M1 Dundalk Western Bypass;
- M4 Kilkock-Enfield-Kinnegad Bypass;
- M8 Rathcormac — Fermoy Bypass;

The six schemes under construction at present are as follows:

- M3 Clonee — North of Kells
- M6 Galway — Ballinasloe
- N7 Limerick Southern Ring Road
- M7/M8 Portlaoise — Cullahill/Castletown
- N25 Waterford City Bypass
- M50 Upgrade phase 2.

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The details of the PPP contracts entered into by the NRA are commercially sensitive under the terms of those contracts. The NRA is currently developing proposals for a second phase of national roads projects to be procured as PPPs.

As regards public transport, it is intended to procure Metro North, Metro West, the DART Underground and the proposed Luas Lucan line mainly through PPP. I am not in a position to give any information in relation to the budget for these projects in advance of the completion of the public procurement processes for each of them. The publication of such commercially sensitive information prior to the completion of the competitive procurement processes would prejudice the State's capacity to derive maximum value for money in respect of these projects.

The procurement process for the Metro North PPP contract is already underway and the first round of tenders are due to be submitted to the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) at the end of this month. As I have pointed out on previous occasions, my priority for public transport is to deliver additional capacity across all modes as quickly as possible and major projects such as Metro North and the DART Underground will be hugely important in this regard.

Proposed Legislation.

102. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport if he has made a decision on changing the legal blood alcohol level for motorists; if so, the proposed new level will be; the reason the decision to change the BAC level has been delayed for so long; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5834/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): The Government gave its approval late last year to the drafting of a Road Traffic and Transport Bill, which inter alia proposes a reduction in the legal Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) level for drivers. It is hoped to have the Bill published in the coming months.

Road Traffic Legislation.

103. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport if he will allocate responsibility to a Minister of State for reviewing and updating the various Road Traffic Acts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [3488/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): I already have responsibility for the road safety functions within the Department, which includes the Road Traffic Acts, corporate governance of the Road Safety Authority and the Medical Bureau of Road Safety, and the making of secondary legislation on issues such as driver testing and licensing, vehicle standards and the regulation of traffic.

The Road Traffic Acts are kept under review and amended from time to time, and my Department is in regular contact with all the agencies involved in road safety and traffic, including my colleague the Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform, An Garda Síochána and the Road Safety Authority.

The text of a Road Traffic Bill is currently being drafted for publication in the coming months.

Rail Network.

104. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Transport the estimated completion

dates for the Navan rail line and the western rail corridor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5809/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Transport 21 provides for the re-opening of the Western Rail Corridor on a phased basis in the period to 2015. Work on the line between Ennis and Athenry commenced in 2007 and services are due to commence between Ennis and Athenry in the autumn of this year.

Planning and design work on phases 2 (Athenry — Tuam) and 3 (Tuam — Claremorris) is a matter for Iarnród Éireann as part of its Transport 21 programme. I understand that further studies are planned for 2009 to determine up to date costings of phases 2 and 3 of the Western Rail Corridor.

Transport 21 provides for the development of the Navan Rail Link on a phased basis in the period to 2015. Work commenced on the Clonsilla — Dunboyne section (Phase 1) in late 2008 and is due for completion in 2010. The current position regarding the Dunboyne — Navan section (Phase 2) is that a scoping study has been completed and Iarnród Éireann is now proceeding to undertake a feasibility study on the two alternative routes identified in the scoping study. The start and completion dates of Transport 21 projects in planning, such as phases 2 and 3 of the Western Rail Corridor and phase 2 of the Navan Rail Link, will in each case be determined by the outcome of public consultation, the statutory planning approval process, the public procurement process and the availability of financial resources determined by the funding allocation available during the current difficult economic climate.

Smarter Travel Policy.

105. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Transport if he will confirm that Galway has been chosen as the pilot demonstration city or town for the transport sustainability measures proposed in Smarter Travel; if this decision is pending; the way or if there will be a nationwide competition for local authorities transportation departments to win this funding; when the programme will commence in the chosen city or town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5820/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Action 44 of the new smarter travel policy framework, which I launched recently, outlines the Government's aim to establish and support a national competition to deliver outstanding examples of sustainable travel towns and rural areas.

It is my intention to pursue this initiative in 2009 and it will be an opportunity for local authorities to identify and put forward examples of transport sustainability best practice at local level.

At national level I first intend exploring the potential of a partnership between the Departments of Transport, Health and Children and Environment, Heritage and Local Government to support this initiative. I will publish the outline of the scheme after such preliminary work.

It follows, therefore, that no location has yet been chosen. In relation to Galway City, my Department has provided funding to support the operation of the Galway Transportation Unit. The purpose of the Unit is to develop and implement an Integrated Transport Solution for Galway City in accordance with best practice and the objectives outlined in Transport 21. My Department has agreed to cover half the cost of its operation for up to five years. I would expect that such planning will reflect the new smarter travel policy and that any plan will also be the result of very close liaison between both Galway City and County Councils.

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In my opinion such integrated sustainable transport plans will be the ones most likely to attract future transport investment funding as it becomes available.

Question No. 106 answered with Question No. 62.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

107. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport his views on whether commitments to make a 20% cut in greenhouse gases by 2020 will be hindered by the recent cuts in Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus. [5839/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector requires an integrated approach across all areas of transport supply and demand. The SmarterTravel policy sets out such an approach, and will ensure that the transport sector, including bus services, makes a meaningful contribution to Ireland's commitments on greenhouse gas emissions.

I do not see the present financial difficulties of Dublin Bus or Bus Éireann as impacting negatively on the long-term goals of the Smarter Travel policy. As the Deloitte report on a cost and efficiency review of the two companies makes clear, there is now an opportunity, in the case of Dublin Bus, to create a simplified network offering improved services with improved cost efficiency. Such an approach, complemented by other measures to improve the efficiency of bus services such as more bus priorities and integrated ticketing will any potential adverse impact of service changes on emissions.

Question No. 108 answered with Question No. 77.

Ministerial Appointments.

109. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport when he will appoint a new chairperson of Dublin Port; if he will appoint a person with strong experience and expertise of ports here and the maritime industry in view of the challenges facing Dublin Port and the whole marine sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5832/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The chairman of Dublin Port Company announced his resignation from the post on 29 January 2009. The chairman's resignation leaves a vacancy on the board to be filled. Before filling such a vacancy, section 30 of the Harbours Act 1996 provides for consultation with a number of bodies.

Various bodies including the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland, IBEC and ICTU have been invited to submit nominations for this vacancy. I will take any such nominations into account when making my decision.

The Ports Policy Statement published in January 2005 gives a number of indications with regard to port company board appointments. It points out that an appropriate balance of skills, competencies and experience is required at board level in order to ensure that the board is capable of providing the leadership and strategic direction required to control and guide the port efficiently and effectively. It is also important that board members cultivate a commercial ethos and display a genuine dedication to the welfare of the port and all its stakeholders. I will bear these points in mind when making my decision.

Road Network.

110. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Transport the status of the long promised

Leinster outer orbital route and the Dublin eastern bypass; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5814/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): As the Deputy will be aware, as Minister for Transport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in respect of the national roads programme element of Transport 21. The implementation of individual national road projects, such as the Leinster Orbital Route or the Eastern Bypass, is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Act 1993 in conjunction with the relevant local authorities.

Neither Transport 21 nor the National Development Plan provides any funding for a Leinster orbital Route or the Eastern Bypass to be constructed in the period to 2015.

It is clear that, in the current economic climate, further progress on projects such as the Leinster Orbital Route and the Dublin Easter Bypass will only be possible as and when resources become available. Both proposals remain important potential elements of our longer-term infrastructure development. My Department will continue to liaise with the National Roads Authority with a view to ensuring that route options are preserved free of impediment for these potential projects.

Question No. 111 answered with Question No. 82.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

112. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport the estimated transport emissions for 2010, 2012, 2015 and 2020; the expected evolution of CO₂ emissions if the economy contracts by up to 5% or more each year to 2011 and 2012; his views on when, within the context of the new smarter travel sustainable transport plan, transport carbon emissions will be stabilised and then fall; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5818/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The production of CO₂ emissions projections is a matter for the Environmental Protection Agency. The latest such data available to my Department was published by the Agency on 16 September 2008.

At that time transport CO₂ emissions for 2010 were projected by the Agency to be in the region of 15 million tonnes. For 2015 and 2020, the projections were in the region of 16 and 17 million tonnes respectively.

With regard to the likely effects of the current economic situation on future transport emissions, it is not possible, at this stage, to make such predictions with accuracy.

The Government's aim is to achieve emissions reductions that are sustainable in the long term. It is therefore vital to address the necessary changes in personal behaviour over the short, medium, and long term, as outlined in the SmarterTravel policy.

Proposed Legislation.

113. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Transport when he will bring forward legislation to reform the 1932 bus licensing law; the new measures the proposed new bus legislation will contain; the way he will reform the bus licensing system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5804/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Government has recently approved the General Scheme of the Public Transport Regulation Bill which contains proposals for a new bus licensing regime which will replace the Road Transport Act 1932 and the provisions of the Transport Act 1958 that relate to the provision of bus services by the State bus companies. In

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accordance with the Programme for Government commitment, the proposed licensing regime will provide a level playing field for all bus market participants. It will establish a clear structure against which applications for bus route licences will be considered as well as a modern system of penalties and associated powers for revocation of licences.

The General Scheme of the Bill also contains proposals for extending nationally the provisions of the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 in relation to the provision of public service obligations; assigning responsibility to the DTA for bus licensing and public transport services contracts nationwide; the amalgamation of the Commission for Taxi Regulation into the DTA, and the renaming of the DTA as the National Transport Authority given its proposed national focus in relation to commercial bus licensing, future bus and rail subvention and the regulation of small public service vehicles.

In the light of the recent Government approval of the General Scheme of the Public Transport Regulation Bill, the Bill will now be drafted and published as soon as possible.

Smarter Travel Policy.

114. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Transport when he will publish the new national walking strategy; the measures he will include in the new strategy to promote walking and the increased safety of pedestrians; the estimated cost of the new walking strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5823/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The commitment to deliver a National Walking Policy is contained in one of 49 actions in the Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future, which is the new Government policy on transport. I launched the policy last week and it covers the period 2009 to 2020. It will take some time to implement the incremental change necessary to meet the Government's targets.

The National Walking Policy will have to address all aspects of walking from the safety of pedestrians in commuting and their daily activities to recreational walking, including rural walking. In relation to the latter, good progress is being made by both the Ministers for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism in developing recreational walking. The new policy will integrate best practice from existing initiatives and examine additional ones, which will be needed to create a culture of walking in Ireland.

Given the range of issues to be addressed in the new Smarter Travel policy, I expect that progress on the walking policy in 2009 will focus on researching best practice and identifying the issues so that we are in a better position to publish a policy in 2010. While the cost of elements of a National Walking Policy could be estimated, many aspects of it would relate to other expenditure areas relating to traffic management and it is not possible to offer an overall estimate at this early stage.

Public-Private Sector Pay.

115. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Taoiseach if he will outline the average hourly and yearly pay rates among the lower paid, middle income and higher income groups between the private sector and public sector workforce in 2000, in 2005 and in 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5642/09]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Pat Carey): Data from the annual National Employment Survey (NES) is available for the following periods and shows the average hourly earnings for the lower paid (those earnings less than €15 per hour), middle

income (those earning between €15 and €30 per hour) and the higher income groups (those earning more than €30 per hour).

Average Hourly Earnings

Reference Month	Public sector			Private sector		
	Less than €15	Between €15 and €30	More than €30	Less than €15	Between €15 and €30	More than €30
March 2003	11.11	20.83	42.15	9.96	19.91	45.62
March 2006	12.32	21.45	42.99	10.71	20.12	46.14
October 2006	12.58	21.22	45.17	10.66	20.15	45.47

Annual earnings data from the annual National Employment Survey (NES) is also available for the following periods and shows the average annual earnings for the lower paid (those earnings less than €30,000 per year), middle income (those earning between €30,000 and €60,000 per year) and the higher income groups (those earning more than €60,000 per year).

Average Hourly Earnings

Reference year	Public sector			Private sector		
	Less than €30,000	Between €30,000 and €60,000	More than €60,000	Less than €30,000	Between €30,000 and €60,000	More than €60,000
2002	20,128	42,479	75,353	18,578	40,222	92,334
2005	20,278	42,479	78,993	19,142	40,699	96,843
2006	20,158	42,946	78,359	19,333	40,929	91,832

National Flag.

116. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Taoiseach if it is correct that at all the Government press conferences only the EU flag is flying and not the Tricolour. [5581/09]

The Taoiseach: The National flag and the EU flag are both represented in the backdrop to the podium in the Government Press Centre. In addition, the National flag is present at all major press conferences held there. However, camera angles, interview positions etc. can mean that the National flag does not always come into view in newspaper photographs or in television coverage. While obviously my Department is not in a position to control such matters, the Government Press Office will try to ensure as far as possible the National flag is given prominence at events in the Press Centre.

Freedom of Information.

117. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the number of Freedom of Information requests received by his Department each month in 2007 and 2008 in tabular format; the number acceded to; the number refused; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5582/09]

The Taoiseach: The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following tables.

[The Taoiseach.]

Year: 2007

Month	Rec'd	Granted	Part Granted	Refused i.e. exempt from release	No Records	Withdrawn
Jan	14	5	5		4	
Feb	1		1			
Mar	8	1	3	3	1	
April	4	2			2	
May	2				2	
June	6		1	1	4	
July	9	4	1	2	2	
Aug	10	3	3	4		
Sept	0					
Oct	4	2		1	1	
Nov	7	3	2		1	1
Dec	6	3	1			2
Total	71	23	17	11	17	3

Year: 2008

Month	Rec'd	Granted	Part Granted	Refused i.e. exempt from release	No Records	Withdrawn
Jan	4	1	2			1
Feb	5	3	1			1
Mar	1	1				
April	5	3	2			
May	12	4	5		2	1
June	1	1				
July	5	2	2			1
Aug	7	2	1	1		3
Sept	8	4	3			1
Oct	11	4	5	1	1	
Nov	14	6	4		2	2
Dec	10	7	1	1	1	
Total	83	38	26	3	6	10

All FOI applications received in my Department are processed by statutorily designated officials and, in accordance with those statutes, I have no role in relation to processing individual applications.

Smarter Travel Policy.

118. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach his Department's work place travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5856/09]

The Taoiseach: My Department supports the Government's Smarter Travel Policy, launched by the Minister for Transport on 5 February 2009. This travel policy recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable.

As announced in budget 2009, the provision of bicycles and associated safety equipment will be treated as a tax exemption benefit-in-kind for employees who agree to use the bicycle to cycle to work. In light of this, my Department intends to provide a covered-in bicycle shelter for staff. Additionally, my Department supplies limited car parking facilities to staff and visitors to Government Buildings.

National Flag.

119. **Deputy Michael Noonan** asked the Taoiseach the protocol which applies to the flying of the EU flag and the Tricolour at occasions such as press conferences at which he is in attendance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6013/09]

The Taoiseach: The National flag and the EU flag are both represented in the backdrop to the podium in the Government Press Centre. In addition, the National flag is present at all major press conferences held there. However, camera angles, interview positions etc can mean that the National flag does not always come into view in newspaper photographs or in television coverage. While obviously my Department is not in a position to control such matters, the Government Press Office will try to ensure, as far as possible, the National flag is given prominence at events in the Press Centre.

Ministerial Travel.

120. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Taoiseach the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related Ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick's Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick's Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6164/09]

The Taoiseach: The official costs to my Department associated with St. Patrick's day 2008 are detailed in the following table:

2008	Costs
	€
Foreign Travel	2,968
Accommodation	14,202
Official Costs (including Subsistence, Official gifts and Photography)	4,946
Total	22,116

I expect to visit New York and Washington during my official trip to the United States for St. Patrick's Day in March .

The St. Patrick's Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised and projected costs cannot be determined at this stage. The cost of the individual programmes and accompanying delegations will, in all cases, be kept to a reasonable minimum. In view of the current difficult economic climate, the potential provided by these visits to promote trade and business opportunities will be maximised and will be a key component of the 2009 programmes.

Work Permits.

121. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she will support a matter (details supplied). [5608/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): Since 2004, Irish labour market policy has been to ensure that general labour and skills needs are met from within the workforce of the European Union. For strategic skills/labour shortages in designated occupations in key economic sectors such as healthcare, information technology and financial services, Government policy is to issue employment permits for the employment of non-EEA nationals for specific vacancies and in response to employer demand. The various schemes that give effect to such policies were introduced under the Employment Permits Act, 2006.

Currently employment permit holders constitute approximately 1.5% of the total labour force. Given that our current employment permit arrangements were designed to be vacancy-driven, the numbers of permit applications and consequent numbers of permits issued over the last six months have been showing a consistent downward trend.

I am currently having our employment permit arrangements reviewed to ensure their ongoing relevance to the needs of the Irish labour market.

Employment Rights.

122. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she has received a reply from the National Employment Rights Authority and the Health and Safety Authority in response to Parliamentary Question No. 144 of 9 December 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5622/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): As I indicated in my reply on 9 December, I referred the matter raised by the Deputy at that time to the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) and the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) for investigation by them as the authorities with responsibility in that regard. The investigations are day-to-day operational matters for those bodies and are not matters in which I have a function. Accordingly, I do not as a matter of course receive reports on the progress or outcome of individual cases.

FÁS Training Programmes.

123. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the policies she and the State agencies have in view of recent announcements or initiatives being undertaken by FÁS to upskill personnel in electrical trades, technicians and engineering personnel, who would have worked in the construction industry and are now unemployed, in order that they would become employable to other industries (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5627/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I visited a business that operate a Technical Training Centre, with particular focus on Automation including PLC's (Programmable Logic Controllers) and VSD's (Variable Speed Drives). These systems that they train on, are at the heart of every Industrial Business in Ireland and covers several Industries such as Pharmaceutical, Power, Electronics, Mining, Foods and Beverage etc. Electricians, Technicians and Engineers would be expected to have this knowledge in these industries. Last year the companies' courses would have run under the CDP section in FÁS. The CDP programme is only available for persons employed. The company is finding that Electricians, in particular, are looking to upskill and be available for Industries with a focus on Automation. Below are some of the training courses

FÁS provides significant up-skilling training in automation for both employed and unemployed Electrical and Engineering crafts-persons and technicians in many of its Training

Centres and also tenders with private providers registered on the FÁS National Register of Trainers when additional training capacity is required.

FÁS provides comprehensive Automation Training Programmes at FETAC Level 5 at Limerick Training Centre and programmes at level 6 in Dublin, Athlone and Cork Training Centres. FÁS has recently developed a number of short automation and CNC courses suitable for unemployed electrical and engineering craftspersons and technicians to broaden their skill base for employment in manufacturing and engineering sectors. The courses are in the following disciplines: Hydraulics, CNC Competencies, Pneumatic, Programmable Logic Controllers and Electrical/Electronic Control Systems.

If the demand for these courses exceeds the supply, FÁS at a local level will go to tender to approved trainers registered with the National Register of Trainers (NRT) in this field. It is important that trainers with the capacity to provide this training are registered on the NRT in order that they may tender for contracts as the opportunity arises.

Departmental Agencies.

124. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the budget and staff employed by the National Employment Rights Authority for each year of its existence; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5686/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): NERA was established on an interim basis in February 2007. Staff attached to the Labour Inspectorate, Employment Rights Information Unit and Employment Rights Prosecution and Enforcement Unit of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment were subsumed into NERA at that time.

98 members of staff were employed by NERA at 31 December 2007. At 31 December 2008, NERA employed 133 staff members of staff. The current staff complement is 131.

NERA's outturn for 2007 totalled €6.957 million.

NERA's provisional outturn for 2008 stands at €9.595 million.

NERA's estimate provision for 2009 amounts to €9.701 million.

County Enterprise Boards.

125. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if funding will be made available to county enterprise boards for the provision of re-training in each board area in respect of persons who have lost their business or enterprise or for those who are seeking to commence new business and small to medium sized enterprise opportunities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5745/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy John McGuinness): The 35 County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) were set up in 1993 to provide support for micro-enterprises in the start-up and expansion phases, to promote and develop indigenous micro-enterprise potential and to stimulate economic activity and entrepreneurship at local level. The CEBs deliver a series of Programmes to underpin this role and they can provide both financial and non-financial assistance to a project promoter.

The Boards are widely dispersed geographically and provide a single point of contact at local level for new and established small businesses. All areas of the country are served by and benefit from, the full range of Enterprise Board grant supports and entrepreneurial develop-

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ment programmes. Subject to certain eligibility criteria enterprises may access assistance and support from the CEBs. The forms of financial assistance which are available, subject to certain restrictions, include Capital Grants, Employment Grants and Feasibility Study Grants. The provision of non-financial assistance can take the form of a wide range of business advice such as Programmes covering Business Management, Mentoring, E-commerce, Enterprise Education, and Women in Business networks.

The focus of CEB activity has been increasingly on the provision of “soft” supports — management training, mentoring, advisory and information services, etc. A significant allocation is made to the CEBs each year for the provision of these soft support or Measure 2 activities to support start-up and development of the microenterprise sector. In addition, CEB staff would be engaged on a daily basis in the provision of an informal information and advisory service to local entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs.

The Capital Allocation for the 35 CEBs under the 2009 Estimates Process stands at €20.8m for the provision of grants and soft supports to enterprises. In 2009 the Boards will continue to be actively involved in the area of economic development and will ensure that available funds are targeted to maximise entrepreneurial development. This will be done not just by direct grant aid to businesses and project promoters but also through the provision of a range of other important business supports such as mentoring, business training and business advice, all of which help to stimulate indigenous enterprise creation.

Proposed Legislation.

126. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her plans to update the Competition Act 2002 and in particular to alter the Act in order that meaningful discussions can take place with the doctors’ unions, the Irish Dental Association and Irish Actors Equity Union amongst others; when she expects legislation to be presented to Dáil Éireann for approval; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5771/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I intend to bring forward legislation during the course of this year to give effect to the amalgamation of the National Consumer Agency and the Competition Authority as announced in the Budget speech last October. The legislation will encompass the outcome of the review of the operation and implementation of the Competition Act 2002, the amendments to section 4 of the Act subject to consistency with EU competition law and the amalgamation of the two bodies.

Smarter Travel Policy.

127. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her Department’s work place travel plans; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5849/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Government’s policy document “Smarter Travel — A Sustainable Transport Future”, which was launched by the Minister for Transport on 5 February 2009, recognises the role that Workplace Travel Plans can play in reducing car dependency and encouraging employees to use alternative modes of transport to travel to work.

At present, my Department operates a Travel Pass scheme which encourages staff to avail of public transport to travel to work. Under this scheme, which was introduced by the Department of Finance in 2001, an employee can forego part of his or her salary in lieu of the provision

by my Department of an annual bus or rail pass. A particular attraction of the scheme for staff is that the employee is not liable to pay tax and PRSI on the cost of the travel pass provided by the employer.

In addition to continuing to operate the Travel Pass scheme, my Department will support the actions on Workplace Travel Plans which are to be developed under the Government's Smarter Travel policy.

Croke Park Tickets.

128. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if FÁS has sold back all its ten year premium tickets at Croke Park; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5904/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I understand that the Director General of FÁS has returned all ten-year premium tickets to Croke Park, requesting a refund on the unused portion of the term of the tickets.

Employment Support Services.

129. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of apprentices who have commenced their off the job experience to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6009/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Since 5 January 2009, 5,597 apprentices have commenced their off-the-job training. The following is the breakdown by each of the three off-the-job phases:

Phase 2 = 1,947 apprentices;

Phase 4 = 2,008 apprentices;

Phase 6 = 1,642 apprentices.

Departmental Agencies.

130. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the membership of the boards of State agencies under her Department; if any board members have served more than two terms; if there are cases in which a chief executive subsequently became chairman during the past ten years; if one or more members of the audit committee in each case has specific financial expertise; and if the companies disclose necessary action to remedy significant failings in internal controls. [6018/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): It has not been possible in the time available to compile the information as requested by the Deputy. My officials are working on preparing the material and I will communicate with the Deputy as soon as the information is available.

FÁS Training Programmes.

131. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the competency development programme organised by FÁS has been suspended which will have a negative impact on persons in employment and in need of being up skilled; her views on having this programme reinstated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6101/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): FÁS has informed me that its Competency Development Programme is not suspended. However, for the last two weeks FÁS has not been making any new commitments pending its assessment of existing commitments for this year.

Ministerial Travel.

132. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related Ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick’s Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick’s Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6157/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Costs incurred by my Department in respect of Ministerial programmes for St. Patrick’s Day, 2008 are set out below.

The then Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Micheál Martin, represented the Government at the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in Rome and the Vatican City in 2008. The total cost of the visit, including the cost for the two officials who accompanied him, was €5,822.44.

The Minister of State for Labour Affairs, Billy Kelleher, represented the Government at the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in Savannah and Charleston. The total cost of the visit, including the cost for the two officials who accompanied him, was €19,979.74.

The Minister of State for Trade and Commerce, John McGuinness, represented the Government at the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in Seattle. The total cost of the visit, including the cost for his spouse and the official who accompanied him, was €21,784.86.

The then Minister of State for Science, Technology and Innovation, Michael Ahern, represented the Government at the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in Birmingham. The total cost of the visit, including the cost for his spouse and the official who accompanied him, was €3,677.92.

The St. Patrick’s Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised and projected costs cannot be determined at this stage. The cost of the individual programmes and accompanying delegations will, in all cases, be kept to a reasonable minimum. In view of the current difficult economic climate, the potential provided by these visits to promote trade and business opportunities will be maximised and will be a key component of the 2009 programmes.

Employment Support Services.

133. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she will confirm that she has applied for funding under the EU Globalisation Fund in order to support the retraining of workers losing their jobs in a company (details supplied) and other ancillary companies in the Limerick area; the estimated timeframe for a decision; the amount of money which might be advanced under this fund for this purpose; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6168/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Funding is available from the European Globalisation Fund (EGF) for the retraining of workers in EU Member States made redundant as a result of changing global trade patterns. Currently, a minimum threshold of at least 1,000 redundancies applies for a given enterprise and its suppliers. This threshold must be reached within a four months period. If redundancies occur in a particular industrial sector, the 1,000 threshold has to be realised within a nine months period. In order for an application for assistance from the EGF to be eligible, formal

notification of redundancies must issue from the company concerned to the individual workers affected.

As regards the 1,900 redundancies recently announced by DELL at its Limerick plant, no formal notification of redundancies has yet issued to the employees in question. Accordingly, no application for assistance from the EGF can be advanced at this time in respect of DELL or those that arise as a consequence of the DELL situation. Once redundancy notices have been sent to the individuals concerned, and other eligibility criteria have been met, a period of ten weeks is available within which an application to the EGF can be made. That application will then be made without any delay.

Up to €500m is available from the EGF annually and there is no minimum or maximum amount of funding that a Member State can seek. That is dependent on the particular circumstances that apply in any given case.

Pension Provisions.

134. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment further to Parliamentary Question No. 177 of 3 February 2009, the reason for the pension top-up and ex-gratia payment made and the statutory basis for these payments; and if she authorised these payments. [6327/09]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The severance package granted to the former Director General of FÁS was granted in accordance with Section 6(3) of the Labour Services Act 1987. The Labour Services Act provides that terms and conditions, including those in relation to remuneration and superannuation, of the Director General, may be determined by the Minister with the consent of the Minister of Finance.

The severance package recognised the public service given by the former Director General of FÁS during his tenure in that organisation, as well as his many years as a civil servant in my Department.

135. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the estimate of the full year and the 2009 Exchequer and local government savings, over and above the savings from the deferral of the national pay agreement, from public sector pay cut of 5% on salaries of more than €50,000, €60,000, €70,000 and €80,000 respectively, from March 2009; and the breakdown of these savings between existing and retired public sector workers. [5576/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): It is estimated that the savings in the various bands mentioned by the Deputy from a 5% cut in salary would be as follows:

Band	Estimate 2009	Estimate Full Year
€	€m	€m
50,000 upwards	290	350
60,000 upwards	160	195
70,000 upwards	125	150
80,000 upwards	95	115

There is no breakdown readily available on the distribution of pensions among retired public servants generally. The limited information that is readily available would not allow reasonable estimates to be made of the effect on pension outgo of pay cuts which were limited to certain categories of retirees.

Public Sector Salaries.

136. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the estimate of the number of existing public sector workers with salaries of more than €50,000, €60,000, €70,000 and €80,000 respectively. [5577/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The estimated numbers of public service employees (not including local authorities) in the salary bands in question (not including other payments such as overtime) are as follows:

	Number
above €50,000	102,000
above €60,000	45,000
above €70,000	31,000
above €80,000	22,000

Pension Provisions.

137. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the estimate of the existing number of retired public sector workers whose pensions are tied to grades with final salaries of more than €50,000, €60,000, €70,000 and €80,000 respectively. [5578/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The information required by the Deputy is as outlined in the following table. The information covers retired Civil Servants whose pensions are tied to the stated salary levels. I, as Minister for Finance, have statutory responsibility for Civil Service pensions. Statutory responsibility for Public Service pension schemes outside the Civil Service rests with relevant Ministers in other Departments as appropriate.

Relevant serving salary scale

Number of retired Civil Servants tied to relevant serving salary scale

	Number
€50,000 to €59,999	1,186
€60,000 to €69,999	574
€70,000 to €79,999	381
€80,000 and upwards	1,699

The statistics provided in the table above are generated on the premise that the majority of the cases involved have: (i) qualified for full pension and (ii) reached the top of their relevant pay scale prior to retirement. The combined numbers in the categories above represent approximately 24% of the overall retired Civil Service payroll.

Fiscal Policy.

138. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the value of new maturing borrowings by the State that will have to be placed during 2009; and the estimated premium over the European Central Bank rate at which he expects them to be placed. [5592/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) have advised me that Ireland has a net financing need of some €24.5 billion in 2009. This is based on:

- the forecast Exchequer Borrowing Requirement of €18 billion as set out in the Addendum to the Stability Programme Update;
- the refinancing of a €5 billion bond which matures in April; and
- some €1.4 billion in respect of the frontloading of the Exchequer contribution for 2010 for the National Pension Reserve Fund in relation to the bank recapitalisation programme.

The European Central Bank has two lending rates — the interest rate on main refinancing operations (which provide the bulk of liquidity to the banking system) currently stands at 2%; the interest rate on the marginal lending facility (which offers overnight credit to banks from the Eurosystem) currently stands at 3 per cent. These rates are short-term rates available to banks.

The NTMA intends to raise funds on the long-term government bond market through a combination of auctions and syndicated loans. It already successfully raised a five-year €6 billion bond at a coupon of 4% in early January. The yield on 10-year Irish Government Bonds is currently around 5.2%. For commercial reasons, the expected yield on bonds to be issued in 2009 is not disclosed.

Financial Institutions Support Scheme.

139. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the value of money market instruments in the banks covered by the State guarantee which come to maturity during 2009. [5593/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Deputy should note that for the purposes of reporting a consistent figure across the covered institutions, that a money market instrument is defined as short-term unsecured instruments with a maturity of one year or less and excludes deposits.

As at the 31 December 2008, the aggregate value of outstanding money market instruments maturing in 2009 for the covered institutions is approximately €78.3bn. This amount is based on information provided by the covered institutions and may change significantly where instruments mature and are rolled over during 2009.

Public Service Contracts.

140. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the details of the proposed savings in 2009 generated by the initiatives on public procurement. [5594/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Initiatives by my Department in regard to construction procurement will yield savings but these will not be quantifiable for a number of years when projects which are currently using the new form of contracts come to a conclusion.

The National Operations Unit will be established in the current year with a remit to procure goods and services and has been set a target of achievable savings of at least €25 million for this year with increased savings in subsequent years. This is in the €140 million announced as part of the adjustment package on 3 February 2009.

Tax Code.

141. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare can receive a P21 balancing statement for the year 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5610/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that a P21 balancing statement for 2007 will issue to the taxpayer in the coming days.

Pension Provisions.

142. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the distribution of employees in the public service by range of gross earnings and the estimated contribution they will make to gross and net receipts from the new pension payment. [5620/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The pension related deduction entails a deduction of 3% on the first €15,000 of annual income, 6% on the next €5,000 and 10% on the balance. This amounts to an average deduction of around 7.5% although the effect varies at different income levels. This produces a total gross saving of €1.35 billion when applied to the relevant part of the public service pay bill (excluding employers PRSI).

The following table sets out an estimate of the numbers of public servants in a range of salary bands. The recently announced public service pension related deduction will apply to all earnings, not just salary. The numbers at different bands vary from time to time depending on matters such as incremental movement, retirements etc. It is not possible to produce similar information on overall earnings as the incidence of payments such as overtime is a variable. The table does not include employees of the local authorities who are not within the public service pay and pensions bill, but who are covered by the pension related deduction.

The net amount of the pension deduction depends on individual circumstances but as a broad rule of thumb it is estimated that the tax forgone will be about one third of the overall gross amount. Information is available on my Department's website which allows the approximate impact on individual public servants to be calculated.

Salary Range	Est. Nos in range
€	
up to 25,000	22,000
25,000-30,000	33,000
30,000-35,000	38,000
35,000-40,000	36,000
40,000-45,000	33,000
45,000-50,000	36,000
50,000-55,000	30,000
55,000-60,000	27,000
60,000-65,000	9,000
65,000-70,000	5,000
70,000-75,000	3,000
75,000-80,000	6,000
80,000-85,000	4,000
85,000-90,000	3,000
90,000-95,000	3,000
95,000-100,000	3,000
greater than 100,000	9,000
Total	300,000

143. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons in the public service who are paying a 5% pension contribution towards their pension entitlement

and the number who do not; and if he will provide details of their distribution across the main categories of public service employment. [5621/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Minister for Finance has statutory responsibility for civil service pensions. Statutory responsibility for public service pension schemes outside the Civil Service rests in the first instance with the relevant Ministers in other Departments, as appropriate.

The number of civil servants in 2008 is estimated at 38,572 in whole time equivalent terms. The number of civil servants making pension contributions in 2008 on a co-ordinated basis is estimated at around 25,000.

144. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated actuarial cost of providing a pension for a public servant post their normal retiring age of 65, assuming that they had 35 years service, and had a salary at retiring of €35,000, €60,000 and €120,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5626/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): While the actual payments to a person after retirement will depend on the actual salary at retirement the actuarial costs for public servants are not generally derived for different pay rates. The actuarial costs of public servants pensions are generally expressed as a percentage of pay over the working life of a typical employee of the group in question. These costs depend not just on final pay but on other factors such as pay at entry and pay progression throughout a person's career. The latest estimate in this regard is taken from the Report of the Public Service Benchmarking Body. This report estimated the total cost in the case of a typical person entering the Civil Service after 2004 to be 26.1% of pay. This figure includes the contribution paid by employees which was estimated, on average, to represent 4.8% of pay. Therefore the estimated cost to the employer was 21.3% of pay. In arriving at their actuarial cost figure for a civil servant the Body made the following assumptions:

- age at entry: 26;
- age of retirement: 65;
- pay at entry: €25,000;
- pay at retirement: €61,000.

145. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the anomaly whereby the new pension levy will bring certain workers' salaries marginally under the standard tax rate band of €36,400 which effectively means that they will only receive relief on their pension levy contribution at the 20% rate while a person earning up to €10,000 more will not pay as much on the levy due to the fact that they will receive 41% relief of their pension levy contribution; if there are plans to address this anomaly or if it has been addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5629/09]

146. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance if, in view of the fact that some pensions are calculated on the basis of number of years service over 80 less twice the social welfare pension, which means that those on lower pay do not qualify for a Government pension in addition to their social welfare pension, there are measures that will be provided to recognise the increased contribution being paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5630/09]

151. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will introduce a pension entitlement for those public service workers who are not entitled to a pension but have been hit with the levy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5644/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 145, 146 and 151 together.

The approach to the pension related deduction is that it applies generally given the fact that all public servants enjoy the benefits of a public service pension which provides for greater security and more favourable terms than the generality of private sector pensions. The graduated approach to the payment is to ameliorate somewhat the impact on lower paid public servants.

Due to the availability of tax relief at the marginal rate for pension contributions, in certain circumstances an individual on a higher gross income may incur a lower net loss than an individual on a lower income as a result of the new pension deduction.

This situation also applied before the deduction was introduced. However, it must be stated that the income tax, PRSI and health levy system is highly progressive. Those on higher incomes pay higher rates of tax. Across the entire public service, on all grades and on all pay scales, the total deductions (which include income tax, PRSI, health levy and the new pension deduction) will be higher as a percentage of gross pay as pay levels increase.

Integration takes into account the value of the Contributory State Pension (CSP) in calculating occupational pensions. Following a recommendation of the Commission on Public Service Pensions, a new system of integration was introduced, with effect from 1 January 2004, for public service pension schemes. The revised system improved the position for people on lower rates of pay and ensured that every person who meets the requirements of the pension scheme gets an occupational pension, regardless of income. It is proposed that the deduction will confer no additional pension benefit.

147. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance the rationale behind the recent decision to introduce a public service pension levy; the reason this step is justified as opposed to a general fiscal measure that would affect all the workforce equally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5639/09]

148. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance the advantages he contends that are enjoyed by the lower paid in the public sector versus their private sector counterparts that would justify the recently announced pensions levy in view of the fact that public sector workers tended to benefit less from the economic growth that took place over the last 15 years than the private sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5640/09]

149. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance the evidence in place to show that the advantages of working in the public sector at present, with a relatively secure employment prospect versus the private sector outweigh the disadvantages in terms of earnings potential experienced during the boom times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5641/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 147 to 149, inclusive, together.

Public servants at all pay levels have access to public service pension schemes. These schemes are superior to the generality of such schemes applying in the private sector, both in relation to security and the terms on offer. It is appropriate, therefore, that a deduction should be made

to reflect this reality at a time when significant savings are needed from the public service pay bill.

I would not agree with the seeming implication in the Deputy's question that public service earnings lagged behind the private sector during the years of economic growth or that lower paid public servants did less well than their private sector counterparts. The second report of the independent Benchmarking Body (published as recently as December 2007) which evaluated the pay and jobs of grades in the public service, by reference to comparators in the private sector, concluded that 'in general public service salaries compare well with the private sector' and 'in general, where remuneration was found to be below private sector levels this arose in the case of some of the more senior grades examined'.

150. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will compare and contrast the average pension entitlement among the lower paid, middle income and higher income groups at retirement age in both the public and private sectors; the estimated pension as a proportion of income paid before and after the pension levy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5643/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Minister for Finance has statutory responsibility for Civil Service pensions. However, statutory responsibility for public service pension schemes outside the Civil Service is a matter in the first instance for the relevant Ministers in other Departments, as appropriate. Policy responsibility for the oversight of private sector pensions is a matter for the Minister for Social and Family Affairs.

As regards pension entitlements of civil servants, they are based on length of service and final pensionable remuneration. The maximum number of years of reckonable service is 40. The maximum pension payable is 50% of final pensionable remuneration. The calculation of pensions will not be affected by the proposed new deduction.

Question No. 151 answered with Question No. 145.

Financial Institutions Support Scheme.

152. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance when the review body set up to investigate the banks will report; if he is prepared to issue strong measures such as pay freezes and cuts for high earning executives irrespective of recommendations made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5646/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Government believes that pay restraint is important in the overall context of the economy and the financial supports being provided by the taxpayer to the covered institutions under the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Scheme 2008 (the Scheme).

Section 47 of the Scheme requires each covered institution to prepare a plan to structure the remuneration packages of directors and executives, including total salary, bonuses, pension payments and any other benefit, so as to take account of the objectives of the Scheme.

The Covered Institutions Remuneration Oversight Committee (CIROC) established by me under the terms of the Scheme will consider the remuneration plans of senior executives of the covered institutions. The relevant plans have been prepared and submitted by the covered institutions, and in line with timeframes set out in the Scheme, CIROC will report to me on or before 5 March 2009, making a recommendation where appropriate, on the compliance by the institution with the terms of the Scheme. The Scheme provides that if I consider, following the advice of CIROC, that the institution has not demonstrated how its remuneration policies for

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the year ahead will comply with Section 47, I may direct the covered institution to amend its remuneration plan so that compliance is achieved.

I announced on 11 February as part of the recapitalisation of AIB and Bank of Ireland that the total remuneration for each of their senior executives will be reduced by at least 33%. No performance bonuses will be paid for these senior executives and no salary increases will be made in relation to 2008 and 2009. The two banks have also accepted that, for non-executive directors, fees will be reduced by 25%. A covered institution may not enter into any contractual arrangement that provides for termination compensation or equivalent to be payable to any director or executive for the duration of the Scheme.

Semi-State Bodies.

153. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance the powers he has in relation to freezing the pay of ESB workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5647/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): As in the case of commercial State sponsored bodies I, as Minister for Finance, do not have statutory control in relation to the pay of ESB employees generally. My sole responsibility as regards pay in the ESB relates to the remuneration of the chief executive officer.

Pension Provisions.

154. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will support a matter (details supplied). [5658/09]

172. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding matters in relation to the new levy (details supplied). [6075/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 154 and 172 together.

The Deputy asks if the Minister will support a matter, i.e. major concerns from public sector workers on the equity of pension levy.

The Government has brought forward several measures to restore stability to the public finances, to maximise economic activity and employment and to improve competitiveness. The new pension-related payment is graduated to reflect different income levels in the public service. As the Government has made clear, the deduction is being made to address the serious budgetary problems facing the country.

The Deputy asks if the new deduction decreases the overall allowable contribution rate made by the individual, if it is calculated on overtime, bonuses etc. which are traditionally non pensionable, if it is fully deductible for purposes of tax and PRSI relief, and if the deduction from Class A1 (PRSI) Civil/Public Sector employees post April 1995 is to be calculated from their integrated or gross salaries?

It is proposed that the legislation will provide that the deduction will not form part of an individual's age related pension contribution limits under the Tax Acts and that it will apply to all remuneration. Certain income that is not pensionable, for example, overtime earnings, will be subject to the deduction, which will be deducted from gross pay by employers before income tax, PRSI and health levies are calculated. Thus, pension contributions will be effectively relieved of tax at the marginal rate. The PRSI class of the public servant does not affect the calculation of the deduction which will apply.

Tax Yield.

155. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Finance the expected yield to the Exchequer if the tax band was raised to 48% for earners on €100,000 and above; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5667/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): It is assumed that the threshold for the proposed new tax bands mentioned by the Deputy would not alter the existing standard rate band structure applying to single and widowed persons, to lone parents and married couples.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the estimated full year yield to the Exchequer, estimated by reference to 2009 incomes, would be of the order of €435 million. Given the current band structures, major issues would need to be resolved as to how in practice such a new rate could be integrated into the current system and how this would affect the relative position of different types of income earners. This figure is provisional and subject to revision.

Public Service Contracts.

156. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Finance the percentage of Irish companies hired in public procurement projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5668/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Full and precise data on the country of origin of companies winning public contracts is not available as this type of information is not published for all contracts. However, analysis of the available data on the national public procurement website, www.etenders.gov.ie, where about 95% of all advertised public contracts are published, indicates that: 83.5% of high-value contracts (i.e., those advertised on etenders and in the European Journal) were awarded to Irish companies; 91.8% of lower-value contracts (those advertised on etenders only) were awarded to Irish companies.

Tax Collection.

157. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Finance the cost to the Exchequer arising from tax exemptions for private hospitals in 2005. [5669/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I assume that the Deputy is referring to the scheme of capital allowances for private hospitals, which was introduced in the Finance Act 2002. Based on the information that has been received and collated for the tax year 2005, there were 67 claims for €7.7 million capital allowances for the construction of private hospitals. This figure would correspond to a maximum Exchequer cost of the order of €3.2 million for these returns in terms of income tax foregone.

158. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Finance the cost to the Exchequer arising from commercial property tax exemptions in 2005. [5670/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the relevant information available relates to the cost to the Exchequer of tax relief in respect of a range of property-based incentives derived from personal income tax returns filed by non-PAYE taxpayers and corporation tax returns filed by companies for 2005. The information on estimated costs is set out on an itemised basis in the following table:

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Scheme	Tax Cost 2005
	€m
Urban Renewal	137.3
Town Renewal	27.3
Seaside Resorts	7.3
Rural Renewal	24.7
Multi-storey car parks	26.2
Living over the shop	1.3
Enterprise Areas	3.2
Park and Ride	2.7
Holiday Cottages	6.1
Hotels	67.0
Nursing Homes	12.4
Housing for the Elderly/Infirm	0.9
Hostels	0.15
Guest houses	0.06
Convalescent Homes	0.2
Qualifying (Private) Hospitals	3.2
Qualifying sports injury clinics	0.0
Buildings used for Childcare Purposes	5.4
Student Accommodation	58.0
Total	383.4

159. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Finance if he will liaise with the Revenue Commissioners regarding a cost imposed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will waive the charge immediately. [5688/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that in this case the person concerned had an agreed payment arrangement with the Sheriff's office. The person concerned was written to by the sheriff on 10 February advising how the matter of bailiffs costs will be resolved having regard to the terms of the agreed payment arrangements.

Garda Stations.

160. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the progress made regarding the provision of a building (details supplied) in County Mayo; the reason for the delay in the project commencing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5798/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The design and tender documentation for the proposed new Station at Ballyvary, Co. Mayo is currently being processed by the Office of Public Works. However, due to emerging financial constraints, this Station is not included on the current Garda priority list, and it will not go to works stage in 2009. Garda Management have indicated to OPW that while they can continue to provide policing facilities to Ballyvary from Castlebar Garda Station in the short term, they wish to avail of an opportunity to secure rented premises in Ballyvary itself, from where Gardaí could operate. At this stage, a suitable premises has been identified, rental terms settled, and a small programme of adaptation works agreed with the landlord. Garda Management have approved funding for these works, and

detailed working plans and specifications are currently being drawn up by OPW. Once the relevant works have been carried out, it is intended that Gardaí will use these temporary premises pending the erection of the new permanent Station.

Smarter Travel Policy.

161. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Finance his Department's workplace travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5851/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): My Department is aware of the Government's Smarter Travel Policy, launched by the Minister for Transport on 5 February, which recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable. My Department promotes the travel pass scheme, of which approximately one third of the Dublin based staff avail, and will shortly introduce the recently announced bicycle purchase scheme for staff. Other initiatives to promote sustainable commuting will be considered and introduced where feasible.

Financial Services Regulation.

162. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the National Treasury Management Agency establishing an investment product as a vehicle for credit unions to invest surplus deposits in the State for a certain rate of return. [5861/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I would like to draw the Deputy's attention to the fact that Irish Government bonds, for which the National Treasury Management Agency is responsible, allow organisations such as credit unions to invest in fixed-term, fixed-rate instruments which are part of the National Debt.

Financial Institutions Support Scheme.

163. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Finance if he will propose a moratorium on repossessions to enable persons who are in arrears to renegotiate their mortgages; if it is his intention that following recapitalisation banks should reschedule excessive mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5884/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Deputy will be aware that in keeping with the Government's announcement (11 February 2009) on recapitalisation, that a commitment was given to the publication of a Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears as part of the arrangements. The Code was published by the Financial Regulator on 13th February and applies only to mortgage lending activities to consumers in respect of their principal residence in the State. It is mandatory for all regulated entities operating in the State. Under the Code of Conduct, a lender may not seek repossession until every reasonable effort has been made to agree an alternative repayment schedule with the borrower. The Code will ensure that mortgage lenders can only commence legal action for repossession at least six months from the time arrears first arise.

The two recapitalised banks, AIB and Bank of Ireland, have each committed that they will not commence court proceedings for repossession of a principal private residence until after 12 months of arrears appearing, where the customer continues to cooperate reasonably and honestly with the bank. The recapitalised banks have, in addition, assured the Government that in the normal course of events they will make every effort to avoid repossessions, as has been evidenced by the low level of repossessions by them to date.

Social Welfare Benefits.

164. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Finance if he will give special consideration to people who have become recently unemployed and people who face difficulties as a result of inflated mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5885/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Measures are already in place to support those who have recently become unemployed and who may experience difficulties in meeting their mortgage payments. For example FÁS has a specific policy in place to deal with redundancies and/or company closures. It offers a tailored approach as early as possible to the workers affected with a view to assisting them to access alternative employment and/or access to relevant skills training. This applies to workers in all sectors.

In terms of support for payment of mortgages, the Mortgage Interest Supplement, administered by the Community Welfare Service of the Health Service Executive on behalf of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, provides assistance where the mortgage relates to a person's sole place of residence. People in debt or in danger of getting into debt can also avail of the services of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS). This is a national, free, confidential and independent service.

It is a particular priority of the Government to ensure as much as possible that difficulties in relation to mortgage arrears do not result in legal proceedings for home repossession. Home repossession should be, and generally is, the last resort for the lender and the preferred method of dealing with arrears cases should be early intervention.

The finalised recapitalisation scheme announced on 11 February 2009 includes a new code of conduct for Mortgage Arrears, based on the Irish Banking Federation Code of Practice on Mortgage Arrears which has been issued by the Financial Regulator and will come into force on 27 February 2009. The new Code will apply to mortgage lending activities to consumers in respect of their principal private residence in the State and is mandatory for all mortgage lenders registered with the Financial Regulator. Under the mortgage arrears code where a borrower is in difficulty the lender will make every reasonable effort to agree an alternative repayment schedule and will not commence legal action for repossession until after six months from the time arrears first arise.

In addition as part of their recapitalisation scheme, the two banks concerned, A.I.B. and Bank of Ireland, will not commence court proceedings for repossession of a principal private residence until after 12 months of arrears appearing. This is subject to the customer continuing to co-operate with their bank.

Pension Provisions.

165. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Finance the number of civil servants paying pension contributions for 2008 and the amount collected; the number of civil servants in receipt of pensions for 2008 and the amount paid out; the number of public servants paying pension contributions for 2008 and the amount collected; the number of public servants in receipt of pensions for 2008 and the amount collected; the number of civil servants included in these categories on co-ordinated pension contributions for 2008; the number of public servants included in these categories on co-ordinated pension contributions for 2008; the amount of pension levy estimated for collection in 2009 for civil servants and for other public servants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5902/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Minister for Finance has statutory responsibility for civil service pensions. Statutory responsibility for public service pension

schemes outside the civil service rests in the first instance with the relevant Ministers in other Departments, as appropriate. The total amount of pension contributions paid by civil servants in 2008 was €46.42m including contributions to the Main Scheme and the Spouses and Children's Scheme). The number of civil servants in 2008 is estimated at 38,572 in whole time equivalent terms. The gross cost of civil service pensions in 2008 was €333.65m and the associated number of pensioners was 15,924. The number of civil servants making pension contributions in 2008 on a coordinated basis is estimated at around 25,000. The proposed new pension deduction is expected to yield €1.16 billion in 2009 for civil servants and other public servants.

Public Service Contracts.

166. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance if he is satisfied himself that the prohibition of price only tenders for public contracts by his Department does not result in unnecessary restriction of competition to a limited circle of familiar contestants, the obstruction of new entrants who will not have a track record and the excessive cost of initial submissions; and his views on these concerns from experience with the price and quality system. [5903/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I assume the Deputy is referring to the use by contracting authorities of the most economical advantageous criteria rather than simply price in evaluating tenders for public contracts. In relation to tendering procedures it is important to note that, in line with EU procurement law, there are two stages: (i) a suitability assessment (pre-qualification) stage and (ii) the tender competition and evaluation stage.

In the suitability assessment stage a contracting authority invites expressions of interest and examines responses to determine which applicants are competent to go forward to the next stage of the competition. The level of evidence required from tenderers is a matter for each contracting authority to decide. This stage is open to everybody and is based on standardised documentation for short-listing participants for the tender competition and evaluation stage.

At tender competition and evaluation stage the most economical advantageous criteria are used to ensure that quality factors, in addition to price, are taken into consideration in order to decide which tender represents best value for money. At all stages of the competition, the contracting authority must ensure that the selection criteria observe the principals of proportionality, transparency and non discrimination as provided for in EU law.

Pension Provisions.

167. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance his views on changing pension legislation to allow a business person to use the funds within their pension trust to invest within their company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5913/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The sole purpose of an approved retirement scheme is to provide relevant benefits on retirement to the member or members of the scheme. It is to this end that the beneficial tax treatment of contributions to and investment growth in approved pension schemes exists. Moreover, it is the responsibility of pension scheme trustees to ensure that there are sufficient assets in the scheme to pay unexpected benefits, such as on death or ill health early retirement of members.

For these reasons, tax legislation seeks to ensure that the investment transactions of pension schemes are conducted on a commercial "arm's length" basis. It does this by effectively rendering transactions, which are not arm's length, tax inefficient by deeming the amount or value of the pension scheme assets used in such transactions to be a pension payment and, therefore, subject to tax. The Deputy's proposal would run counter to the arm's length principle and I do not propose to change the legislation in the manner put forward.

Tax Yield.

168. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Finance the breakdown of the estimated €1 billion saving to the Exchequer referred to in the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 170 of 4 February 2009; if relief for these deductions and reliefs was confined to the standard rate of income tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6012/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that a breakdown of the savings to the Exchequer, estimated to be of the order of €1 billion, from confining to the standard rate of income tax those deductions and reliefs which are allowable for tax at an individual's marginal rate is set out as follows for the year 2005, the most recent year for which the necessary detailed information is available except where otherwise stated. As I stated in my previous reply, this estimate does not take into account any possible behavioural change on the part of taxpayers as a consequence of such a change or the economic effect of such a change. This applies in particular to the BES, Film Relief, Pensions Contribution Relief and Capital Allowances regime. The standard rating of employee pension reliefs would also have an impact on workers' take home pay.

Tax Relief Provision	2005 Cost	Saving to Exchequer if tax relief was confined to the standard rate of income tax
	€m	€m
Person Taking Care of Incapacitated Taxpayer	1.8	0.8
Health Expenses	134.0	55.0
Contributions Under Permanent Health Benefit Schemes, after Deduction of Tax on Benefits Received	3.2	1.4
Interest paid relating to borrowings for purposes such as acquiring an interest in a company or partnership or to pay death duties.	22.2	10.0
Expenses Allowable to Employees under Schedule E	65.0	25.0
Donations to Approved Bodies	34.0	15.7
Donations to Sports Bodies.	0.2	0.1
Retirement Relief for certain Sports Persons.	0.3	0.2
Revenue Job Assist allowance	0.4	0.07
Allowance for seafarers	0.4	0.1
Investment in Corporate Trades (BES)	16.1	8.5
Investment in Seed Capital	1.3	0.6
Stock Relief	2.0	0.7
Relief for expenditure on significant buildings and gardens	3.3	1.2
Donation of Heritage items	5.8	1.9
Capital Allowances (Income Tax only)	734.5	305.0
Rented Residential Relief — Section 23	239.7	125.6
Investment in Films	15.7	8.2
Employees' Contributions to Approved Superannuation Schemes*	540.0 (2006)	255.0
Retirement Annuity Premiums*	380.0 (2006)	196.0
Personal Retirement Savings Accounts*	120.0 (2006)	56.0
Total	2,319.9	1,067.07

*Estimate of cost revised for 2006 as part of the work on the Green Paper on Pensions.

Departmental Agencies.

169. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the membership of State agencies under his Department; if any board members have served more than two terms; if there are cases where a chief executive subsequently became chairman; if one or more members of the audit committee in each case has specific financial expertise; and if the companies disclose necessary action to remedy significant failings in internal controls. [6019/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The table below sets out the information requested by the Deputy in relation to State Agencies under the aegis of my Department. There were no instances of Chief Executive Officers or equivalent becoming chairpersons of the Board. In the case of the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland two members of the Board have served more than two terms and similarly with the National Lottery Company two members of the Board have served more than two terms. Five members of the Financial Services Ombudsman Council have served more than two terms.

Name of Agency	Name of Board Members	Do members of the audit committee have specific financial expertise?	Do the Agencies disclose necessary action to remedy significant failings in internal controls?
Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland (Central Bank)	John Hurley (Governor) Tony Grimes (Director General) David Begg Gerard Danaher Jim Farrell Dermot O'Brien Brian Hillery David Doyle John Dunne Alan Gray Mary O'Dea Deirdre Purcell	Yes.	See Note 1 Below
Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority (Financial Regulator)	Jim Farrell (Chairman) Alan Ashe Gerard Danaher John Dunne Alan Gray Tony Grimes Mary O'Dea (acting Chief Executive & Consumer Director) Deirdre Purcell Dermot Quigley	Yes	See Note 2 Below
Financial Services Ombudsman Council	Dermott Jewell, Chairman Paddy Leydon Frank Wynn Caitriona Ni Carra Paddy Lyons Tony Kerr Michael Connolly	Yes	Obligated to bring such actions to the attention of the Financial Services Ombudsman
National Treasury Management Agency Advisory Committee	Gerold Brandt Don Roth David Doyle Shane O'Neill David Byrne John F Daly Hugh Cooney	Yes	The Agency operates in accordance with the Framework Code of Best Practice set out in the Code of Practice on the Governance of State Bodies.

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Name of Agency	Name of Board Members	Do members of the audit committee have specific financial expertise?	Do the Agencies disclose necessary action to remedy significant failings in internal controls?
State Claims Agency Policy Committee	Margaret Lane Ann Marie Hayes Noel Whelan Deirdre Hanlon Brendan Phelan	Yes	The Agency operates in accordance with the Framework Code of Best Practice set out in the Code of Practice on the Governance of State Bodies.
National Pensions Reserve Fund Commission	Brian Hillery Brid Horan Don Roth John Canning Maurice Keane Michael J Somers Paul Carty	Yes	The Agency operates in accordance with the Framework Code of Best Practice set out in the Code of Practice on the Governance of State Bodies.
National Development Finance Agency Board	Brian Murphy Ann Fitzgerald Fred Barry Liam Berney Michael J Somers (ex officio as CEO of NTMA) Peter McManamon Stewart Harrington Tony Jones	Yes	The Agency operates in accordance with the Framework Code of Best Practice set out in the Code of Practice on the Governance of State Bodies.
National Lottery Company	Mr Donal Connell Mr James Hyland Mr Dermot Griffin Ms Niamh McGowan Mr Michéal O'Muircheartaigh Ms Barbara Patton Mr Oliver Wilkinson	Yes	It is the Company's policy to disclose significant failings in internal controls and the actions taken to remedy them. To date, there has been no significant failings in internal controls requiring disclosure

Disclosure of necessary action to remedy any significant failings in internal controls:

Note 1: (CBFSAI) There are several channels through which the CBFSAI could disclose necessary action to remedy significant failings in internal controls:

1. the Bank prepares a report of its activities during the year and presents the report to the Minister for Finance which is subsequently laid before each House of the Oireachtas and published;
2. the Governor meets with the Minister from time to time to keep him informed regarding the Bank's performance of its statutory duties; and
3. subject to the requirements of the Maastricht Treaty and the confidentiality provisions imposed by law, the Governor appears before Joint Committees of the Oireachtas on request.

Note 2: (Financial Regulator) There are several channels through which the Financial Regulator could disclose necessary action to remedy significant failings in internal controls:

1. the Financial Regulator prepares a report of its activities during the year and presents the report to the Minister for Finance which is subsequently laid before each House of the Oireachtas and published. This report includes a Statement on the System of Internal Financial Controls;
2. the Chairman and Chief Executive meet with the Minister for Finance to keep him informed regarding the Financial Regulator's performance of its statutory duties; and

3. subject to the confidentiality provisions imposed by law, the Chairman, Chief Executive, Consumer Director and Registrar of Credit Unions are required to appear before Joint Committees of the Oireachtas on request.

Financial Services Regulation.

170. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Finance if staff appointed in 2003 to the office of the Financial Regulator had a qualification in banking regulation, worked for a regulation agency similar to the Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority or worked for a regulated financial institution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6053/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): When the Financial Regulator was established in 2003, it was staffed by a combination of the following:

1. Existing staff from Central Bank who had been working in the area of supervision/regulation transferred to the Financial Regulator.
2. 52 staff from Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (DETE) and the Office of the Director of Consumer Affairs (ODCA) were seconded for a period of 24 months. At the end of this period 16 of the seconded staff were appointed on a permanent basis and the others returned to the DETE/ODCA.
3. A large recruitment drive to fill positions at a junior and middle management grades was undertaken in May 2003. The recruitment advertisement specified the criteria for all middle management positions were a third level qualification and significant relevant experience in a banking, insurance or financial environment. The more junior positions were filled in the main by graduates from a business background with more limited work experience.

The Financial Regulator has a very comprehensive academic and professional training programme for staff whereby specific skills are developed and upgraded on an ongoing basis.

Parking Facilities.

171. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will acquire land to provide a public car and bus park adjacent to the Gallarus oratory in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6060/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Office of Public Works has no plans to acquire lands to provide a public car and bus park adjacent to the Gallarus Oratory, in Co. Kerry. A privately owned car park and visitor centre already exists adjacent to the Oratory and certain visitor facilities are provided there.

Question No. 172 answered with Question No. 154.

Fiscal Policy.

173. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Finance the plans in place to free up working capital for small businesses to survive in the short-term; if he will facilitate small businesses employing four employees with three to four months work ahead of them by providing access to €50,000 in the short-term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6094/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): As part of the recapitalisation package announced last week, Allied Irish Bank and Bank of Ireland have reconfirmed their December commitment to increase lending capacity to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by 10% and to provide an additional 30% capacity for lending to first time buyers in 2009. The banks have committed to public campaigns to actively promote their lending to these sectors. If the mortgage lending is not taken up, then the extra capacity will be available to SMEs. Compliance with this commitment will be monitored by the Financial Regulator. AIB and Bank of Ireland have also committed to public campaigns to actively promote small business lending at competitive rates with increased transparency on the criteria to be met. The banks will make quarterly reports to the Financial Regulator, with the first report to end March 2009 to be submitted by end April 2009.

The recapitalised banks have also agreed to engage in a ‘clearing group’ chaired by a Government representative and including representation from business interests and State agencies. The purpose of this group will be to identify specific patterns of events or cases where the flow of credit to viable businesses appears to be blocked and to seek to identify credit supply solutions. There will also be an independent review of credit availability funded by the banks but managed jointly by the banks, Government and business representatives.

In addition, a Code of Conduct for Business Lending to Small and Medium Enterprises was published by the Financial Regulator on the 13th of February. This code will apply to all regulated banks and building societies and will facilitate access to credit, promote fairness and transparency and ensure that banks will assist borrowers in meeting their obligations, or otherwise deal with an arrears situation in an orderly and appropriate manner. The business lending code includes a requirement for banks to offer their business customers annual review meetings, to inform customers of the basis for decisions made and to have written procedures for the proper handling of complaints. Where a customer gets into difficulty the banks will give the customer reasonable time and seek to agree an approach to resolve problems and to provide appropriate advice. This is a statutory code and banks will be required to demonstrate compliance.

Tax Collection.

174. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a proposal to establish an ombudsman office for revenue affairs; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
[6118/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Deputy’s question is related to the calls made on occasion for the establishment of an independent individual or entity whose proposed role would include acting as an advocate for taxpayers who feel unfairly treated by the system. The statutory remit of the Ombudsman already incorporates the roles proposed for a taxpayer advocate, namely, acting for taxpayers and investigating actions which are contrary to fair or sound administration.

Since the inception of the Office of the Ombudsman, significant numbers of taxpayers have exercised their right to make complaints to that office. Furthermore, the Ombudsman has carried out a number of special investigations on her own initiative under the Ombudsman Act 1980, such as into the operation of schemes for disabled drivers and the repayment of tax to certain widows. When calls were previously made for the establishment of a taxpayer advocate, the then Ombudsman drew attention to the duplication of role and responsibilities that such a development would involve.

Apart from the statutory role and responsibility of the Ombudsman, other avenues are also open for taxpayers to make their complaints and to seek satisfaction for perceived unfair treatment. They can lodge a customer service complaint about the standard of service received in their personal contact with the Revenue Commissioners by telephone, correspondence, fax, e-mail or in person to a Revenue public office. They can request a review by Revenue of any aspect of the way in which their tax affairs have been handled. Such reviews are undertaken by a senior Revenue official who was not involved in the original decision or, at the taxpayer's request, jointly by an external reviewer and a senior official. Taxpayers who are dissatisfied with specific treatments by Revenue can also make an appeal under statutory provisions which grant access to the appeal commissioners. The appeal commissioners are completely independent of the Revenue Commissioners.

The fact that few people are enthusiastic about paying taxes is all the more reason for effective channels of complaint and appeal by taxpayers against poor service or unfairness. However, given the comprehensive and accessible system already in place for complaints or appeals by any taxpayer who feels unfairly treated by the tax system, it is not obvious to me that there is a case for putting in place the additional layer of a tax advocate's office.

Financial Institutions Support Scheme.

175. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6126/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Financial Regulator published its Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears on 13th February in keeping with the Government's announcement on recapitalisation arrangements. This code applies only to mortgage lending activities to consumers in respect of their principal residence in the State, by all regulated entities operating in the State. Under the Code, where a borrower is in difficulty, the lender will make every reasonable effort to agree an alternative repayment schedule and will not commence legal action for repossession until at least six months from when the arrears first arise.

The two recapitalised banks, AIB and Bank of Ireland, have each committed that they will not commence court proceedings for repossession of a principal private residence until after 12 months of arrears appearing, where the customer continues to cooperate reasonably and honestly with the bank. The recapitalised banks have, in addition, assured the Government that in the normal course of events they will make every effort to avoid repossessions, as has been evidenced by the low level of repossessions by them to date.

Flood Relief.

176. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding flood relief plans in respect of a town (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6136/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh): The Office of Public Works, in conjunction with Wexford County Council and Enniscorthy Town Council, has developed outline flood relief proposals for Enniscorthy Town. I formally launched the statutory public exhibition of the proposed scheme in Enniscorthy this morning. The proposals will be on Public Exhibition, as required under the Arterial Drainage Acts, from today, Tuesday, 17 February, until Wednesday, 18 March at the Wexford County Council Offices in Ennis-

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corthy, where the general public will be invited to view the proposed scheme and make any observations they see fit.

177. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding flood relief plans in respect of towns (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6137/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh): In relation to Newcastle West, a preliminary study was carried out of the potential vulnerable areas. A flood model is being developed to identify the areas that do not have protection up to the 100-year flood level. This process involves confirming the river cross section by means of a site survey and this has now been completed. Work is planned to commence in May 2009 to construct flood defence walls in the Rathinagh area, so as to provide protection up to the 100-year flood.

As part of the OPW's ongoing maintenance programme, tree felling will shortly be completed in the Demesne area. OPW has recently purchased an alarm to provide an audible warning during extreme flood events such as that occurred in July last year, and it will be installed as soon as possible and operated by the Local Authority. In relation to Clonmel, work on Phase 1 of the Scheme is in progress, and is well advanced. It was to be completed this year. Detailed design of the remaining elements of the scheme is in progress, and it is hoped that work on the ground can commence early in 2010.

Public Sector Pay.

178. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance his views on freezing or reversing the recent pay increase awarded to persons on principal officer level and above in view of the depth of feeling among public servants that the higher paid are benefiting disproportionately; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6148/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): No increase has been awarded to persons at Principal Officer level or above. I presume that the Deputy is referring to the very limited number of increases recommended by the last Benchmarking Body to, among others, Principal Officers. Those increases have not been paid.

Ministerial Travel.

179. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of foreign travel, accommodation and related ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick's Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick's Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6159/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The total cost of my predecessor's visit to Malaysia and Vietnam for St. Patrick's Day, 2008, including foreign travel, accommodation and related Ministerial and official costs, amounted to €27,245.11. No formal arrangements have been put in place for St. Patrick's Day 2009.

Pension Provisions.

180. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that non-consultant hospital doctors are due to suffer from a double pay cut from the Health Service Executive and the application of the new pension levy; his views on whether

this is fair; if it is his intention that the new pension levy be applied even when a person has suffered a pay cut on their basic pay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6325/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The pension related deduction will apply to all public servants including those working in the health sector. As the Government has made clear, the deduction is being made to address the serious budgetary problems facing the country.

Tax Code.

181. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the categories of people who are exempt from the income tax levy other than the fact that they are below the income threshold; and the reason for same. [6326/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The following categories of individuals are exempt from the income levy:

- an individual with a gross income of less than €18,304 per annum,
- an individual who is entitled to a full medical card and
- an individual who is aged over 65 years with an income less than €20,000 for 2009.

In addition, a married couple, where either one or both spouses is aged 65 years or over and whose joint income is less than €40,000, will be entitled after the end of the year to a refund of any income levy that they might have paid. In addition to the exemption from the income levy of certain categories of individuals, certain income sources are also excluded from the scope of the income levy. These include:

- social welfare payments and similar type payments made by other Government Departments,
- statutory redundancy payments and other redundancy related payments that are relieved from income tax,
- payments exempt from income tax on social or other grounds such as payments from the Haemophilia Trust, payments made to thalidomide sufferers, foster care payments and other similar type payments.

A full list of such exempt income is available in Appendix A and B of the document “Frequently Asked Questions on the income levy” which is posted on the Revenue website. These categories of individuals and income sources have been exempted from the income levy on social and equity grounds, mainly with a view to protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

Public Sector Salaries.

182. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the number of public servants in receipt of salaries in the various bands from €10,000 per annum and at intervals of €5,000 above that. [6328/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Information is not readily available in the precise format sought by the Deputy. However, the following table provides estimates of the numbers of public servants in various salary bands of €5,000. The recently announced public

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service pension related deduction will apply to all earnings, not just salary, and will also include employees of the local authorities who are not included within the public service pay and pensions bill and are not included in the following figures. The numbers at different salary bands vary from time to time depending on matters such as incremental salary movement, retirements etc. Furthermore, in the case of some groups additional earnings may arise from overtime, allowances and premium payments.

Salary Range	Est. Nos in range
€	
up to 25,000	22,000
25,000-30,000	33,000
30,000-35,000	38,000
35,000-40,000	36,000
40,000-45,000	33,000
45,000-50,000	36,000
50,000-55,000	30,000
55,000-60,000	27,000
60,000-65,000	9,000
65,000-70,000	5,000
70,000-75,000	3,000
75,000-80,000	6,000
80,000-85,000	4,000
85,000-90,000	3,000
90,000-95,000	3,000
95,000-100,000	3,000
greater than 100,000	9,000
Total	300,000

Pension Provisions.

183. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the basis for his estimation that the pension levy would raise €1.4 billion; and the details of the calculations involved. [6329/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have estimated that the pension related deduction will realise €1.35bn in a full year; the remainder of the €1.4bn will be found through a reduction in travelling and subsistence rates and other adjustments. The public service pay and pensions bill, excluding pensions and PRSI, is approximately €16.7bn. The proposed deduction will average 7.5%, yielding some €1.25bn. It is estimated that the application of the deduction in the local authority area — which is outside of the public service pay and pensions bill — will yield a further €100m.

184. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the reason he has not provided details of the cost of the tax relief on self-administered pension schemes in view of the fact that details of all such schemes must be supplied to the Revenue Commissioners on their establishment and at regular intervals thereafter; and if he will request the Revenue Commissioners to provide details of the value of the 6,500 schemes which are currently in existence, the total contributed by employers and the cost of the tax relief on these schemes for each of the past three years. [6330/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the current requirements that apply to small self-administered pensions schemes as regards documentation to be supplied to Revenue are as follows:

1. A detailed approval application is submitted to which approval is given following satisfactory examination and clarification of the application.
2. Annual accounts are submitted.
3. An actuarial review is submitted every 3 years. The information provided in this documentation is used for the purpose of managing and reviewing the pension schemes in question on a case by case basis.

The data provided are not at present electronically captured in such a way as to provide a dedicated basis for compiling the statistical information requested by the Deputy. To obtain this information it would be necessary to manually extract data from the documentation submitted and would also require checking the tax position of each individual employer and employee, thereby necessitating manual examination of 19,500 sets of accounts for the last 3 years, 6,500 actuarial reviews, 6,500 employer tax records and at least 6,500 employee tax records. The specific information requested could not, therefore, be obtained without conducting a protracted examination of the Revenue Commissioners' records.

Tax Collection.

185. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance the amount collected in VRT, stamp duty, income tax, VAT and corporation tax in January 2009; the comparable figures for January 2006, January 2007 and January 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6310/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The figures the Deputy requests are detailed in the following tables. Tax revenue receipts are published on the Department's website as part of the monthly Exchequer Statements.

	Jan 2006	Jan 2007	Jan 2008	Jan 2009
	€m	€m	€m	€m
Stamp Duty	291	347	180	50
Income Tax	1,116	1,107	1,208	1,165
VAT	2,036	2,332	2,335	1,970
Corporation Tax	131	208	197	121

Vehicle Registration Tax in a component of Excise Duties and receipts are not separately detailed within Exchequer Statements. The Revenue Commissioners have provided VRT receipts for the January period from 2006 to 2009 and these figures are supplied below. The VRT figures provided are on a Revenue Net Receipts basis, which differ from Exchequer receipts due to timing and accounting issues. The Deputy should note that the VRT figures for 2009 are provisional at this stage and are liable to some slight revision.

	Jan 2006	Jan 2007	Jan 2008	Jan 2009
VRT	€54m	€68m	€215m	€32m*

*Provisional.

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The end-January Exchequer Returns showed tax receipts, at €3,735 million, down 19% year-on-year. However, it must be taken into account that tax receipts in January 2008 were relatively strong. In this regard, tax receipts for January 2009 represent approximately 10% of the total forecast receipts for the year and this is in line with the percentage received in previous years.

Financial Services Regulation.

186. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance when his attention was first drawn to, or when the possibility was first flagged to him, whether formally or informally, that the Financial Regulator had concerns about issues of governance at Anglo Irish Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6315/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I presume the Deputy is referring to the issue of loans to directors at Anglo Irish Bank. In December 2008, I enquired about the level of director's loans at Anglo compared to other financial institutions. The Financial Regulator informed me at that time of the movement of the former Chairman's loans to the Irish Nationwide Building Society prior to Anglo Irish Bank's year end and the practice in this regard over the previous 7 years. My Department was aware as a result of the PWC report of the movement of funds both to and from the Irish Life and Permanent group, again at the end of the accounting year end. This was referred, as a prudential issue in the first instance, to the Financial Regulator to be investigated. All of these issues are currently subject of investigations by both the Financial Regulator and the Office of Director of Corporate Enforcement.

Financial Services.

187. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he values the continued presence of mutual societies as an important element of the landscape of credit institutions; if the maintenance of such a presence is a tenet of current policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6361/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): While the regulation of financial institutions, including building societies, is a matter for the Financial Regulator, policy responsibility for building societies currently rests with the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. I might mention, however, that arrangements for the transfer of the policy responsibility for building societies legislation to my Department are currently under development and I hope to be able to bring forward the necessary enabling legislation later this year. The significance of the role of building societies has changed significantly over recent decades. During the 1980s almost two-thirds of mortgages were provided by building societies, with their proportion of total mortgages reaching a peak of over 70% in the early 1990s. However, they now account for approximately 20% of the mortgage market and the number of building societies now stands at just three — of which two are mutuals. The Government is facilitative as regards mutual building societies in providing a legislative framework under which they can be established and operate, and the legislation certainly supports any building society which wishes to retain its mutual status. Ultimately, of course, it is a matter for the membership of a building society to decide whether or not it should retain its mutual status.

Financial Services Regulation.

188. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the date and circumstances on which he first became aware, whether formally or informally, of anomalies at a group (details

supplied) now a matter of public record to a very limited extent, with respect to the inappropriate use of funds by the chairman to fulfil financial obligations relating to speculation on the stock market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6323/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Investigation of this issue was a matter for the Financial Regulator, who has as the Deputy is aware, imposed by settlement a penalty on both the company concerned and its Chairman. As the Financial Regulator has not disclosed the details of its investigation it would not be appropriate for me to comment. I was not, and would not expect to be, involved in the conduct of such an investigation. However, where matters are likely to give rise to a financial stability issue these can be brought to my attention as part of the arrangements between my Department, the Central Bank and the Financial Regulator for this purpose.

National Development Plan.

189. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which he is proposing to re-design or re-allocate resources from the capital expenditure programme or the National Development Plan to ensure that capital expenditure is channelled towards employment intensive projects first; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6369/09]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Government decision of 3rd February last re-allocated €150m from within the revised 2009 capital allocation of €7.931 billion to labour intensive activities in the areas of school building and energy efficiency/home insulation measures. This is part of the Government's endeavours to respond to the employment difficulties at present by investing in labour intensive areas which will promote and sustain domestic employment and achieve other policy objectives. As the deputy is aware, NDP capital investment supports employment directly as well as addressing issues that will help in sustaining employment, such as the development of key economic infrastructure including major transport projects, water services, school building, STI capital etc. The extent to which further re-allocation is possible is subject to review. The precise details of individual Vote allocations are currently being finalised in consultation with Departments and will be included in the upcoming Revised Estimates Volume 2009.

Health Service Allowances.

190. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the status of an application for domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5575/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Consent.

191. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on correspondence (details supplied) if legal guardians are to act jointly in relation to consenting to medical treatment for minors as per the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964 or if consent is only needed from one person with parental responsibility; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5600/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The issue of medical consent required for the treatment of children is not governed by any specific piece of legislation. What

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is required in a given situation falls to be determined on the basis of the facts of an individual case. In medical emergencies, for example, urgent treatment may be provided to a child in the absence of express consents where it is necessary to save the life of the child. The age of the child is also relevant with this issue being provided for in the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 for children over 16 years.

I have contacted the Health Service Executive in this regard and I understand that the Executive has developed guidelines entitled “Procedure for obtaining consent for non emergency treatment/services from parents of children and young people under the age of 18 years”. These guidelines give the necessary clarity in relation to this matter and I shall arrange for a copy to be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible. I understand from the HSE that these guidelines will be available on the HSE website in the near future. If the Deputy is aware of any particular case where the issue of medical consent needs to be clarified then the individual concerned should contact his/her Local Health Office in this regard.

Health Services.

192. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason a person (details supplied) in County Louth cannot have current funding for their day place in Drogheda transferred to Health Service Executive Galway, in view of the fact that HSE Galway cannot fund a day place for this person from their current budget; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5551/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Service Staff.

193. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to fill therapy grades within Roscommon primary community continuing care and Leitrim PCCC; the posts which are vacant in each PCCC area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5554/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Almost 130,000 people work full-time or part-time in our public health services. In recent years, the Government’s ongoing high level of investment in health has achieved and maintained significant increases in the numbers of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals employed in the public health services. The Government has also invested heavily in the education and training of such personnel in order to secure a good supply of graduates to provide for the healthcare needs of the population into the future.

Subject to overall parameters set by Government, the Health Service Executive has the responsibility for determining the composition of its staffing complement. In that regard, it is a matter for the Executive to manage and deploy its human resources to best meet the requirements of its Annual Service Plan for the delivery of health and personal social services to the public. As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Health Service Allowances.

194. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding an application for domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5559/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Staff.

195. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the Health Service Executive has finalised the procedure in the setting up a tendering process for the appointment of nursing agencies within its hospital network as was promised in 2008; the reason for the delay; when this procedure will be put in place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5561/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Services.

196. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason post operative care here would be denied in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork who travelled abroad to have surgery to avoid the long waiting period for the same surgery here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5573/09]

197. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will expedite an appointment for a cochlear implant at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5574/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 196 and 197 together.

Under the provisions of Regulation (EC) 1408/71, persons who are covered by the public healthcare system of one member state are entitled, under certain circumstances, to receive healthcare in the public system of another member state. Article 22 (1) (c) of the Regulation governs the referral of patients for public health services to another member state (E112 arrangements). Under this provision, the HSE may, where certain criteria are met, authorise a person to go to another member state for treatment in the public health system there. In such cases, a Form E112 is issued by the HSE, which involves a commitment by the Executive to pay for the cost of treatment. It is a matter for the HSE to assess each application for an E112 Form and determine whether authorisation for treatment abroad should be granted.

In the case raised by the Deputy, therefore, it is open to the parents of the child concerned to make application to the Treatment Abroad Section of the HSE if they wish to seek treatment for her in another EU member state in accordance with these entitlements. In the event that treatment is arranged in this way, the necessary follow-up care would be available in the Irish public health system.

Health Insurance Levy.

198. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will make a statement on the effectiveness of her health insurance levy and the effectiveness of the tax credit regime for controlling the growth in health insurance costs to older people, who have experienced increases of more than 25% in the cost of their health insurance. [5579/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): There is a serious risk that market segmentation would occur in a community rated market in the absence of measures under which insurers would receive compensation for the higher claims costs of older people. As set out in the analysis provided by the Health Insurance Authority, there was a significant risk

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that this would accelerate following the July Supreme Court decision in the absence of steps to support community rating.

The Government remains convinced that a community rated health insurance market sustained by a risk equalisation scheme is in the best interest of health insurance customers. The Government has asked the Department of Health and Children and the Health Insurance Authority to begin work on designing a new scheme. However this will take some time before it comes into effect. The Government therefore decided that some interim measures must be put into place in order to support community rating. It is anticipated that this interim solution will remain in place for the next three years.

In addition to enhancing the position of older persons in the market, the measures should not, in themselves, lead to an overall increase in private health insurance premiums paid by all consumers as the new levy on health insurance companies will yield approximately the same amount as the enhanced tax relief for those aged over 50. I would still like to make it clear that the levy is not being imposed on the individual policy holder but on the insurance companies. It is a commercial decision for each company whether they pass on any or all of the levy to their customers.

Since I last answered questions on this matter the insurers have announced price increases for customers taking out or renewing policies from 1 January 2009. Quinn Healthcare was due to implement increases at that stage and VHI had not increased its premiums as was usual practice in September 2008, following the Supreme Court judgement. Hibernian AVIVA Health has more recently announced an increase in prices. It is a matter for the individual companies to determine their increases. I believe that if insurance policies were fully risk-rated in the absence of the planned interim tax relief measures, the price increases would be substantially higher.

There are several underlying cost pressures in the health insurance market, including medical inflation, the ageing of the insured population, increased numbers of procedures, and the economic pricing of private and semi-private beds in public hospitals.

As to the effectiveness of this measure, older people are benefiting by the fact that the price of their policies did not rise massively based on their age and risk factors, as they would have if the market had been segmented. The package of measures announced keeps private health insurance affordable for older people. In addition, the introduction this year of lifetime community rating regulations will encourage younger people to continue to take out health insurance. The combined effect of all of these measures is overwhelmingly positive for the health insurance industry and its two and a quarter million customers.

Health Services.

199. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [5601/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Cards.

200. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3 has not received their medical card despite supplying the information on numerous occasions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5624/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services.

201. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children the cleaning programme for the health centres in Roscommon primary community and continuing care; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5636/09]

227. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children when all primary care professionals will take up accommodation at a health centre (details supplied) in County Roscommon; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5795/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 201 and 227 together.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospitals Building Programme.

202. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Health and Children the cost to date of the new National Children's Hospital; the estimated cost of this hospital; if she will provide a progress report on the project; the estimated date of completion; the way this project will be funded; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5637/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The development of the National Paediatric Hospital is a priority project for the Government. The Health Service Executive Capital Plan 2009-2013 includes provision for the development of the new hospital and an associated Ambulatory and Urgent Care Centre at Tallaght.

The National Paediatric Hospital Development Board was established in May, 2007. Its primary function is to plan, design, furnish and equip the new national paediatric hospital. The HSE is working closely with the Board in progressing the project.

A detailed Design Brief for the new hospital is being prepared and is due for completion shortly. The Design Brief will be converted into an exemplar design, outlining the exact dimensions and specifications for the new hospital, to allow the project proceed to tender for construction. A more accurate estimate of costs will be available at that point.

My Department has asked the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to revert directly to the Deputy on the other issues raised by him.

Hospital Staff.

203. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the Health Service Executive has issued instructions in written or verbal form to management of Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin, requesting that term time leave not be granted in 2008 and 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5651/09]

204. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the Health Service Executive has communicated in any way with senior management or the human resources department of Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin, to the effect that cover for term time leave will not be provided or that such cover will be restricted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5652/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 203 and 204 together.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

205. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Health and Children the policy for the provision of term time leave for parents of children with special needs within the health sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5653/09]

206. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of health service employees who applied for and received term time leave in 2006, 2007 and 2008 in all Dublin hospitals; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5654/09]

207. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Health and Children the average salary paid to a person who is given term time leave within the sector versus the costs for hiring replacement cover; the savings made to the Exchequer for the duration of each term time leave; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5655/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 205 to 207, inclusive, together.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Aids and Appliances.

208. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on extending the health cover for hearing aids to include digital hearing aids, which are essential for many deaf people; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5661/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Inter-Country Adoptions.

209. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the bilateral agreement between Ireland and Vietnam to facilitate inter-country adoption will be signed and finalised; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5676/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): The Adoption Bill 2009, which will give force of law to the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, was published on Friday 23rd January. Under the new legislation, prospective adoptive parents will be able to adopt from countries which have also ratified the Hague Convention, and countries with which Ireland has a bilateral agreement which meets Hague standards.

While it is true to say that our current Agreement with Vietnam is based on Hague principles, as part of the preparations for our new legislation we need to ensure that our Agreement reflects the Hague Convention as comprehensively as possible. A new Agreement allows the opportunity to elaborate and strengthen some existing provisions to meet the standards which it is anticipated will be set in draft legislation. There have been considerable developments in intercountry adoption in Vietnam since the Agreement was signed 5 years ago. This progress also needs to be reflected in any new Agreement.

In December 2008, the Irish Government issued a formal request to the Vietnamese Authorities stating that we wish to enter into discussions immediately for the purpose of negotiating a new Agreement to follow on from the existing Agreement which will expire on 1 May 2009. The Vietnamese Authorities have responded positively to Ireland's request.

Ireland offered to provide the Vietnamese Authorities with the text of a draft agreement as a basis for negotiations. An initial draft was prepared by my officials and was submitted to

colleagues in the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Attorney General's Office for their consideration in December 2008.

At present, the text of the draft is being finalised following the receipt of legal advices. Once the text of the draft has been agreed between the OMCYA, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Attorney General's Office it will be forwarded to the Vietnamese Authorities for their consideration. It is anticipated that we will be in a position to forward this draft to Vietnam very shortly.

The work to prepare for and advise the Government on this issue and the implementation of Government's decisions is being given the highest priority. These are complex matters which require careful consideration. At all times, the Minister and the Government, and officials advising them, are guided by the need to respect and protect the best interests and rights of the child.

Product Labelling.

210. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children when legislation will be put in place for labelling on bottles, that is, warning about alcohol and pregnancy, in view of the fact that alcohol is not only a toxin, it is a teratogen, a carcinogen and a mutagen; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5677/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace): My Department is developing proposals on the labelling of all alcohol containers advising of the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy. The labelling of foodstuffs, including alcohol products, is subject to European regulation and scrutiny so the proposals will have to take this into account.

Cancer Screening Programme.

211. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that patients involved in the breast cancer scare at Portlaoise Hospital which were subsequently referred to Tallaght Hospital for treatment, have been told that services in Tallaght Hospital are to be withdrawn and that no alternative is in place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5697/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Under the National Cancer Control Programme, there are four managed cancer control networks and eight cancer centres, into which services are being transferred progressively. Symptomatic breast disease services are the first to be transferred to the eight centres.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has designated St. James's Hospital and St. Vincent's University Hospital as the two cancer centres in the Managed Cancer Control Network for the HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster region. The designation of cancer centres aims to ensure that patients receive the highest quality care while at the same time allowing local access to services, where appropriate.

In relation to Tallaght Hospital, the general catchment area incorporates both St Vincent's University Hospital and St James's Hospital, and the transfer of services from Tallaght will take place in a coordinated way to these two designated centres. The resources to be transferred from Tallaght and the incorporation of these resources into the specialist cancer services at the receiving hospitals will take place in accordance with patient need and choice and in line with where GPs will refer to in the future.

With regard to patients currently receiving their care at the Symptomatic Breast Care Centre in Tallaght Hospital, the clinical team working with these patients in Tallaght Hospital will continue to work with them in the designated cancer centre to which the patient transfers.

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Treatment services for cancer patients, including medical oncology, and follow-up clinical and review appointments, will continue to be offered as close as possible to the patient's home. Therefore, hospitals such as Tallaght will continue to provide this function, in co-operation with the designated cancer centres, as part of a network of care in the region.

Health Services.

212. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she would reinstate the home care package hours in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork in view of the letter from their consultant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5698/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Private Health Insurance.

213. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children the percentage increase in annual subscription for each of the health plans provided by the VHI in each of the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5727/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The total average percentage increase in VHI premia for adults over the past five years is set out in the tables below.

	TOTAL INCREASE	BASE PLANS					
		PLAN A	PLAN B	B XS	PLAN C	PLAN D	PLAN E
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
SEPT 2004	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80
SEPT 2005	12.61	12.50	12.50	10.50	12.50	16.00	16.00
SEPT 2006	12.50	10.65	12.36	12.35	12.44	14.73	14.74
SEPT 2007	8.50	9.50	8.50	9.40	10.30	13.60	11.90
JAN 2009	23.00	22.70	24.60	26.90	26.50	30.10	29.70

	OPTION PLANS		
	PLAN A	PLAN B	PLAN C
	%	%	%
SEPT 2004	2.50	2.50	2.50
SEPT 2005	12.00	12.00	9.00
SEPT 2006	10.49	12.29	11.93
SEPT 2007	7.50	8.50	8.30
JAN 2009	21.70	24.90	25.70

VHI also have a number of plans which were not available five years ago, these are outlined in the table below.

	LIFESTAGE PLANS										
	First Plan Select	First Plan	First Plan 2	First Plan +	First Plan + 2	Family Plan	Family Plan 2	Family Plan +	Family Plan + 2	Forward Plan	Forward Plan 2
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
SEPT 2004											
SEPT 2005		11.29		11.52		11.32		11.54		11.87	
SEPT 2006		12.33		12.35		12.83		12.70		12.41	
SEPT 2007		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	8.00	7.80
JAN 2009	20.40	19.00	19.00	18.60	18.60	18.20	18.20	17.90	17.90	25.60	28.70

It is noted that VHI did not increase the cost of their plans in September 2008. The statutory position is that I have no role in the pricing of health insurance plans by VHI. It is a matter for the VHI Board to determine the levels of the increases which they introduce having regard to business considerations, the increasing cost pressures it faces and the need to accrue reserves. There are several underlying cost pressures in private health insurance, such as medical inflation, the ageing of the insured population, increased numbers of procedures, and the move to full economic pricing of public hospital beds.

Hostel Inspections.

214. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will publish the Health Service Executive, Health Information and Quality Authority and social services inspectorate reports on hostels for unaccompanied migrant children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5731/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): Hostels for unaccompanied migrant children are inspected by the Registration and Inspection Service of the Health Service Executive. As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Health Service Staff.

215. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of staff within the Health Service Executive dealing with the home care package programme; if there has been a reduction in this number since November 2007, either as field officers or office staff; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5738/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services.

216. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the funding provided by her Department to the Health Service Executive to fund the home care programme for each of the past three years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5739/09]

The Home Care Package Initiative was introduced in 2006, following a pilot programme in 2005. Home Care Packages form a key component of the Government's commitment to provide a range of quality services to enable older people to live at home and in their communities for as long as possible. There has been a total of €120 million new service development funding provided to the HSE for this specific initiative since 2006, broken down as follows:

Year	€m
2006	55
2007	55
2008	10

217. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there is a waiting list for the home care package scheme; if so, the number on the list for the Kildare west Wicklow area of the Health Service Executive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5740/09]

218. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of home care assistants employed within the Kildare west Wicklow areas of the Health Service Executive areas of the Health Service Executive for each of the past three years; the number of patients attended by the attendants in each year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5741/09]

221. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of home care package grants issued to applicants in the Kildare west Wicklow area by the Health Service Executive since November 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5756/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor): I propose to take Questions Nos. 217, 218 and 221 together.

As these are a service matter they has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

219. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she or the Health Service Executive have plans to re-introduce the suspended pre-school payment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5746/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): As the Deputy will be aware operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Services Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested that the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive investigate the matter and issue a reply directly to the Deputy.

220. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive treatment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5754/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Question No. 221 answered with Question No. 217.

Hospital Services.

222. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding the new Dingle Community Hospital, Dingle, County Kerry; if the hospital and all of its day services will be fully operational in 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5761/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services.

223. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will review the circumstances of a case (details supplied) with a view to resolving the custody issues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5769/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

National Children's Strategy.

224. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to implement the commitment to unaccompanied migrant children in the national children's strategy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5772/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): The National Children's Strategy, 2000 states that "Unaccompanied children seeking refugee status will be treated in accordance with best international practice, including the provision of a designated social worker and Guardian-Ad-Litem." In line with international best practice, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 6 on the Treatment of Unaccompanied and Separated Children outside their country of origin (2005) states that countries should appoint a guardian or advisor to the child as soon as the child is identified. The guardian should be consulted and informed regarding all actions to be taken in relation to the child.

Under the Child Care Act, 1991 it is the role of a social worker assigned to any young person to act in their best interests. As such, it is the view of my Office and the Health Service Executive that the social worker assigned to a young person and who accompanies that young person through the asylum process represents the best interests of that young person.

Currently, the appointment of Guardian Ad Litem, under the Child Care Act, 1991, is restricted to children involved in public law court proceedings only. The appointment of a Guardian Ad Litem outside of the court proceedings may impinge on the Health Service Executive's ability to provide an appropriate and expedient solution for the young person in question. In light of the existing role of the social worker in representing and advocating for the best interests of the child, it is the view of my Office that the appointment of a Guardian Ad Litem outside of court proceedings could lead to a duplication of this role and would not represent the best use of available resources for this client group.

The main priority for my Office and the Health Service Executive in relation to separated children seeking asylum is the provision of services to these young people that adequately meet their needs. In meeting their needs my Office and the Health Service Executive must ensure that the residential, foster care and other services meet with the many standards which have been developed in recent years. The HSE have devised a National Operational Policy for separated children. The policy includes the principle that all children in the care of the HSE should receive the same standard of care whether they be separated children seeking asylum or indigenous children in care. The policy also reflects the principle of good practice that younger children under 12 should be placed in foster care. In line with this the Executive is currently progressing plans to move to a more comprehensive model of care for these children. It is recognised that each child should be accommodated in a service that meets all relevant standards as well as providing the necessary security and grounding in the community that is

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appropriate for their needs. It is understood that the Health Service Executive are developing proposals that will see an end to these children being accommodated in hostels with the provision of care for separated children seeking asylum being provided on a national basis with each child cared for in a registered care placement or equivalent.

Health Services.

225. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children further to Parliamentary Question No. 138 of 10 December 2008, if she will furnish the up to date figures; the number in each year since 1999 to date in 2009 that were reported to the Garda and posted on the website; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5773/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

226. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the Health Service Executive has ever initiated an internal programme to ask staff their opinions on the way money could be saved within the health services; if there are plans to do so; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5791/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Clearly, the current fiscal position demands the most careful control of public expenditure and I am strongly of the view that account needs to be taken of all opportunities for efficiencies. Within my Department, there is considerable focus on identifying opportunities to save money and this has been included in the annual business planning process which involves all staff. Within the wider health service, I am very conscious of the need to make savings where possible without impacting on service levels and I have consistently communicated this need to the HSE and other health agencies. As part of a multi-annual approach to value for money announced by me in the context of the Budget, a range of value for money measures has been outlined in the HSE Service Plan 2009.

Operational responsibility for the management of value for money and internal staff programmes are matters for the Health Service Executive. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy on the specific matter raised.

Question No. 227 answered with Question No. 201.

General Medical Services Scheme.

228. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a general practitioner will be appointed on a full-time permanent basis to the GMS list of a doctor (details supplied) in County Roscommon; the number of temporary appointments made since the last permanent appointee left the position; the date when this person left the post; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5796/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Smarter Travel Policy.

229. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health and Children her Department's work place travel plans; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5853/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My Department does not have a formal Workplace Travel Plan. However, the Department's policies in a number of areas impact on workplace travel, as follows; Parking is provided for bicycles used by staff to come to work, and showers are available for those cycling to work; The Travel Pass Scheme, which facilitates and encourages the use of public transport is available to those who wish to avail of it; Various atypical working arrangements which facilitate staff travel outside of peak traffic hours are available to Departmental staff; The use of private cars for work-related travel is kept to a minimum. The use of public transport, and sharing arrangements where car travel is essential, are encouraged.

Health Services.

230. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the plans in place to maintain beds in a public nursing home (details supplied) in County Carlow; if she will ensure it is kept open to serve the needs of people who need long-term care in the area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5859/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hootor): The Health Service Executive has operational responsibility for the delivery of health and social services, including those at facilities such as Bethany House.

Bethany House is a Welfare Home which opened in the 1970's. It is currently operating as a 30 bed unit, of which 28 beds are residential and 2 are respite. At present there are 25 long stay residents, with one long stay admission to the facility in the last six months.

The HSE commissioned a review of elderly services within the Carlow/Kilkenny region in 2006, which included Bethany House. The review was conducted in 2007. The report was received by the HSE in early 2008. Following consultation with the General Hospital Manager and Director of Nursing a decision was made on Tuesday 13th Jan 2009 by the Local Health Manager to relocate residents from Bethany House to alternative accommodation. This decision was put forward to the Assistant National Director of Primary Care and Continuing Services HSE South, who approved same as part of 2009 HSE South Service Plan.

On the 15th January last the Executive announced the Service Plan for the Local Health Offices and Hospitals in the Southern area at the Regional Health Forum. The Plan identified a Programme to address infrastructural deficits to meet new national standards for residential care facilities for older people. These standards provide the basis for the very best quality of care to be provided, monitored and enforced in all nursing homes. They will be an objective and transparent way for both care providers and inspectors to implement and enforce standards of care for nursing home residents and they will apply to both the public and private sector. The Executive is working on a phased programme of refurbishment and replacement of existing public homes, where necessary to meet the proposed standards.

The Executive advised the Forum that the 30 bed Bethany House Welfare Home is no longer able to provide appropriate services due to the increasing levels of dependencies of its patients.

The independent review highlighted the lack of facilities to provide appropriate care and the home's inability to support high dependency patients. This inadequacy increases demands in terms of maintenance, standards and health and safety issues including infection control.

The HSE decided it was necessary to discontinue admitting patients to the home and to arrange for the current residents to be accommodated in facilities more appropriate to their needs.

[Deputy Máire Hctor.]

All 25 residents, will be relocated to better and safer facilities that are purpose built to cater for their health and well-being. The Executive will consult with each resident, their families or representatives, to explain what options are available with a view to agreeing their preferences for relocation.

The safety and well-being of older people living in nursing homes is of critical concern. Quality care and patient safety comes first and all patients should receive the same high standard of quality-assured care. Bethany house will continue to be used as a health care facility and preliminary discussions have commenced with the Alzheimer's Society with a view to day care services being provided from the facility.

Health Service Allowances.

231. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position on an application for domiciliary care allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [5863/09]

232. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position on the provision of DCD services in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [5864/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 231 and 232 together.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

General Medical Services Scheme.

233. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children the process for allowing a doctor to treat medical card and general practitioner visit card patients at their practice. [5871/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Health Service Executive (HSE) has responsibility for the selection and recruitment of general practitioners to provide services under the General Medical Services (GMS) Scheme.

At present there are two options for entry into the GMS for fully qualified vocationally trained General Practitioners. These are:

- Vacancies arising from the retirement, resignation or death of an existing GMS doctor or where posts are created in response to an identified need for an additional doctor in an area;
- Recruitment as an assistant with a view to partnership, where an existing GMS contract holder requests approval from the HSE for the creation of a post of assistant with a view to partnership within that practice.
- Recruitment to any vacancies as outlined above or as an assistant with a view to partnership is by way of an open competition.

Under the terms of an Agreement between my Department and the Irish Medical Organisation, the HSE is required, when filling a vacant GP patient panel or creating a new patient panel, to take account of the potential viability of such a panel under a range of headings including:

- The number of GMS patients on the list;
- The age/sex profile of the patients on the list;
- The geographic area in which the practice is situated;
- The number and age profile of the GMS doctors in the area, and their list sizes;
- The private practice profile of the area in question, including the ratio of private to public patients in the area;
- The population size in the area and surrounding areas;
- The factors advanced by the applicant doctor in support of his/her application;
- The particular public health needs of the area in question.

When the GP Visit card was introduced in 2005, a once off arrangement was put in place for doctors to enter the GMS Scheme with a limited contract to allow them to treat this cohort of patients only. The entry criteria were that doctors must be vocationally trained and be in practice on 1st July 2005 and have been in practice for a period of one whole year prior to that date. This right of entry is limited for a period of five years to the acceptance of GP Visit Card patients. These doctors will be entitled to a full GMS contract after the five year period. In the case of doctors who on or before 1st July 2005 had entered into a partnership with an existing practitioner, the five year period is reduced to two years.

Hospital Services.

234. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the transfer of the symptomatic breast cancer unit from South Infirmary-Victoria University Hospital to Cork University Hospital will occur; the funds being allocated to facilitate this transfer; her views on whether such funds would be better directed towards the cervical cancer vaccination programme in view of the fact that an established centre of excellence in breast cancer treatment exists at South Infirmary-Victoria University Hospital; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5882/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Under the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP), there are four managed cancer control networks and eight cancer centres, into which services are being transferred progressively. In the HSE South, the designated cancer centres are Cork University Hospital, and Waterford Regional Hospital. Symptomatic breast disease services are the first to be transferred to the eight centres.

The transfer of symptomatic breast disease services from South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital to Cork University Hospital Cancer Centre (CUHCC) is underway and will be completed as quickly as possible. The transfer of breast services is being undertaken in conjunction with the development of other cancer services in CUHCC. The NCCP has been working with both senior general management and clinical staff to ensure that appropriate facilities are in place for this purpose. The NCCP has approved a €5m capital grant to develop diagnostic facilities in CUH that will incorporate comprehensive outpatient and treatment facilities, radiology and support services, for symptomatic breast care and also for rapid access diagnostic clinics for lung and prostate cancers. Because the capital development is complex and includes services other than breast cancer the timeframe for the development has extended to Autumn 2009. The Director of the NCCP has always emphasised that services will not move until CUHCC has the facilities and resources to manage the transferring patients safely and in

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accordance with the National Quality Assurance Standards for Symptomatic Breast Disease Services.

I want to emphasise that the decision to reorganise services is about achieving optimum outcomes. In order to achieve the very best outcomes we need to concentrate the totality of cancer work in just eight centres. That necessarily means that some centres which are well organised and have a significant case load will nonetheless need to transfer that work to larger centres at other locations.

In relation to cervical cancer, all of the clinical advice available to me indicates that the national roll-out of a cervical screening programme should be my first priority. The National Cervical Screening Programme, CervicalCheck, is being implemented with effect from September of last year. The full year cost of this programme is in excess of €40m. I am fully committed to keeping the introduction of a HPV vaccination programme under active review.

Accident and Emergency Services.

235. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if it is intended that the accident and emergency units at South Infirmar-y-Victoria University Hospital and Mercy University Hospital, Cork are to be closed or downgraded to minor injury units; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5883/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

236. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on correspondence (details supplied); the reason the accident and emergency department of Cork University Hospital can not accept payment by credit card, thereby eliminating unnecessary mailing and billing costs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5890/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I understand that a number of hospitals have the facility to accept credit card payments in their Emergency Departments. The HSE is exploring the use of 24 hour banking services to facilitate ease of payment for all hospitals. I would support the introduction of improved payment methods for patients and the reduction of associated costs.

My Department has asked the HSE to respond more fully to the Deputy with regard to the issue raised.

Nursing Home Subventions.

237. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if, in view of the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 210 of 3 February 2009 and the delay in implementing the fair deal scheme, further consideration will be given to the granting of enhanced subvention to a person (details supplied) in County Cork who is paying €120 per day in a nursing home; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5891/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hootor): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Services.

238. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the Wrixon

review will be published; the reason for its delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5892/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The HSE has indicated to me that this report will be published in the coming weeks. The HSE commissioned the report from Horwath Consulting Ireland, in association with Teamwork Management Services, to examine the arrangements for the provision of acute hospital services in the South with a view to identifying the best configuration of such services in the region. The Government is committed to ensuring the delivery of the best quality health services possible, in an effective and efficient way. Ensuring patient safety is of paramount importance, so that people can have confidence in the services and that the best possible patient outcomes can be achieved.

There is significant international and national evidence that acute complex health care, particularly for emergency medicine, complex surgical services and critical care should be provided in hospitals which are suitably staffed and equipped and which undertake sufficient volumes of such activity, in order to maximise clinical outcomes and ensure safe services. At the same time, there is a significant range of less complex care which can continue to be provided safely in smaller hospitals. Reorganisation of services must of course occur in consultation with the key stakeholders and on an incremental basis. I believe that it is important to work with health professionals and other interested parties to secure an increasing set of improvements over time. This approach will, I am confident, produce the best outcome for patients.

Health Services.

239. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there are plans in place to develop an acute brain injury rehabilitation facility in the Munster area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5893/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): Plans have been prepared in some areas for regional rehabilitation facilities. The development of a regional network of rehabilitation facilities and services will be considered in the context of a national policy/ strategy for the provision of rehabilitation services. A Working Group, established by my Department and the HSE, is currently developing this. The Group consists of key stakeholders and experts in the field of rehabilitation and is chaired by James O'Grady, Policy Advisor to the Office for Disability and Mental Health. It is expected to report in mid 2009.

My Department has asked the HSE to provide the Deputy with information on any specific plans it has regarding rehabilitation facilities in the Munster area.

240. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there are plans in place to provide a comprehensive stroke treatment service in the Cork and Kerry region; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5894/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for a direct reply.

Hospital Services.

241. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has received correspondence relating to the cover for anaesthetists at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda, County Louth; the nature of the correspondence; and the subsequent action taken by the Health Service Executive. [5905/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I have received direct correspondence, and copies of correspondence to the Health Service Executive (HSE), from consultants, including anaesthetists, at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda regarding acute hospital services at Drogheda. The issues raised, including the issue of anaesthetic cover in the Louth/Meath area, have been the subject of detailed discussions between officials of my Department and the HSE in order to ensure that any action necessary is taken to guarantee the provision of safe services to patients.

My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy on the specific issue raised.

Health Services.

242. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will assist in securing a place at a day care centre for a person (details supplied) in County Cork commencing in September 2009. [5907/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Services.

243. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason a shuttle bus service was withdrawn from service at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda, County Louth; when the service will be restored; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5908/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Health Services.

244. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children the level of funding to be provided by the Health Service Executive in 2009 to a service provider (details supplied) in County Cork for a specific service; and if she will confirm the funding provided in 2007 and 2008 for this service. [5912/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply

Housing Aid for the Elderly.

245. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children if, further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 528 and 1115 of 27 January 2009, the Health Service Executive is processing all remaining applications under the former housing aid for the elderly scheme or if a decision on all remaining applications will be jointly made by the Health Service Executive and local authorities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6026/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hootor): The Special Housing Aid for the Elderly previously operated by the Health Service Executive is no longer operational. The scheme was replaced by the Housing Aid for Older People (HAOP) Scheme in August 2008. The new scheme is being administered by the Local Authorities.

Pending finalisation of the hand-over, a decision on all remaining applications from the original scheme, will be made jointly by the HSE and Local Authorities.

Medical Consent.

246. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children if legal guardians must give joint consent to medical treatment for a child as appears to be the interpretation of section 6(1) of the Guardianship of Infants Act 1964 or if the Health Service Executive is correct in stating that consent is required from only one person with parental responsibility; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6030/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): The issue of medical consent required for the treatment of children is not governed by any specific piece of legislation. What is required in a given situation falls to be determined on the basis of the facts of an individual case. In medical emergencies, for example, urgent treatment may be provided to a child in the absence of express consents where it is necessary to save the life of the child. The age of the child is also relevant with this issue being provided for in the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 for children over 16 years.

I have contacted the Health Service Executive in this regard and I understand that the Executive has developed guidelines entitled “Procedure for obtaining consent for non emergency treatment/services from parents of children and young people under the age of 18 years”. These guidelines give the necessary clarity in relation to this matter and I shall arrange for a copy to be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible. I understand from the HSE that these guidelines will be available on the HSE website in the near future. If the Deputy is aware of any particular case where the issue of medical consent needs to be clarified then the individual concerned should contact his/her Local Health Office in this regard.

Health Services.

247. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [6061/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Health Service Executive to arrange to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy on the issue raised.

248. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support persons (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [6062/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

249. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will ensure that a person (details supplied) in County Cork receives speech and language therapy going forward in view of the fact that the service he was availing of has been shut down; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6069/09]

250. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a speech and language service operating in County Cork has been shut down, affecting 197 children; the locations to which the families of these children will go to continue availing of speech and language therapy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6070/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 249 and 250 together.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters I have arranged for these questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct replies.

Cancer Screening Programme.

251. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7 has not been given an appointment date by BreastCheck; the average length of waiting time for women over 50 years in the Dublin area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6091/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The matters raised by the Deputy are the responsibility of the National Cancer Screening Service. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Chief Executive Officer of the Service to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to the matters raised.

Health Services.

252. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding an application for three additional home care hours in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; the reason for the delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6140/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Food Safety Authority.

253. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children, further to Parliamentary Question No. 251 of 29 October 2008 and following on from the 2006 report, the number of prosecutions initiated by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland or the official agency in conjunction with the FSAI; the number of legal actions which are currently before the courts; the number which were successful; the corresponding figures for breaches identified as part of the routine inspection of food businesses in each year 2006 to 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6144/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace): My Department have been in contact with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) which is currently collating the information requested from the official agencies. I have asked the FSAI to identify and to forward directly to the Deputy the details requested.

Health Services.

254. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children, further to Parliamentary Question No. of 295 of 21 October 2008, the position and the plans within the 2009 budget to address the waiting times; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6145/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): The Department understands that the HSE replied to the Deputy in respect of Parliamentary Question No. 295 of 21 October, 2008, on the 17th November 2008. As the Deputy's current question

also relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Accommodation.

255. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children, further to Parliamentary Question No. 223 of 2 December 2008, the position regarding the construction of this project. [6147/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): In drawing up its capital programme, the Health Service Executive is required to prioritise the capital infrastructure projects to be progressed within its overall capital funding allocation under the National Development Plan, taking account of the NDP targets for division of capital investment between the Acute and Primary, Community & Continuing Care programmes.

The Executive is finalising its capital proposals and consultation is ongoing between the HSE and my Department. Details on individual projects will not be known until such time as the capital plan for 2009 is approved.

Ministerial Travel.

256. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health and Children the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick’s Day 2008; and the plans for St. Patrick’s Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6161/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The total paid by my Department in respect of the St. Patrick’s Day Ministerial programme for 2008, including the cost of officials and advisors who accompanied me and the Ministers of State at my Department, are detailed below.

I attended the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in Prague, Czech Republic. The total cost of the visit, including the cost of one official, a special advisor and the deputy Government Press Secretary, who accompanied me, was €4,859.

The then Minister for Children, Deputy Brendan Smith, represented the Government at the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in Munich, Germany. The total cost of the visit, including the cost of one official who accompanied him, was €4,259. The then Minister of State at my Department, Deputy Pat the Cope Gallagher, represented the Government at the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in San Francisco, USA. The total cost of the visit, including the cost of one official who accompanied him, was €25,926. The then Minister of State at my Department, Dr. Jimmy Devins, represented the Government at the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in New Zealand. The total cost of the visit, including the cost of one official who accompanied him, was €28,471. The Minister of State at my Department, Deputy Máire Hctor, represented the Government at the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in Philadelphia, USA. The total cost of the visit, including the cost of one official who accompanied her, was €15,854.

The St. Patrick’s Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised and projected costs cannot be determined at this stage.

Health Services.

257. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the progress made in addressing the financial problems faced by a service (details supplied) in County Limerick

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which have threatened the loss of service to 100 clients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6166/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Complaints Procedures.

258. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number and nature of complaints made against mental health units and intellectual disability services here for the years 2007, 2008 and to date in 2009; the details of all reports and documents regarding investigation of such complaints against mental health units and intellectual disability services; the number of these complaints that have been fully investigated, had an investigation commenced but not finalised and had no investigation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6171/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): My Department receives correspondence on a broad range of issues including complaints. These are referred as appropriate to the Health Service Executive or to the Mental Health Commission. The Health Act 2004 (Complaints) Regulations 2006 (SI 652 of 2006) made under Part 9 of the Health Act 2004, provide for the making of complaints by persons to the HSE and service providers and require the establishment and operation of procedures and arrangements to achieve a fair and reasonable resolution of such complaints. In addition, under the Mental Health Act 2001, the Mental Health Commission may inquire into approved centres, the care and treatment provided to a particular patient etc. The Mental Health Act (Approved Centres) Regulations 2006 require all approved centres to have written operational policies and procedures relating to the making, handling and investigation of complaints. The complaints procedure must be made known to each resident.

Medical Cards.

259. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a medical card will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6199/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services.

260. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when an increase in home help hours will be offered to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6200/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

261. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health and Children if it is the policy of her Department and the Health Service Executive to issue vouchers to public patients to pay for private therapies if public therapist services are not available; if this system is in operation

in each HSE area; the circumstances under which vouchers are issued; the number of vouchers issued and cost of same in each HSE area in 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6311/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Staff.

262. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that non-consultant hospital doctors are due to suffer from a double pay cut from the Health Service Executive and the application of the new pension levy; her views on whether this is fair; the strategic approach to pay for such doctors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6324/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The pay and conditions of employment for Non-consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHDs) are negotiated nationally with their representative union, the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO).

I am aware that in the context of the current economic difficulties, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has been in discussions with the health service group of unions, including the IMO, with a view to achieving payroll savings for the purpose of meeting service plan commitments and to maximise employment. The Executive has advised that it undertook a critical examination of payroll costs, and that following this review a number of proposals specific to NCHDs were formally put to the IMO for discussion and agreement. I understand that the IMO is currently balloting its NCHD membership for industrial action in response to the HSE's proposals. In the absence of any meaningful engagement with the IMO, or alternative proposals from it for realising the savings required, the HSE has notified the IMO of its intention to proceed with the implementation of its proposals with effect from 18 February 2009.

Under the provisions of the European Working Time Directive (EWTD) the working hours of NCHDs will be limited to a maximum average 48 hour week with effect from 1 August 2009. The HSE is legally required to ensure that arrangements are in place to give effect to the legislative provisions of the Directive. Over the past number of years, discussions have taken place with the IMO, under the auspices of the Labour Relations Commission, for the purpose of agreeing revised contractual arrangements for NCHDs having regard to the legal imperatives of the EWTD. Unfortunately these discussions have not resulted in an agreed resolution.

As the deadline for achieving compliance with the requirements of the European Working Time Directive approaches, my considered view is that the early finalisation of new contractual arrangements for NCHDs is essential. I would therefore urge the IMO to engage in urgent and intensive discussions with the HSE aimed at resolving all issues in dispute.

Health Services.

263. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support a matter (details supplied). [6341/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett): On 9 October 2008, my colleague, the Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney, published the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill 2008 — “A Fair Deal”. The legislation was introduced at Second Stage in the Dáil on 13th November 2008. The Minister intends to progress the

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legislation through the Houses of the Oireachtas with a view to implementing the scheme in 2009. Unfortunately it is not possible to give a specific timeframe at present.

Applications for the scheme will be made to the Health Service Executive (HSE). The HSE is preparing application forms for the scheme at present but will not be in a position to finalise these until the Legislation is passed into law.

Complementary Therapies.

264. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to implement the recommendations of the 2003 working group report on the regulation of massage therapists; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6343/09]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): In November 2002, the then Minister for Health and Children announced the establishment of a National Working Group on the Regulation of Complementary Therapists to advise on future measures for strengthening the regulatory environment for complementary therapists, including massage therapy. The Working Group had its first meeting in May 2003 and comprised representatives of the main therapy groups as selected by the various groups for those therapies, a consumer representative, representatives from my Department and the Department of Education and Science and Ministerial nominees.

The Report of the National Working Group on the Regulation of Complementary Therapists in 2006 made recommendations on strengthening the regulatory environment for complementary therapists. My primary concern while carefully considering the Report of the National Working Group was to consider the most effective way to regulate this sector, and to allow people freedom of choice while still protecting their safety. In this regard, my Department continues to support greater voluntary self-regulation for all complementary therapists. To support the development of robust voluntary self-regulation, the Report of the National Working Group outlined guidance for professional associations and provided examples of codes of ethics and good practice, including grievance and disciplinary procedures. In addition, my Department has facilitated the provision of work days. The purpose of these days was for different therapies to come together to undertake a process of harmonisation and development with regard to common basic standards of practice, education and training. In addition, these facilitated work days provided a forum for greater cohesion within each therapy. Work days were organised in 2007 for a number of the higher risk therapies as categorised in the Report of the National Working Group on the Regulation of Complementary Therapists.

At the same time as the launch of the Report in May 2006, an Information Guide for the Public was also launched. It offers guidance for members of the public when choosing to see a complementary therapist, to enable consumers to make better informed choices. The certification of complementary therapy training courses was also recommended in the Report of the National Working Group on the Regulation of Complementary Therapists. In this regard, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) is developing standards for complementary therapy education courses.

While complementary therapists are not subject to professional statutory regulation, they remain subject to a range of legislation and regulation, similarly to other practitioners including consumer legislation, competition, contract and criminal law. It is hoped that progress in the development of appropriate forums between complementary and conventional medicines can

be achieved over time and that mechanisms for robust voluntary self-regulation will continue to be pursued.

Harbours and Piers.

265. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding relocation of the docks in Galway. [5737/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Galway Harbour Company has been developing a plan to build a new port for a number of years, which would involve relocating from the existing docks. My Department has liaised closely with the company throughout this period.

The company has not as yet submitted a planning application for the project. However, I understand that the evolving plans are currently on public display in the harbour office.

The Department of Finance Capital Appraisal Guidelines apply to such projects and the business case will be carefully examined before any commitments are made.

State Airports.

266. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport if there are proposals to dispose of airports in public ownership with a view to raising revenue on behalf of the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5589/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I have no proposals to dispose of any of the three State Airports.

Question No. 267 answered with Question No. 58.

Private Transport Services.

268. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Transport the reason an application for a licence by a company (details supplied) to operate a coach service between Galway and Dublin via the new motorways and onwards to Dublin Airport via the Port tunnel has not been adjudicated upon since it was lodged in June 2006; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that if this licence is not granted 30 jobs will be lost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5760/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Road Transport Act 1932 provides the legislative basis for entry to the public transport market by private bus operators. In accordance with this legislation, private operators are licensed to operate coach and bus services within the State. Bus services provided by Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus are not subject to the provisions of the 1932 Act. However, both Companies are required by Ministerial direction under the Transport Act 1958 to notify my Department of proposed new services or proposed changes to existing services and require my consent where a service competes with an existing authorised service by another operator.

The company in question applied for a bus passenger licence in 2006 for an express service connecting Galway City and Dublin Airport/City. The Dublin to Galway corridor features the operation of a range of bus services provided by a number of interests, including a company that has an association with the company referred to by the Deputy. A process of rationalisation of licences held by that company was completed in December 2008 with the grant of a single licence to replace three prior existing licences.

[Deputy Noel Dempsey.]

Applications for licences under the 1932 Act and submissions from Bus Éireann are generally considered on a first come first served basis. Prior to the receipt of the application in question, my Department was already in receipt of a submission from Bus Éireann for a proposal to operate additional services on this route. While certain of the services proposed by Bus Éireann have been noted, my Department has been engaged on an ongoing basis with that company in relation to the remaining services to which their submission relates. It is envisaged that a final determination will be made in relation to those services within the next two weeks. The position in relation to the application from the company to which the question relates was discussed at a meeting held between its representatives and officials of my Department on 16th February 2009. Significant progress was made at that meeting which will facilitate the determination of that application immediately following the finalisation of the prior submission from Bus Éireann.

Smarter Travel Policy.

269. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport his Department's work place travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5857/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): My Department instituted its first Workplace Travel Plan in September 2007. Among the measures contained in that Plan were a dedicated website to facilitate staff in lift sharing; provision of bicycles in each office location in Dublin to service inter-office travelling needs and to facilitate those who might wish to sample commuting by bicycle; the establishment of bicycle users and walkers groups; provision of information to staff on timetabling of public transport services; awareness raising in relation to walking distances to the Department's offices from suburban areas; and promotion of the annual travel pass scheme.

In delivering the Plan, an undertaking was given to regular review. Such a review has been undertaken recently and it is envisaged that my Department's second workplace travel plan will be launched shortly.

At this stage, some 75% of my Department's staff travel to work either on foot, by bicycle or by public transport.

Rail Network.

270. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Transport if the second phase of the Dublin to Navan rail line — that is, Pace to Navan — will be included in the forthcoming national development plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5895/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The second phase of the re-opening of the rail line to Navan is included in the current National Development Plan 2007-2013. Iarnród Éireann completed a scoping study for phase 2 in December 2007 in which they examined nine routes and concluded that the project was economically viable. Iarnród Éireann is currently undertaking a feasibility study on the two alternative routes identified in the scoping study and will prepare a business case for the preferred route in due course.

The start and completion dates of Transport 21 projects in planning, such as Navan phase 2 will in each case be determined by the outcome of public consultation, the statutory planning approval process, the public procurement process and the availability of financial resources determined by the funding allocation available during the current difficult economic climate.

Ministerial Travel.

271. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick’s Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick’s Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6165/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): In 2008, I represented Government in Australia. My Press Advisor and Private Secretary travelled with me. Details of the cost:

Hotel costs: €6,625.53

Flight costs: €25,639.79

Car hire: €3,982.99

VIP Service: €181.49

Subsistence: €1,700

Gifts: €135

There are no details available for this year.

The following is the itinerary for Minister for Transport Deputy Noel Dempsey on his visit to Australia for St. Patrick’s Day 2008.

Programme

Tuesday 11 March — Canberra

06.25 Arrive Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport & transfer to domestic terminal

08.10 Depart for Canberra

09.05 Arrive Canberra International Airport Met on arrival by Ambassador Mairtin Ó Fainin & Aidan Cronin, First Secretary

12.20 Arrive at Parliament House

12.30 Official Lunch with committee members of Australia-Ireland Parliamentary Friendship Group

14.00 Attend Question Time

16.00 Meeting with Federal Minister for Transport Mr. Anthony Albanese

18.00 Ambassador’s St. Patrick’s Day Reception — Minister addresses & conveys St. Patrick’s Day greetings to assembled guests

Wednesday 12 March — Canberra/Melbourne

07.45 Depart hotel for airport

09.45 Arrive Melbourne

10.30 Meeting with Computershare Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Tom Honan

12.30 Tourism Ireland business lunch — Minister addresses guests

18.00 Reception hosted by Ambassador Ó Fainin — Minister addresses guests

[Deputy Noel Dempsey.]

Thursday 13 March — Melbourne

09.00 Meeting with Victorian Minister for Police & Emergency Services, Mr. Bob Cameron
MLA

10.15 Depart for the Australian Irish Welfare Bureau, 440a High Street, Northcote

10.45 Morning coffee with staff & volunteers and members of Melbourne Irish-Australian
community — Minister conveys Irish greetings

11.45 Depart for Enterprise Ireland business lunch

12.15 Enterprise Ireland business lunch — Minister gives address & extends Irish Govern-
ment greetings and message

15.00 Meeting with Victorian Minister for Public Transport, Ms. Lynne Kosky MLA

19.00 St. Patrick's Dinner at The Hotel Windsor, 103 Spring St. — Minister addresses
guests & conveys Irish Government greetings & message

Friday 14 March — Melbourne/Sydney/Brisbane

06.30 Irish Australian Chamber of Commerce St. Patrick's Day Breakfast — Minister
addresses invited guests

08.30 Depart Crown Palladium for airport

00.00 Depart Melbourne for Sydney

11.20 Arrive at Sydney domestic airport

11.30 Depart airport for Sydney Convention Centre, Darling Harbour

12.30 Lansdowne Club Lunch, Sydney Convention Centre — Minister addresses guests

14.30 Depart Convention Centre for domestic airport

16.05 Depart Sydney for Brisbane

16.35 Minister and party arrive in Brisbane

18.15 Pre-dinner Reception — Minister is guest of honour

18.45 St. Patrick's Dinner — Minister addresses guests & delivers Irish Government greet-
ings & message

Saturday 15 March — Sydney

10.00 Review Brisbane St. Patrick's Day Parade

14.00 Depart for Sydney

17.45 Arrive Sydney airport

Sunday 16 March

09.00 Represents the Government in St. Patrick's Church

10.30 Pre-parade reception hosted by Consul General — Minister addresses guests

12.00 Review parade — Minister is guest of honour

13.00 Attends family day celebrations in Hyde Park — and meet with various Irish Communities

Monday 17 March — St. Patrick's Day

09.00 Meeting with Rob Gilmore, GHD (IDA Client)

10.00 Presentation by Albert Montocchio, G.M of Transtank/Steelbro (IDA client)

11.00 Interview with the Irish Echo

12.00 Tourism Ireland Business lunch — Minister speaks & conveys Irish Government greetings & message

15.00 Attends Briefing by Paul Hayes, General Manager, Camera Enforcement Branch, NSW Road & Traffic Authority

18.20 Consul General's St. Patrick's Day reception for the Irish community and business people — Minister addresses guests

Tuesday 18 March

10.00 Meeting with Memorial Committee and presentation of Famine Memorial award at Hyde Park Barracks

12.30 Depart Sydney for Adelaide

Wednesday 19 March

Informal Meeting with Members of the Irish Club in Adelaide Meeting with Mr Pat Conlon, Minister for Transport, South Australia

19.30 Depart Adelaide.

Road Safety.

272. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport if he proposes to take steps to enhance safety on the motorways with particular reference to procedures to be followed such as early warning in the event of accidents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6172/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): As Minister for Transport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme element of Transport 21. The implementation of individual national road projects, including safety and related matters, is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Act, 1993 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, and where appropriate the Garda and emergency services.

Rail Network.

273. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport if consideration has been given to the possibility of reintroducing a direct rail service to Naas, County Kildare by way of a spur extension from Sallins; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6176/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Transport 21 sets out the investments to take place in extending the rail network to enhance the range of railway services available to commuters in the period up to 2015. While there will be significant developments on the Kildare line, a rail link to Naas does not form part of the investment programme. The Dublin Transport Office is currently preparing a new transportation strategy for the Greater Dublin Area. The Deputy may wish to avail of the extensive consultation process on that strategy to suggest the project for consideration.

State Airports.

274. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport if he is satisfied that airport handling costs at all airports here are competitive and in keeping with the needs of the economic climate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6187/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Airport charges at Dublin airport are subject to independent regulation by the Commission for Aviation Regulation with a view to ensuring that charges are maintained at competitive levels. While other airports are not subject to regulation, in setting charges all airports have to take account of the highly competitive nature of the aviation market in order to attract and retain airlines.

Question No. 275 answered with Question No. 94.

Public Transport.

276. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport his priorities in terms of the development of the bus and rail services for the future within the constraints of prevailing economic circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6189/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): As I have stated previously the provision of increased capacity is my key consideration in determining public transport investment priorities in the period ahead. In that context, Metro North and the DART Underground are particularly important rail investments as they form a core part of the planned integrated public transport network for the Greater Dublin Area envisaged by Transport 21.

In relation to the bus network, the recent Deloitte report concluded, in the case of Dublin Bus in particular, that the current fleet size is adequate to serve current demand. My priority in relation to the bus network is, therefore, working with the bus companies and the local authorities to maximise the efficient and effective utilisation of the existing fleet. In this context, Dublin Bus will focus in the period ahead on a reorganisation of their network in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Deloitte report. My Department is also engaged with local authorities on the provision of bus priority measures such as the bus gate at College Green and green routes in the provincial cities in order to maximise the potential of the network.

Economic Competitiveness.

277. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport if air and sea transport

costs to Europe and the US are sufficiently available and competitively priced to meet domestic and commercial needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6190/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern): As an island nation, Ireland is particularly reliant on our shipping and air services for the maintenance and creation of business, trade and tourism links with Europe and the rest of the world.

Air

The market for air services in the European Community was fully liberalised in 1992 and the EU-US market was liberalised more recently under the EU-US 'Open Skies' agreement which came into effect last year.

Within this competitive market structure, there are no restrictions on the routes that can be operated and airlines can freely set fares for the services provided. The opening up of the market has completely transformed air travel in Europe and has brought enormous benefits to the European economy and particularly to the Irish economy.

The benefits of liberalisation are clear to see both in the context of the European market and the Ireland-US market. The number of routes available into and out of Ireland to and from other points in Europe has increased dramatically and fares have fallen significantly in the period since the market was opened up in 1992. With regard to the Ireland-US market, the benefits of the EU-US Open Skies agreement are already evident with a number of new routes being operated between Ireland and the US (e.g. Aer Lingus has commenced new services to San Francisco, Washington Dulles and Orlando).

Sea

Ireland has one of the most extensive short sea networks in Europe with multiple operators and various alternate modes of shipping available. Over the past decade, there has been an 80% increase in the number services between Ireland and the UK and European markets.

Shipping operates in a highly liberalised global market environment, which has enhanced competition on the key Irish routes. The ongoing development of our shipping network has provided the Irish market with more competition, choice and frequency in accessing the global market place.

Irish companies seeking to access the US markets have regular daily sailings from around the island of Ireland that connect with the main deep-sea intercontinental services. 6 of the top 10 largest global shipping groups have established sales and operational offices in Ireland.

Public Transport.

278. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport the degree to which he proposes to facilitate competition between the public and the private sectors in the area of bus passenger transport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6191/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): In accordance with the Agreed Programme for Government commitment, the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 was enacted in July 2008 and provides for the establishment of the Dublin Transport Authority, the DTA.

For the first time, we have the law in place to ensure that a single body will be in charge of surface transport in the Greater Dublin Area. The DTA Act 2008 gives the new Dublin Trans-

[Deputy Noel Dempsey.]

port Authority the power to procure public passenger transport services through the making of public transport services contracts.

Under section 48 of the Act, the DTA may enter into contracts following open tendering in respect of public bus passenger services, as well as metro and light rail services. It also provides that public bus and rail services can be secured by means of direct award contracts. Section 52 provides that direct award contracts will only apply to the continued provision of the services currently being provided by Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann. Accordingly, the future growth in the market for subvented public bus services in the Greater Dublin Area will be pursued by way of open tendering in accordance with the new EU Regulation No. 1370/2007 on public passenger transport services by rail and by road, which will become mandatory from December this year. All contracts will be framed against the background of EU law and will set strict standards of operational performance and customer service and will contain penalties for non-performance.

The Government has recently approved the General Scheme of the Public Transport Regulation Bill which contains proposals for a new bus licensing regime which will replace the Road Transport Act 1932, which applies to the licensing of private bus operators, and the provisions of the Transport Act 1958 that relate to the provision of bus services by the State bus companies. In accordance with the Programme for Government commitment, the proposed licensing regime will provide a level playing field for all bus market participants, both public and private. It is envisaged that the new licensing structure will apply in respect of all commercial bus services, including those provided by Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann and will encompass provisions relating to the subvented bus market outside the Greater Dublin Area that are consistent with the new EU PSO Regulation.

In the light of the recent Government approval of the General Scheme of the Public Transport Regulation Bill, the Bill will now be drafted and published as soon as possible.

279. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport the extent to which revised costings have been determined in respect of the road and rail development proposals contained in the national development plan or Transport 21; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6193/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): A significant number of roads and rail projects are under construction at the present time and the costs involved are set on the award and signing of the associated contracts. The costs of future projects will be determined by the bids received as part of the procurement processes. The implementing State agencies have indicated to my Department that there is a general downward trend in the cost of land purchases and procurement tenders in recent times.

Air Services.

280. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport the number of EU capitals or major cities with which direct air flights are established and those with which Dublin, Cork, Belfast or other provincial airports have such access; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6194/09]

281. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Transport if he has satisfied himself that the business and commercial sectors have adequate, regular, reliable and cost effective

direct air transport links with other EU capitals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6195/09]

282. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport the extent to which he expects the public and private sector to compete in the area of air passenger transport; his proposals to reduce the costs to the consumer in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6196/09]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 280 to 282, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the market for air services in the Community was fully liberalised in 1992. All European carriers, whether publicly owned or privately owned are free to compete on an equal basis within the European market.

The opening up of the market has completely transformed air travel in Europe and has brought enormous benefits to the European economy and particularly to the Irish economy. As we are an island nation, we are particularly reliant on air services for the maintenance and creation of business and tourism links with Europe and the rest of the world. To that end, within the European Union, Ireland has consistently supported market liberalisation measures and has also sought to influence the wider international framework for aviation to ensure that it continues to promote competition and innovation in the market-place.

The benefits of liberalisation are clear to see both in the context of the European market and the EU-US market which was liberalised more recently. The number of routes available into and out of Ireland to both European and US destinations has increased dramatically and fares have fallen significantly in the period since the market was opened up. Details of the destinations served from each of the main airports in the State, both State and regional airports, can generally be found on the airports websites.

UN Conventions.

283. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when Ireland will ratify the UN convention on persons with a disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5678/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy John Moloney): It is the Government's intention to ratify the UN Convention as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to ensure that all necessary requirements under the Convention are being met.

The Inter-Departmental Committee established by my Department to advise on and monitor the legislative and administrative actions required to enable the State to ratify the Convention has developed a work programme that is being actively addressed by Government Departments. The Disability Act, 2005, underpinned by the National Disability Strategy, meets a considerable portion of the Convention's requirements. However, insofar as my Department is concerned the Mental Capacity Bill, which is in the course of being drafted by Parliamentary Counsel, forms an important part of what is required in addition to facilitate ratification of the Convention. Work on what is involved by way of implementation of the various other provisions in the Convention, which are extensive, continues in the relevant Departments.

[Deputy John Moloney.]

The Government's decision on the matter of ratification of the Convention will be made in due course, as it must, on the basis of being fully satisfied that all the requirements are met in each Department.

Legal Aid Service.

284. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will put in place a system of free legal aid for persons facing repossession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5885/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I wish to inform the Deputy that the all applications for legal aid are considered on an individual basis and decisions taken on whether or not to grant legal aid by reference to the general merits criteria set out in the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995, including the prospects of successfully defending the proceedings and the likely cost of providing legal representation as against the likely benefits to the applicant from being granted legal aid.

The Legal Aid Board have confirmed that all applications for legal aid are dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995. Section 28 (9) (a) of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 provides that, “(ii) disputes concerning rights and interests in or over land” are designated matters and therefore outside the scope of legal aid.

Notwithstanding this general exclusion, the Act provides that legal aid may be granted in respect of certain such disputes, primarily involving family law matters. However, if an application for legal aid is made as a result of a lack of resources to meet mortgage repayments and there are no issues regarding the validity of the mortgage, it is considered unlikely that legal aid would be granted to defend proceedings of this nature.(Section 28 (9) (a) of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 refers).

For the sake of completeness, I refer the Deputy to my answer to Question No. 292 of 29th October, 2008 in relation to recovery of a civil debt.

Citizenship Applications.

285. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when a decision will be made in respect of an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5570/09]

286. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when a decision will be made in respect of an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5572/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I propose to take Questions Nos. 285 and 286 together.

I refer the Deputy to my detailed Reply to his recent Parliamentary Question, No. 623 of Tuesday, 27 January 2009, in this matter. The position in the State of the person concerned is as set out in that Reply.

Visa Applications.

287. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if an Australian citizen who is in a relationship for two years with an Irish citizen and who has been

employed here since March 2008, can be considered for an interdependent partner visa to enable them to continue living and working here; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that such visas may be obtained in Australia after a relationship of 12 months' duration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5597/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I have been informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that Australian nationals proposing to enter the State are not visa required. In this case where an Australian citizen is legally resident in Ireland and is in a relationship for two years with an Irish national it is open to that person to apply to the General Immigration Division of my Department for permission to remain based on the de-facto relationship. I cannot comment on procedures or arrangements in other countries.

Garda Deployment.

288. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will support a matter (details supplied). [5607/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that as of 31 December 2008, the latest date for which figures are readily available, the personnel strength of Clontarf Garda Station which polices the area referred to by the Deputy, was 81 with 6 members specifically assigned to Community Policing.

Current policing policy in the area is predicated on the prevention of crime, including crimes of violence against persons and property, the prevention of public order offences and the maintenance of an environment conducive to the improvement of the quality of life of the residents. This strategy is, and will continue to be, central to the delivery of the policing service in this area.

It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the Force taking everything into account. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the needs of the area referred to by the Deputy will be fully considered within the overall context of policing requirements throughout the country.

Citizenship Applications.

289. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the documents his Department are waiting for in respect of an application for naturalisation by a person (details supplied). [5614/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): An application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Division of my Department in August 2006.

Officials in that Section inform me that further documentation requested from the applicant has been received. Processing of the application has commenced and the file will be submitted to me for a decision in due course.

Crime Levels.

290. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will support a matter (details supplied). [5659/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the area referred to is in the Clontarf Sub-District.

I am further informed that local Garda management is aware of anti-social behaviour in the location concerned, which has been designated as a public order hot-spot. The area is subject to regular patrols by uniform and plain clothes units, including the Community Policing, Garda Mountain Bike and District Detective and Drug Units. Patrols are supplemented by the Divisional Task Force and Traffic Corps personnel. A member of the Community Policing Unit is allocated to the area and regularly meets local residents. Neighbourhood Watch meetings are held, and issues raised receive ongoing Garda attention.

Current policing policy in the area is predicated on the prevention of crime, including crimes of violence against persons and property, the prevention of public order offences and the maintenance of an environment conducive to the improvement of the quality of life of the residents. This strategy is, and will continue to be, central to the delivery of the policing service in this area.

Residency Permits.

291. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position with regard to an application for long-term residency in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford. [5679/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The position in relation to granting long term residency is as follows: persons who have been legally resident in the State for over five years on the basis of work permit/work authorisation/work visa conditions may apply to the Immigration Division of my Department for a five year residency extension. In that context they may also apply to be exempt from employment permit requirements.

The dependants of the aforementioned, who have been legally resident in the State for over five years may also apply for long term residency. This particular long term permission does not grant an exemption from employment permit requirements to any such dependants. Time spent in the State on student conditions cannot be counted towards long term residency.

While applications for long term residency are under consideration, the person concerned should ensure that their permission to remain in the State is kept up to date. An application for long term residency from the first person referred to by the Deputy was received in January 2008. I understand that applications received in March 2007 are currently being dealt with. As soon as a decision is made on the case, the person concerned will be informed.

Prison Staff.

292. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he has plans to start recruitment for the post of prison officer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5700/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): A recruitment campaign was advertised in October 2008, which meets the immediate recruitment needs of the Irish Prison Service, and it is very unlikely that there will be a recruitment campaign this year.

Deportation Orders.

293. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Longford. [5709/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The person concerned arrived in the State on 9 December 2003 and applied for asylum. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, and, on appeal, by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999, as amended, the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 17 January 2005, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State i.e. why he should not be deported.

His case was examined under Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act, 1999, as amended, and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996, as amended, on the Prohibition of Refoulement. On 11 March 2005, one of my predecessors refused permission to remain temporarily in the State and instead signed a Deportation Order in respect of him. However, late representations seeking temporary leave to remain in the State were lodged on 14 March 2005 by the legal representative of the person concerned. Following consideration of the information submitted, the Deportation Order was affirmed and the legal representative of the person concerned was notified of this decision by letter dated 9 May 2005.

Notice of the affirmed order was served by registered post requiring the person concerned to present himself at the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 on Thursday 19 May 2005 in order to make travel arrangements for his removal from the State. The person concerned failed to present as required and was classified as evading his deportation. Should he come to the notice of the Gardaí, he would be liable to arrest and detention. He should, therefore, present himself to the GNIB without any further delay.

I am satisfied that the applications made by the person concerned for asylum and for temporary leave to remain in the State, together with all refoulement issues, were fairly and comprehensively examined and, as such, the decision to deport him is justified. The effect of the Deportation Order is that the person concerned must leave the State and remain thereafter out of the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order remains an operational matter for the GNIB.

Departmental Expenditure.

294. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position in relation to Parliamentary Question No. 199 of 4 February 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5714/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The information requested by the Deputy is being compiled and will be forwarded to him shortly.

Citizenship Applications.

295. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he

[Deputy Joe Costello.]

will respond to correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5725/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): An application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Division of my Department in March 2006. Officials in that Section inform me that the application is at an advanced stage of processing and the file will be forwarded to me for a decision in due course. I understand that the person concerned is married to an Irish national and every effort is made to ensure those applications are dealt with as quickly as possible.

Human Rights Issues.

296. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of cases which have been taken to the European Court of Human Rights since Ireland transposed the European Convention of Human Rights into law in 2003; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5726/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The full information sought by the Deputy is not held in my Department. The matter is one that is the responsibility of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Garda Deployment.

297. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding changes in a Garda district (details supplied); if he will re-examine the practicalities of such a decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5763/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The Garda Síochána's 2008 Policing Plan contains the Garda Commissioner's proposals to realign Garda Divisional boundaries to make them coterminous with local authority boundaries to facilitate both local Garda and local authority management in the administration of Joint Policing Committees as provided for under Section 22(1) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005. Accordingly, the area referred to by the Deputy was made part of the Birr Garda District. However, the matter has been re-considered by the Commissioner who has now decided that the area should be re-aligned to the Roscrea sub-district. This re-alignment is scheduled to take place on 1 March 2009.

Prisoner Releases.

298. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the circumstances under which remission of sentence is granted to male and female prisoners; if he proposes to change the period of remission from a quarter to one third; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5768/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The majority of prisoners, both male and female, are eligible to earn remission of 25% of their sentence by good conduct. The position is that provided the conduct of the prisoner is not found in disciplinary proceedings to warrant loss of remission, the prisoner will be deemed to have earned 25% remission. Where a sanction of loss of remission is imposed, the period forfeited may be

restored through subsequent good conduct. The use of remission in this way is tried and tested and has proved to be an important tool in the good management of our prisons.

Certain categories of prisoner are excluded from standard remission of sentence under the Prison Rules and these are as follows:

- Life sentence prisoners
- Persons convicted of debtor offences
- Persons convicted of contempt of court
- Persons being held on remand warrants
- Persons serving a sentence of less than one month.

Section 59(2) of the Prison Rules, 2007 already allows for the discretionary granting of additional remission, up to one third as opposed to the standard rate of one quarter, where a prisoner has shown further good conduct through his engagement in authorised structured activity and where as a result, the prisoner is less likely to re-offend and will be better able to reintegrate into the community.

I can advise the Deputy that this additional concession will only be awarded in exceptional cases and where I am satisfied beyond any doubt that the prisoner concerned has demonstrated that she/he meets the requirements as set out in the Prison Rules. While there have been a number of applications for extra remission to date only one prisoner has been granted this concession.

Visa Applications.

299. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will grant a visa to a person (details supplied) to visit Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5770/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The visa application referred to by the Deputy was received in the Visa Office, Abuja on the 28 January 2009. Following consideration by a Visa Officer it was refused on 30 January 2009 for a number of reasons:

1. The evidence of finances submitted was deemed insufficient;
2. There was insufficient documentation submitted in support of the application;
3. There was no clear link to the reference shown;
4. It was the opinion of the Visa Officer that the applicant may not observe the conditions of the visa if granted;
5. The proposed visit was not short term in nature in that it exceeded ninety days.

The decision of the Visa Officer may be appealed within two months of the date of decision, in this case before 30 March 2009. Any appeal must be submitted to the Visa Office, Abuja for consideration. Guidelines on making an appeal can be found on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service — www.inis.gov.ie

Smarter Travel Policy.

300. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform his Department's workplace travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5854/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I can inform the Deputy that my Department is aware of and fully supports the Government's Smarter Travel Policy which was recently launched by the Minister for Transport on the 5th February last. The policy recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable.

Citizenship Applications.

301. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when a decision will be made on an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5887/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): Officials in the Citizenship Division of my Department inform me that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question.

Residency Permits.

302. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position of an application for long-term residence by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5897/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The position in relation to granting long term residency is as follows: persons who have been legally resident in the State for over five years on the basis of work permit/work authorisation/work visa conditions may apply to the Immigration Division of my Department for a five year residency extension. In that context they may also apply to be exempt from employment permit requirements. The dependants of the aforementioned, who have been legally resident in the State for over five years may also apply for long term residency. This particular long term permission does not grant an exemption from employment permit requirements to any such dependants.

Time spent in the State on student conditions cannot be counted towards long term residency. While applications for long term residency are under consideration, the person concerned should ensure that their permission to remain in the State is kept up to date. An application for long term residency from the first person referred to by the Deputy was received in December 2007. I understand that applications received in March 2007 are currently being dealt with. As soon as a decision is made on the case, the person concerned will be informed.

303. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position of an application for long-term residence by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5898/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The position in relation to granting long term residency is as follows: persons who have been legally resident in the State for over five years on the basis of work permit/work authorisation/work visa conditions may apply to the Immigration Division of my Department for a five year residency extension. In that context they may also apply to be exempt from employment permit require-

ments. The dependants of the aforementioned, who have been legally resident in the State for over five years may also apply for long term residency. This particular long term permission does not grant an exemption from employment permit requirements to any such dependants.

Time spent in the State on student conditions cannot be counted towards long term residency. While applications for long term residency are under consideration, the person concerned should ensure that their permission to remain in the State is kept up to date. An application for long term residency from the first person referred to by the Deputy was received in December 2007. I understand that applications received in March 2007 are currently being dealt with. As soon as a decision is made on the case, the person concerned will be informed.

Pension Provisions.

304. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if it is correct that 350 gardaí are applying for early retirement following the proposed pension levy. [6063/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that between the 4th February 2009 and the 11th February 2009, a total of seventeen (17) applications to retire were received from members of An Garda Síochána.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission.

305. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the criteria for appointment to membership of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6090/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): Section 65 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 makes provision for the membership of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission. The Ombudsman Commission consists of three members, with at least one of the three members to be a woman and at least one of them to be a man. One of the members is appointed as chairperson. Appointments to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission are made by the President on the nomination of the Government and following the passage of resolutions recommending the appointments by both Houses of the Oireachtas. In considering the nomination of a person to be a member of the Ombudsman Commission, the Government must satisfy themselves that the person has the appropriate experience, qualifications, training or expertise necessary to be a member of the Commission.

Residency Permits.

306. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will take steps to have the issues raised in correspondence of 3 November 2008 to his office (details supplied) dealt with, particularly in view of the hardship being imposed as a result of the decisions made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6123/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I have been informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that the person referred to by the Deputy was informed in writing on the 13th November 2008 that permission to remain in the State in respect of him and his wife was extended until the 2nd May 2010. Prior to the expiry of this permission it is open to the person concerned to write to the General Immigration Division of my Department and their case will be considered. I am also aware of the correspon-

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dence referred to by the Deputy and am informed that my officials are considering the issues raised. A reply is being prepared and will be issued shortly.

Closed Circuit Television Systems.

307. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position in relation to Parliamentary Question No. 292 of 9 December, 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6146/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the installation of CCTV in Athlone is well underway. It is anticipated that the CCTV work will be completed by the end of March 2009.

Ministerial Travel.

308. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick’s Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick’s Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6162/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): In 2008, my predecessor, Brian Lenihan, T.D., travelled to Boston to represent the Government at St. Patrick’s Day celebrations held there. In addition to traditional aspects of the programme the Minister also took part in a number of industrial promotion events in Massachusetts and held meetings with law enforcement leaders there. He also gave an address at the Kennedy School of Government on the theme of “Law, Order and Community in the New Ireland”. The travel, accommodation and related costs of the visit, including the cost of accompanying persons, was €37,052. The Minister for Integration, Conor Lenihan, T.D. represented the Government at St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in Toronto. The travel, accommodation and related costs of the visit, including the cost of accompanying persons, was €27,211.

The 2009 St. Patrick’s Day Ministerial Programme has yet to be finalised and, accordingly, it is not possible to provide projected costs at this stage. The Deputy can be assured that the cost of any overseas St. Patrick’s Day visits made this year will be kept to an absolute minimum.

Asylum Applications.

309. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position in regard to the residency application or refugee status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6197/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): There is currently no application pending in my Department for residency in the case of the person whose details were supplied. If an application for asylum has been made by the person concerned the Deputy will of course be aware that it is not the practice to comment in detail on individual asylum applications where a final decision has not been made.

Liquor Licensing Laws.

310. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if his attention has been drawn to concerns regarding the ongoing problem of off-licences delivering

to homes or to the vicinity of a home in which minors seem to be able to gain easy access to alcohol; and the steps he will take to address the issue. [6337/09]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): It is already an offence under section 31(2) of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 1988 (as amended) for a license holder to sell or deliver, or permit any other person to sell or deliver, intoxicating liquor for consumption by a person under the age of 18 years in any place except with the explicit consent of the person's parent or guardian in a private residence in which he or she is present either as of right or with permission. During discussions leading up to enactment of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008, I undertook to examine the need for any additional statutory provisions to prohibit third parties from purchasing and then delivering intoxicating liquor, including such deliveries to persons under the age of 18 years. I intend to address this matter in the forthcoming Sale of Alcohol Bill.

I should add that new statutory provisions in the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 enable the Gardaí to confiscate intoxicating liquor found in the possession of minors in public places. It also enables the Gardaí to confiscate intoxicating liquor in the possession of persons over the age of 18 years of age in order to prevent public disorder or damage to property. I am confident that these provisions have strengthened the capacity of the Gardaí to deal with problems arising from the consumption of intoxicating liquor in public places.

Foreign Conflicts.

311. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs his views on the issues raised by a person in a letter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5562/09]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): There is no doubt that the conflict in Gaza was appalling, both for the people of the territory and for the wider peace process. The stark facts of the conflict make grim reading: 1300 people killed, nearly 6000 wounded, and thousands of buildings destroyed. Estimates indicate that the rebuilding process could cost \$2 billion and take up to five years.

From the start of the conflict in Gaza on 27 December 2008, I made clear that I regarded the Israeli offensive, or Operation Cast Lead as it was known, as completely disproportionate in its scale and ferocity and I repeatedly condemned Israeli actions. At the same time, I condemned the unjustifiable and deplorable rocket attacks on southern Israel by Hamas and other Palestinian militants.

The priority in Gaza remains the consolidation of the existing fragile ceasefire arrangements through full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1860. Beyond that, the international community must work to restore momentum and credibility to the Middle East peace process. For a renewed political process to be credible, it must not only address the core issues of the conflict but must also aim to improve the daily lives of the people most affected. For a start, the parties must be encouraged to implement their obligations under the Quartet Roadmap. This must involve an end to all violence in and from the Occupied Territories, the lifting of checkpoints, the easing of restrictions on movement for Palestinians, and the end of the confiscation of Palestinian land.

In relation to settlement construction, I have repeatedly stated that the illegal construction and expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank has a direct, negative impact on the peace process. It prejudices the outcome of final status negotiations and threatens the viability

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of an agreed two-State solution. If Israel is genuine about wanting peace with the Palestinians, they must take the difficult decision of implementing a complete freeze on all settlement construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem. I have made this point directly to members of the Israeli government whom I have met, including Foreign Minister Livni last July and Education Minister Yuli Tamir whom I met in Dublin on 20 January. The EU has made the same point to the Israeli Government on many occasions, most recently in a demarche to the Israeli Foreign Ministry on 11 February 2009.

The Government has consistently been opposed to proposals for trade, diplomatic, cultural, academic, sporting or other boycotts against Israel. More than ever, we need to encourage and support Israeli and Palestinian political leaders in their efforts to negotiate a settlement based on a two-State solution. A policy of boycotts or exclusion would clearly not contribute to that process.

Regarding the question of the EU's relations with Israel, I have repeatedly stated that Ireland will continue to take a cautious approach to any further upgrading of this relationship. Indeed, at the General Affairs and External Relations Council in Brussels on 23 January, I made clear that what happened in Gaza means that there cannot be a "business as usual" approach to proceeding with an upgrade at this time. I have also consistently made the point that Israel's relationship with the EU must be seen in the context of developments in the peace process, particularly with progress towards a two-State solution.

As for the purchase of military products from Israel, my colleague, the Minister for Defence, has informed me that the procurement of equipment for the Defence Forces is purely on the basis of the most effective equipment available to meet the specification, competitively tendered. In recent years the Defence Forces have purchased defensive equipment, such as helmets, from Israeli companies, on the basis of effectiveness and best value.

Smarter Travel Policy.

312. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs his Department's workplace travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5852/09]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): My Department has not, to date, adopted a specific workplace travel plan. However, it is supportive of the Government's Smarter Travel Policy, launched by the Minister for Transport on 5 February, which recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable.

There are a number of initiatives being undertaken by my Department which contribute to more sustainable travel to work. The Department of Foreign Affairs promotes the use of public transport for travel to work by supporting the Civil Service Tax Saver Commuter Ticket Scheme. The new bicycle scheme, which provides the facility to purchase a bicycle and related equipment up to €1,000 on a tax free basis, will be fully implemented by my Department. There are a number of secure locations provided for Departmental staff to leave their bicycles and I understand that a significant number of them either cycle or walk to work. In addition, there are a number of family friendly work/life balance initiatives which are currently in place in my Department. Many of these initiatives result in a reduction in the number of people travelling to work.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has developed a policy, in line with the broad Civil Service wide initiative, to promote the wider use of e-working. The initial pilot programme in

my Department, commenced in 2005, was successful and has been extended to 2010. At present, eleven officers have an element of e-working in their jobs.

Foreign Conflicts.

313. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if he will call on the UN Security Council to launch an immediate, independent and properly resourced inquiry into the recent conflict in Gaza. [6064/09]

314. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the steps he is taking to ensure that an independent and impartial investigation takes place of abuses of international rights and humanitarian law in the recent Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Gaza Strip. [6099/09]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 313 and 314 together.

The recent conflict in Gaza witnessed a number of appalling incidents and alleged violations of international humanitarian law by both parties. I have called on several occasions — including at the General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting in Brussels on 26 January — for these incidents to be fully investigated and, where evidence of violations of international humanitarian law is adduced, for those responsible be held to account.

I note that the Israeli Government is investigating the very serious allegations against its Defence Forces. At a minimum, these investigations require the involvement of independent international experts if they are to have any credibility. No investigation needs to be conducted to prove that Hamas, in its indiscriminate shelling of southern Israel, has violated international law.

It remains desirable that there should also be an international investigation into some of the most serious incidents of the Gaza conflict, as this represents the most effective way to ensure impartiality and transparency. To this end, I very much welcome the decision of UN Secretary General Ban to appoint a Panel of Investigators to examine certain incidents that occurred in Gaza during the recent conflict, and to report back to the Security Council. Although the Terms of Reference for this Panel are not as yet available, it would appear that the investigators will focus on the three separate attacks on UN facilities (the shelling of areas adjacent to two UN schools on 6 January and of UNRWA HQ on 15 January) and, in this context, the killing and injuring of civilians.

Ministerial Travel.

315. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the cost in respect of foreign travel, accommodation and related ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick’s Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick’s Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6160/09]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): Much careful consideration is given to determining the Ministerial programmes for St. Patrick’s Day to ensure that Ireland’s economic, trade, social and cultural interests are effectively represented and promoted. The cost of each of the individual Ministerial programmes is, however, a matter for individual Departments. I am not, therefore, in a position to provide the Deputy with costs for 2008 other than those incurred by my own Department. These costs are detailed below.

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The then Minister for Foreign Affairs attended the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Argentina in 2008. The total cost of the visit, including the cost for the two officials and press advisor who accompanied him, was €44,150. The Minister of State for European Affairs, Dick Roche, travelled to China over the St. Patrick's Day period in 2008. The total cost of this visit, including the costs for the official who accompanied him, was €22,260. The then Minister of State for Overseas Development represented the Government at the Scottish St. Patrick's Day celebrations in 2008. The total cost of the visit, including the cost for the official who accompanied him, was €3,730.

The St. Patrick's Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised and projected costs cannot be determined at this stage. The cost of the individual programmes and accompanying delegations will, in all cases, be kept to a reasonable minimum. In view of the current difficult economic climate, the potential provided by these visits to promote trade and business opportunities will be maximised and will be a key component of the 2009 programmes.

Smarter Travel Policy.

316. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism his Department's workplace travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5844/09]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen): The Department is aware of, and supports the Government's Smarter Travel Policy, launched by the Minister for Transport on 5 February, which recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable. In that context, the Department has been operating the Civil Service travel pass scheme since 2002. Furthermore, I am aware of the provisions of Section 7 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 2008 which introduced an exemption from an income tax charge under section 118 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 in respect of a benefit in the form of a bicycle or associated safety equipment provided to a director or employee by his or her employer, where the bicycle/associated safety equipment is used by the employee or director mainly for qualifying journeys. The Department proposes to implement the Cycle to Work Scheme in 2009 following the receipt of guidelines from the Department of Finance on how to administer the Scheme in Government Departments.

Departmental Agencies.

317. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the membership of State agencies under his Department; if any board members have served more than two terms; if there are cases where a chief executive subsequently became chairman; if one or more members of the audit committee in each case has specific financial expertise; and if the companies disclose necessary action to remedy significant failings in internal controls. [6016/09]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen): In respect of the State agencies under the aegis of the Department, the requested information is as set out in the following table. As the Deputy may be aware, in a number of cases I am not responsible for appointing all the members of the boards named below.

State Agency	Membership of Board	Any Current Board Member Served More Than Two Terms?	Any Chief Executive Become Chairperson of Board?	Any Member of Audit Committee (or Equivalent) Have Financial Expertise?	Does Agency Have Procedure to Disclose Necessary Action to Remedy Significant Failings in Internal Control?
Arts Council	Pat Moylan (Chair) Maurice Foley Aibhlin McCrann Philip King John Crumlish Orlaith McBride Colm Toibin Fiona Kearney Alan Stanford Sheelagh O'Neill Caroline Senior Louise Donlon Paul Johnson	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.
Bord na gCon	Dick O'Sullivan (Chair) Tony McKenna Frank O'Connell Danny Reilly Teresa Wall Tim Gilbert Billy O'Dwyer	Yes — Danny Reilly.	No.	Yes. In addition, an external advisor forms part of the Audit Committee.	Yes.
Chester Beatty Library	Thomas P. Hardiman (Chair) Aongus Ó hAonghusa Mark Cochrane Dermot Desmond Joan Duff Sean Freyne Elizabeth Maguire Kate Coleman Moriarty Roger Stalley Louise O'Mahony	Yes, as follows: Thomas Hardiman Mark Cochrane Joan Duff Dermot Desmond Roger Stalley Sean Freyne	No.	Yes.	Yes.

State Agency	Membership of Board	Any Current Board Member Served More Than Two Terms?	Any Chief Executive Become Chairperson of Board?	Any Member of Audit Committee (or Equivalent) Have Financial Expertise?	Does Agency Have Procedure to Disclose Necessary Action to Remedy Significant Failings in Internal Control?
Crawford Art Gallery Cork	John Bowen (Chair) Ann Harpur Neil Prenderville Michael F. Downes Mary O'Donovan Máirín Quill Barbara Patton Frank Hayes Jim Corr Tim Brosnan Joe Gavin Vera Kelly Sheila Maguire Noel O'Keefe	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.
Fáilte Ireland	Redmond O'Donoghue (Chair) Noel McGinley Brian Hughes Pádraig Ó Céidigh Patrick O'Donoghue Páidí O Sé John McDonnell Richard Bourke Eithne Scott-Lennon Catherine Reilly Dominic Dillane Brian Dowling Maureen Cairnduff	No. This is prohibited by legislation.	No.	Yes.	Yes.

State Agency	Membership of Board	Any Current Board Member Served More Than Two Terms?	Any Chief Executive Become Chairperson of Board?	Any Member of Audit Committee (or Equivalent) Have Financial Expertise?	Does Agency Have Procedure to Disclose Necessary Action to Remedy Significant Failings in Internal Control?
Horse Racing Ireland	Denis Brosnan (Chair) Dermot Cantillon Michael Doyle Francis Hyland John McStay Noel Meade Michael Murphy James Nicholson Mary O'Connor Nicholas Wachman Noel Cloake John Power Bernard Caldwell William Flood	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.
Irish Film Board	James Morris (Chair) Tristan Orpen-Lynch Kirsten Sheridan Lesley McKimm Kevin Moriarty Barry Grace	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.
Irish Manuscripts Commission	James McGuire (Chair) Nicholas Canny Francis J. Byrne David Craig Deirdre McMahon Michael Kennedy Máire Mac Conghail James Kelly Aongus Ó hAonghusa David Edwards David Dickson Chris Flynn Jane Ohlmeyer John McCafferty Thomas O'Connor Ruan O'Donnell Maurice Bric	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.

State Agency	Membership of Board	Any Current Board Member Served More Than Two Terms?	Any Chief Executive Become Chairperson of Board?	Any Member of Audit Committee (or Equivalent) Have Financial Expertise?	Does Agency Have Procedure to Disclose Necessary Action to Remedy Significant Failings in Internal Control?
Irish Museum of Modern Art	Eoin McGonigal (Chair) Frank X. Buckley Valerie Connor Brendan Flynn Aine O'Driscoll Brian Randalow Patricia Tsouros Rosemary Ashe Kevin Kelly Chris Flynn Emer O'Kelly Conor Bowman Anne O'Donoghue Eamon Delaney	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.
Irish Sports Council	Ossie Kilkenny (Chair) Maurice Ahern Mary Davis Tony McCarthy Peter McLoone Tracy Piggott Colm Brennan Michael Spain Brian Mullins	No. This is prohibited by legislation.	No.	Yes.	Yes.
National Concert Hall	David Byrne (Chair) Cathal Goan Rachel Holstead Ite O'Donovan Karan Thompson Dorothea Dowling Paddy Moloney Mark Ryan Niall Ó Donnchú David Byers Dermot Egan Sean Braiden Carmel Ryan Fionnuala Hunt Patricia Slavin	Yes — Dermot Egan.	No.	Yes.	Yes.

State Agency	Membership of Board	Any Current Board Member Served More Than Two Terms?	Any Chief Executive Become Chairperson of Board?	Any Member of Audit Committee (or Equivalent) Have Financial Expertise?	Does Agency Have Procedure to Disclose Necessary Action to Remedy Significant Failings in Internal Control?
National Gallery of Ireland	Lochlann Quinn (Chair) Bernard McNamara Abdul Bulbulia Patrick Fotrell Desmond Fitzgerald Loretta Brennan Glucksman John Mulcahy Andrzej Wejchert Martin Gale Sean Benton Nicholas Canny Stephen McKenna Anthony Scott Fonsie Mealy Olive Braiden Paul O'Brien	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.
National Library of Ireland	Gerard Danaher (Chair) Patrick F. Clyne Bob Collins Ida Delamer Breda Kelly Gerard Long Susan McGrath Máire Mac Conghail Niall MacMonagle Brendan O'Donoghue Noreen Whelan David Harvey	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.

State Agency	Membership of Board	Any Current Board Member Served More Than Two Terms?	Any Chief Executive Become Chairperson of Board?	Any Member of Audit Committee (or Equivalent) Have Financial Expertise?	Does Agency Have Procedure to Disclose Necessary Action to Remedy Significant Failings in Internal Control?
National Museum of Ireland	John O'Mahony (Chair) Gerard Collins Brian Coyle Dervilla Donnelly Niamh Fitzpatrick Susan McGrath David Hanna Bernardine Hurley Eamonn Langford Proinsias O Cillín Fergus McKenna O'Hagan Nollaig O Muraile John Sheehan Ruth Whelan Eamonn McEneaney Nessa O'Connor	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.
National Sports Campus Development Authority	Dan Flinter (Chair) William Attley Sean Benton Mary Davis Seán Donnelly Bernadette Cronin Arthur O'Brien Pat Hickey Tom Kiernan Caroline Murphy Miriam O'Callaghan Christy O'Connell John Treacy	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.
Tourism Ireland	Hugh Friel (Chair) Ciara Boyle Bill McGinnis David Lyle Ann Riordan John Power Shaun Quinn Brian Ambrose Móira McNamara Mandy Martin Robert Manson	No.	No.	Yes.	Yes.

Sports Capital Programme.

318. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism when a grant under the sports capital programme approved in 2007 in respect of a club (details supplied) will be awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6104/09]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen): A grant of €140,000 was provisionally allocated to the club in question under the 2007 Sports Capital Programme. The letter notifying the club of the provisional allocation issued on 24 April 2007. The grant allocation was subject to the terms and conditions of the Programme, which included the execution of a deed of covenant and charge.

A deed of covenant and charge provides, inter alia, for a refund of the grant in the event of the facility not continuing to be used for the purpose for which the grant was allocated. The Department's legal adviser, the Chief State Solicitor's Office — CSSO — deals with the grantee's solicitor in executing this deed. I understand that the CSSO wrote to the club's solicitors on 21 January 2009 requesting outstanding documentation. The current position is that a response to the letter of 21 January has recently been received by the CSSO and is currently being examined.

Ministerial Travel.

319. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick's Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick's Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6152/09]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen): My predecessor, the late Minister Seamus Brennan TD did not travel abroad for St. Patrick's Day 2008 and as such there were no associated costs. The St. Patrick's Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised and projected costs cannot be determined at this stage. The cost of the individual programmes and accompanying delegations will, in all cases, be kept to a reasonable minimum. In view of the current difficult economic climate, the potential provided by these visits to promote trade and business opportunities will be maximised and will be a key component of the 2009 programmes.

Community Development.

320. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs when a decision will be made on a school outdoors playing facilities enhancement scheme on behalf of a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary. [5613/09]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): A decision in relation to the school's application for CLÁR funding under the primary school outdoor play facilities enhancement scheme will be made as soon as possible and the Deputy informed of the outcome.

National Drugs Strategy.

321. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on the programme dial to stop drug dealing; if he will ensure that sufficient funding is in place to enable such programmes to continue and to be rolled out across this State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5617/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy John Curran): As the Deputy will be aware, the Dial-to-Stop Drug Dealing Campaign was officially launched on 30 September 2008. The first phase was ran across five Local and Regional Drugs Task Forces areas with funding being provided by my Department (€100,000) and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (€50,000). As highlighted during the launch, the confidential number used in the campaign is open for all to use regardless of the area they come from.

Overall, I believe that the campaign to date has proved to be successful. In this context, I understand that there have been well over 1,000 calls to the phone-line that have generated in excess of 300 information reports to the Gardaí. An Garda Síochána has confirmed that, to date, the information gathered has proved useful to their enquiries and has yielded a number of seizures and arrests. In all areas where the campaign is being rolled out, the local Gardaí are following strong lines of enquiry resulting from the information arising from the free phone number. The next phases of the campaign will be funded from the Dormant Accounts Fund and an indicative allocation of €300,000 has been approved for the campaign in 2009. I expect to have Government approval shortly on the specific Local and Regional Drugs Task Force proposals involved.

With regard to any future funding, as the Dormant Accounts funding is once-off in nature, the €300,000 referred to above is the total that will be allocated. As the allocation for funding for drugs initiatives in my Department in 2009 is fully committed, I regret that there is no scope, at present, for further campaigns. Notwithstanding this, the Deputy should note that all of the Local and Regional Drugs Task Forces were consulted to assess their interest in rolling out a local campaign. While several opted not to run one, I am satisfied that, with the available funding, the majority of the Task Forces will be engaged in the process. In this context, I would again point out that the campaign confidential number is open for all to use regardless of the area they come from.

Smarter Travel Policy.

322. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs his Department's workplace travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5846/09]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): My Department has not adopted a Workplace Travel Plan. However, my Department is supportive of the Government's Smarter Travel Policy, launched by my colleague, the Minister for Transport, on 5 February last, which recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable.

Road Network.

323. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if a road (details supplied) in County Mayo will be resurfaced under schemes run by his Department. [5868/09]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I understand that there is no application for grant assistance within my Department for the road referred to by the Deputy.

In order for the road to be evaluated under my Department's Scéim na mBóithre Áise, an application needs to be made and I have arranged that the appropriate form be sent to the

Deputy's office. The question of allocating funds for Gaeltacht roads in 2009 will fall to be considered in the context of the amount of funding available and outstanding commitments.

Harbours and Piers.

324. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if funding is in place to build a pier on An Bhlascaoid Mhór and to upgrade the pier at Dún Chaoin, County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6056/09]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): As I previously informed the House, a decision was made in 2005 in relation to the committal of funding in principle for works to piers on An Blascaod Mór and at Dún Chaoin, contingent on the completion of arrangements for the purchase of the island by the State. Subject to this, it was intended that my Department, in partnership with Kerry County Council, would be responsible for the development of the two piers. However, as the Deputy is aware, it was not possible to proceed with the development at the time as a result of issues that arose in regard to planning.

Now that the island has been acquired by the State, I anticipate that further discussions will take place between my Department, Kerry County Council and the Office of Public Works regarding the proposed development works. The Deputy will appreciate that the provision of funding for the project will have to be evaluated in the context of existing commitments and future priorities, having regard to the financial resources available to my Department.

Community Services Programme.

325. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if there will be a roll over for the CSP for 2010; and when that will be confirmed. [6081/09]

326. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if the assessment criteria for CSP will be changed for the application process. [6082/09]

327. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if reapplications for CSP will be assessed on the basis of financial stability. [6083/09]

329. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if he will guarantee current CSP funding until 2013. [6085/09]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I propose to take Questions Nos. 325 to 327, inclusive, and 329 together.

The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports a range of community business and social enterprises to deliver a diverse range of local services and employment opportunities. The Programme has a particular focus on employing people who are currently without work or have limited employment opportunities, and delivering services through community and voluntary organisations where gaps exist.

Groups supported by this Programme are required to provide good quality employment opportunities and pay the going rate for the work undertaken. Each group is required to have the ability to earn the required balance of funding from service delivery to ensure its current and future operations are sustainable through service charges, fees and trading income. These requirements are reflected in the application criteria and the on-going monitoring of the programme.

[Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív.]

The budget for the Programme for 2009 is €50.85m. Our projections and targets indicate that by the end of the year, between 440 and 450 groups will be operational under the CSP and that approx. 2,600 people will be employed in the delivery of services to their communities.

Funding for 2010 and future years for the Programme will fall for consideration in the context of the annual Estimates process for my Department.

Finally, the Deputy should note that I do not propose to make a call for new proposals under the CSP in 2009.

Community Development.

328. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the duration of the contract that Pobal has with his Department. [6084/09]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Pobal is a not-for-profit company with charitable status that manages programmes on behalf of the Government and the EU. In addition to my Department, POBAL manages programmes on behalf of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the Office of the Minister for Children, the Department of Transport, the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Higher Education Authority.

General arrangements in respect of all Programmes delivered by Pobal on behalf of public bodies are set out in a framework agreement. This is not time bound but is subject to review as necessary and is underpinned by service level agreements with Pobal, on an individual programme basis, which are also subject to review as necessary. Budgets are reviewed annually at a minimum.

Question No. 329 answered with Question No. 325.

Ministerial Travel.

330. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the cost in terms of foreign travel, accommodation and related ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick’s Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick’s Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6154/09]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The Deputy will appreciate that much careful consideration is given to determining the Ministerial programmes for St Patrick’s Day to ensure that Ireland’s economic, trade, social and cultural interests are effectively represented and promoted. In 2008 I visited Mumbai and Delhi on behalf of the Government.

In relation to the costs associated with the St Patrick’s Day programme in 2008, the costs incurred by me in relation to flights, accommodation and related expenses amounted to €5,449, with an additional cost of €1,656 incurred in respect of flights for my wife who accompanied me. The costs in respect of two accompanying officials amounted to €8,390.

The St Patrick’s Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised and projected costs cannot be determined at this stage. The cost of the individual programmes and accompanying delegations will, in all cases, be kept to a reasonable minimum. As always, but particularly in view of the current difficult economic climate, the potential provided by these visits to promote trade and business opportunities will be maximised and will be a key component of the 2009 programme.

National Drugs Strategy.

331. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the reason for the delay in publishing the new national drugs strategy; and when he expects this to happen. [6334/09]

333. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if he will include the problem of alcohol abuse under the remit of the local drugs task forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6336/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy John Curran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 331 and 333 together.

Work on the development of the new National Drugs Strategy to cover the period 2009 — 2016 has been ongoing in my Department throughout 2008 and is continuing as a priority in 2009.

The Steering Group, established to develop proposals and to make recommendations to me on the new Strategy, is chaired by my Department and is meeting regularly — in fact almost weekly for past number of weeks — as they work towards finalising their proposals.

As the Deputy will be aware, an extensive consultation process was undertaken last year on the new Strategy. The outcomes of these discussions are being used by the Steering Group as the basis for much of their deliberations. I can report that significant progress has been made on a number of areas and I expect to receive proposals and recommendations from the Steering Group by the end of March.

With regard to the question of alcohol, the Steering Group is conscious of the need to target alcohol in the context of developing a broader prevention strategy to tackle substance misuse, particularly in relation to under 18 year olds. They are also aware of the potential synergies in areas such as treatment and rehabilitation, especially given the growing evidence of poly-substance use. Consequently, the Group, in its deliberations will consider the degree to which problem alcohol use should be brought under the remit of the new Strategy and what role, if any, the Local/Regional Drugs Task Forces should play in this regard.

Once the Group's proposals on the new Strategy are received, I will carefully consider the recommendations before submitting the matter for Government consideration. I anticipate that this will happen in April, with publication of the Strategy to follow shortly thereafter.

332. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the reporting system in place for the drugs strategy from the local drugs task forces to An Taoiseach. [6335/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy John Curran): The Local and Regional Drugs Task Forces report to the National Drugs Strategy Team (NDST), which is a cross-Departmental body which operates under the aegis of my Department. In addition, a member of the Team acts as liaison person on each of the Task Forces.

The NDST reports to my Department and to the Inter-departmental Group on Drugs (IDG), which I chair. The IDG reports, through my Department, to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, which is chaired by the Taoiseach.

As the Deputy may be aware, structures and reporting arrangements are among the broad range of issues being considered by the Steering Group currently developing proposals on the new National Drugs strategy 2009 — 2016.

[Deputy John Curran.]

For completeness, I might mention that an Expenditure Review of the Local Drugs Task Forces, completed in late 2006, found that:

- the LDTF programme has been effective and highly relevant to the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy;
- extensive measures have been implemented to address the drug problem at a local level; and
- there are indications of high cost benefit ratios of projects such as those delivered through the LDTF programme.

The Review also identified some areas for improvement and substantial progress has been made in that regard.

More recently, an evaluation of nearly 300 interim funded Local Drugs Task Force projects has been carried out and its findings are being progressed.

Question No. 333 answered with Question No. 331.

Community Development.

334. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if he will support a centre (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [6340/09]

Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): My Department has received no application for funding from this group. My Department provides support for Community and Voluntary Organisations under a number of its Programmes, details of which are available on the website at www.pobail.ie.

Pension Provisions.

335. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the proportion of the population at large, at current calculations, who will reach retirement age with no pension whatsoever; if she will break this down by private and public sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5645/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): According to the Central Statistics Office, it is estimated that supplementary pension coverage for workers in general was 54% in the first quarter of 2008 and, for the key target group, those aged 30 years and over, stood at 61%.

Almost all Irish public sector workers are members of occupational pension schemes. When public sector workers are removed from the coverage figures above, it can be estimated that approximately 45% of workers in the private sector have supplementary pension coverage.

It should be noted that all of these figures relate to current employees and it cannot be presumed that those without supplementary pension coverage at present will not take out a pension in the future. In addition, these employees will be entitled to a state pension (contributory), provided that they have sufficient social insurance contributions. Those without sufficient means may be entitled to a state pension (non-contributory).

Exploring ways in which supplementary pension cover could be improved was a major focus of the Government's Green Paper on Pensions. A framework to address the pensions agenda over the longer-term will be published in the near future.

Our objective must be to ensure that we have in place a pensions system which will deliver an adequate retirement income to all and which can, at the same time, withstand the cost pressures which will arise in the future as the composition of our population changes and the balance between those at work and those who are retired shifts dramatically.

Death Certificates.

336. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when a death certificate will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6198/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The administration of the Civil Registration Service is statutorily a matter for the Registrar General. I have had enquiries made with the Registrar General and he has informed me that the position is as follows:

When a person dies, it is the duty of a relative of the deceased to act as qualified informant. This means that the relative must give to a registrar of births, deaths and marriages the information necessary to register the death, including a medical certificate of the cause of death, which is obtainable from the medical practitioner who attended the deceased, and sign the register of deaths.

In certain circumstances, a death is referred to the Coroner. There is a legal responsibility on doctors, registrars, undertakers, Gardaí, hospitals and nursing homes to inform the Coroner where a death occurs suddenly or unexpectedly, or from a cause unknown, unclear or unnatural, or where the deceased was not seen or treated by a registered medical practitioner within one month prior to death.

In such cases, the Coroner may request a post-mortem examination. If the post-mortem shows that a death was due to natural causes, the Coroner may issue a certificate to the Registrar, who can then proceed to register the death and issue a death certificate. If the post-mortem shows that a death was due to unnatural causes, the Coroner may cause an inquest to be held. In such cases, the registrar must await the outcome of the inquest and the issue by the Coroner of a coroner's certificate before the death can be registered.

In the case of the person concerned, the death has been referred to the relevant Coroner and it is a matter for the Coroner to decide what course of action to take. When the deliberations of the Coroner have been concluded a certificate is issued by him/her to the Registrar and the Registrar must then register that death. A death certificate in respect of the death may then issue.

Social Welfare Benefits.

337. **Deputy Noel O'Flynn** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of PPS numbers issued by her Department to non-EU nationals in 2008 and in January 2009; the countries the applicants reside in; the reason for issuing the PPS numbers; the number of PPS numbers in total issued to non-EU nationals; the number which are active in the State and the country of origin of the holder of the PPS number; the number of people here who are non-EU nationals receiving unemployment benefit and other benefits; the cost of the benefits in each category; the number of non-Irish citizens, but who are EU citizens receiving unemployment benefits and other benefits and the cost to the State in 2008; the policy in respect of paying these benefits; if she is proposing to introduce new rules to require people to sign on more frequently; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that EU nationals claim benefits here and return to their own countries to work and sign on here, once a month to claim benefits; the enforcement methods and checks in place to detect fraudulent claims by EU

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nationals claiming benefits here, but no longer residing in the State; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5063/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): A total of 441,168 PPS numbers were issued to non-EU nationals from mid-June 2000 to end of January 2009 of which 37,195 issued in 2008 and 2,533 were issued in January 2009. The majority of applications for a PPS numbers are from people living in the State. A small number of PPS numbers are issued to people residing outside the State. These numbers are issued mainly, to people applying for a pension based on their Irish insurance contributions and for testate cases.

Applicants for PPS numbers are required to specify the reason the number is required but statistics of the various reasons are not maintained. PPS numbers are issued for a variety of reasons including to take up employment, to access social welfare and other Government services, to open a bank account, and to apply for driver theory testing and driver licences. Due to the extent of use of the PPS number in the State, it is not be possible to establish the numbers that are active at any given time.

Under the provisions of the Social Welfare Acts nationality in itself is not a determining factor in deciding entitlement to schemes and services. Social Welfare payments are made on a contingency basis, for example, a person must be unemployed to qualify for jobseeker's payment or have reached age 66 to qualify for state pension. When a person makes a claim, their circumstances are examined by a deciding officer to determine whether they satisfy the qualifying conditions for the particular scheme. To qualify for a jobseekers payment, a person must be legally resident in the State; must not place any restrictions on taking up employment and must satisfy the conditionality attached to the scheme.

In addition, with effect from 1 May 2004, the requirement to be habitually resident in Ireland was introduced as a qualifying condition for all applicants for social assistance schemes and child benefit. The restriction is not based on citizenship, nationality, or immigration status. In order to determine if an applicant is habitually resident in Ireland the following factors are taken into account;

- length and continuity of residence in Ireland or in any other particular country
- length and purpose of any absence from Ireland
- nature and pattern of employment
- applicant's main centre of interest and
- future intentions of the applicant.

In the case of EU nationals, any application for one of the Department's schemes is first examined under domestic legislation and where necessary, EU legislation is invoked under EU Council Regulations 1408/71 and 574/72. These Regulations co-ordinate social security systems and are designed to ensure that people are not disadvantaged by moving within the EU to take up work. This is achieved primarily by setting out rules to determine to which State the person will pay a social insurance contribution and which State will pay benefit in the event of the usual contingencies arising from sickness, unemployment, old-age etc. For example, under these regulations Irish and EU people are entitled to transfer their jobseekers benefit to another EU county for a maximum period of 78 days.

With the exception of the jobseeker payments the Department does not maintain statistics on the nationality of recipients. Similarly, the Department does not maintain statistics on the cost of social welfare payments made to non-Irish nationals.

Details in respect of the number of non-Irish jobseeker recipients on the live register at the end of December 2008 and the end of January 2009 are as follows:

Groupings	December 2008		January 2009	
	Jobseekers Allowance	Jobseekers Benefit	Jobseekers Allowance	Jobseekers Benefit
Non-EU Nationals	6,096	2,919	6,507	3,543
EU Nationals	18,828	26,612	22,152	32,132

With regard to the question of control, the prevention of fraud and abuse of the social welfare system is an integral part of the day to day work of the Department and systematic risk analysis is a key element of the Control Strategy.

In late 2007, the Department identified a number of cases where non-Irish nationals were living in their native country and returning to Ireland on a monthly basis to sign for jobseekers payments. Arising from this, the Department undertook a number of small scale residency checks on non-Irish nationals in receipt of jobseekers payment. Between October 2007 and February 2008 some 766 cases were investigated, of which 76 yielded savings of almost €760,000. In response to the findings of these initial checks, it was considered that a more targeted control approach to residency was required. From 26 February 2008, nationwide residency checks were introduced for non-Irish nationals on a jobseekers payment. This measure involved a home visit within 6 weeks of the first signing day and again between 6 to 8 months and at 12 months. The frequency of the visits was varied so as not to establish a predictable pattern. Throughout 2008 some 3,665 such residency checks were carried out, 403 of which yielded savings totalling of almost €3.3m.

In view of the level of high risk identified, the Department decided in July 2008 not to make payment by electronic fund transfer to bank accounts available to all new jobseeker applicants, for the first six months of their claim. Instead, they are required to collect their payment weekly at a post office. Each weekly payment at a post office is available only for a limited period and if not collected within a matter of a few days it reverts to the Department. In such situations, the person is required to attend at the local social welfare office to have their payment reinstated.

The Department has no plans at present to alter signing arrangements for recipients of jobseeker payments. It should be noted however, that certain recipients are required to sign more frequently where the circumstances so warrant.

In addition to jobseekers checks, EU nationals employed in Ireland and in receipt of child benefit for non resident children under EU regulations are contacted on a 3 monthly basis to confirm they are still employed in the state or in receipt of a qualifying social welfare benefit. If their employment or benefit has stopped or no reply is received to the letter within 21 days, further child benefit payments are automatically suspended.

Controls are exercised at both the initial claim stage and at subsequent stages during the claim life cycle. Claims are reviewed on a regular and targeted basis. During 2008, some 564,000 reviews of entitlements were carried out by staff in this Department. The records of some 3,200 employers were inspected to ensure compliance with the Department's regulations and in particular to prevent and detect abuses of the system. The Department also undertook

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inspections on employers in conjunction with officials from the Revenue Commissioners and more recently with officials from the National Employment Rights Authority.

The Department is committed to ensuring that social welfare payments are available to those who are entitled to them and to ensure that abuse of the system is prevented and is dealt with effectively when detected. In this regard, the control programme is carefully monitored and the various measures are continuously refined to ensure that they remain effective.

Social Welfare Code.

338. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if the Government's policy on SSIA's and social welfare matters (details supplied) has been changed; if so, when such change took effect; if any change in policy did occur when the change was announced by her or the Government; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5550/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The policy in relation to SSIA's and social welfare payments has not been changed in recent times.

In assessing means for social assistance purposes, account is taken of any cash income the person may have, together with the value of capital and property (except the family home).

Capital may include the following:

- Stocks and shares of every description, which are assessed according to their current market value.
- Savings certificates / bonds / national instalment savings, which are also assessed according to their current market value.
- Money invested in a bank, building society etc.

Capital amounts held in Special Savings Investment Accounts when such accounts existed were treated in the same manner as other capital. Following the closing of such accounts in 2007, capital formerly held in these accounts continues to be assessed for means tested purposes in the same manner as before. Accordingly, there has been no change in these arrangements.

In 2004, the then Minister reviewed the arrangements for the assessment of capital, particularly in so far as they relate to SSIA's. In Budget 2005, it was announced that the amount of capital disregarded for means test purposes for all social welfare schemes (except supplementary welfare allowance) would be increased, with effect from June 2005, from €12,697.38 to €20,000, an increase of over €7,300. This change was introduced in the Social Welfare and Pensions Act, 2005 which was published on February 14 2005 and applies to all capital regardless of where it is or was held, be it in a SSIA, a Credit Union, with An Post or any other account with a bank or other financial institution.

Currently, for the purposes of most social assistance schemes the first €20,000 of capital continues to be disregarded. The first €50,000 is disregarded in the case of disability allowance while the first €5,000 is disregarded in the case of supplementary allowance.

Social Welfare Appeals.

339. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if she will provide a date for an oral hearing for a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5599/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The claim for disability allowance, by the person concerned, was refused by a Deciding Officer of the Department on 25 August 2008 on the grounds that he did not satisfy the statutory means assessment for eligibility to this allowance.

An appeal was opened on 24 September 2008 and I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that the case was considered by an Appeals Officer on 24 October 2008 who made a summary decision disallowing the appeal.

Summary decisions may be made where the Appeals Officer is of the opinion that a case is of such a nature that it can be properly determined on the basis of documentary evidence and without oral hearing. However, following correspondence from the person concerned, the Appeals Officer has decided to re-open the appeal by way of oral hearing, a date for which has yet to be set.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office is an office of the Department that is independently responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits.

340. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of people in receipt of the social welfare rent supplement nationwide and in Dublin city; the cost to her Department for the rent supplement scheme for 2007 and 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5631/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Rent supplement is administered on behalf of the department by the Health Service Executive as part of the supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme.

Expenditure on rent supplement was €392m in 2007 and €441m in 2008. The following tabular statement shows the number of recipients of rent supplement by county and Dublin postal codes at the end of 2008.

Recipients of Rent Supplement at by County and Dublin Postal Codes, end 2008

County	Recipients
Carlow	1,161
Cavan	874
Clare	1,441
Cork	8,538
Donegal	3,282
Co Dublin	4,427
Dublin 1	1,126
Dublin 2	215
Dublin 3	890
Dublin 4	342
Dublin 5	533
Dublin 6	1,198
Dublin 6W	328
Dublin 7	2,150
Dublin 8	1,907
Dublin 9	941
Dublin 10	275

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County	Recipients
Dublin 11	1,183
Dublin 12	685
Dublin 13	516
Dublin 14	256
Dublin 15	2,940
Dublin 16	366
Dublin 17	258
Dublin 18	231
Dublin 20	173
Dublin 22	1,332
Dublin 24	1,847
Dublin Total	24,119
Galway	3,733
Kerry	2,252
Kildare	3,275
Kilkenny	1,092
Laois	706
Leitrim	456
Limerick	2,942
Longford	706
Louth	1,887
Mayo	2,585
Meath	1,453
Monaghan	509
Offaly	833
Roscommon	1,042
Sligo	733
Tipperary	2,082
Waterford	2,126
Westmeath	1,275
Wexford	2,870
Wicklow	2,066
Total	74,038

Family Support Services.

341. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if she will support persons (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [5632/09]

355. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the way the counselling service she announced recently will be delivered; the groups or organisations responsible for delivery of the service; if existing counselling services will be offered the opportunity of applying for funding in order to deliver the service; when she expects the service to be available to persons who feel in need of counselling; the way they can apply for the service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6042/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 341 and 355 together.

The Family Support Agency provides funding through a Scheme of Grants to voluntary and community organisations providing marriage and relationship counselling, marriage preparation courses, child counselling in relation to parental separation and bereavement counselling and support on the death of a family member. The focus of the scheme is on the development of support services in the community for families to enhance stability in family life and to assist families and their members deal with difficult circumstances, which they may experience.

Over €11m was made available under the Scheme for 2008 and 600 organisations received funding. The budget for the Counselling Grants Scheme in 2009 is €11.89m. A press release was issued to the national press in November 2008 inviting applications for funding. A letter issued directly to organisations who had previously received funding, notifying them of the scheme for 2009. It was also advertised on the website of the Family Support Agency. There have been almost 590 applications.

As part of the overall budget of €11.89m to support counselling services, funding of over €7.8m for 29 major organisations (including Accord and MRCS) who have been identified for multi-annual funding was recently announced. The balance of applications for funding are currently being processed and there will be a further announcement on funding for these in the coming months.

It is open to individuals who feel in need of counselling support to approach their local service provider. A guide to local organisations providing counselling and support can be found on the Family Support Agency's website at <http://www.fsa.ie/supportdirectory/sfdir—06.pdf>

The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is the main Government funded service which provides assistance to people who are over-indebted and need help and advice in coping with debt problems. The service is available at 65 locations nationwide, through the Telephone Helpline 1890 283 438 and the MABS website www.mabs.ie.

Social Welfare Benefits.

342. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if she has a directive or guideline in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5638/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is designed to provide support for people with families who are on low earnings. This preserves the incentive for them to remain in employment in circumstances where they might only be marginally better off than if they were claiming other social welfare payments.

In terms of the amount of work required to qualify for FIS, the customer must be in paid employment, as an employee under a contract of service for which PRSI is payable, of at least 38 hours every fortnight or 19 hours per week. This condition must be satisfied on an ongoing basis. If the customer works less than 38 hours every fortnight, he/she cannot qualify for FIS.

Once the person concerned works the required number of hours as an employee and has means within the prescribed limit for their family circumstances they can qualify for FIS. The primary legislation governing FIS is contained in the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 (Part 6, Section 227 to Section 233, as amended). The regulations governing FIS are contained in S.I. No. 142, of the Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) Regulations 2007 (Part 6, Article 172 to 177, as amended).

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

This legislation can be viewed via the Department's website at www.welfare.ie

Social Welfare Code.

343. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the conditions which apply in respect of rent allowance in the case where a person resides with a brother or sister; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5666/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The supplementary welfare allowance scheme, which includes rent supplement, is administered on behalf of the department by the community welfare division of the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The purpose of the scheme is to provide short-term income support to eligible people living in private rented accommodation whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source.

A person is not excluded from rent supplement where the accommodation is owned by a family member, provided a bona fide tenancy exists, the person has a housing need and the rent payable is within prescribed limits. Each application for rent supplement is decided by a community welfare officer on the basis of its own merits and in accordance with the relevant legislative provisions governing the scheme.

The department does not have any function in relation to decisions on individual claims.

Social Welfare Fraud.

344. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the progress made in preventing welfare fraud by non-Irish nationals who have returned to their home country but continue to claim jobseeker payments. [5684/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): In late 2007, the Department identified a number of cases where non-Irish nationals were living in their native country and returning to Ireland on a monthly basis to sign for jobseekers payments.

Arising from this, the Department undertook a number of small scale residency checks on non-Irish nationals in receipt of jobseekers payment. Between October 2007 and February 2008 some 766 cases were investigated, of which 76 yielded savings of almost €760,000. In response to the findings of these initial checks, it was considered that a more targeted control approach to residency was required. From 26 February 2008, nationwide residency checks were introduced for non-Irish nationals on a jobseekers payment. This measure involved a home visit within 6 weeks of the first signing day and again between 6 to 8 months and at 12 months. The frequency of the visits was varied so as not to establish a predictable pattern. Throughout 2008 some 3,665 such residency checks were carried out, 403 of which yielded savings totalling of almost €3.3m.

In view of the level of risk identified, the Department decided in July 2008 not to make the EFT (Electronic Fund Transfer) payment method available to new claimants for jobseekers payments for the first six months of their claim. Instead, they are paid weekly by means of Electronic Information Transfer (EIT) at a Post Office of their choice. This means that they must attend at the Post Office weekly to collect their payment. In general, the payment expires if not collected within a week and they would have to call to the local office to have the payment reinstated. Where two consecutive payments are not collected, the claim is automatically suspended. In addition, they must attend at their local social welfare office on a monthly

basis to sign-on and to confirm that they are continuing to comply with the conditions of the scheme to be available for and genuinely seeking employment.

The Department is committed to ensuring that social welfare payments are only available to those who are entitled to them. In this regard the control programme of the Department is carefully monitored and measures are continuously refined to ensure that they remain effective.

Departmental Bodies.

345. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the basis on which it was decided that the current chairperson of the Pensions Board was the best candidate for the role; her views on whether this decision should be re-examined; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5695/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The current Chairperson of the Pensions Board was appointed by one of my predecessors, the late Seamus Brennan, in January 2006, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by paragraph 2 (as amended by section 50 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2002 (No.18 of 2002)) of the First Schedule to the Pensions Act, 1990 (No. 25 of 1990), as he was considered to be a most suitable person for the position.

Pension Provisions.

346. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if she will confirm that the introduction of the pension payment scheme by the Minister for Finance will apply as a deduction from income when calculating the eligibility of a family for family income supplement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5734/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Family Income Supplement (FIS) provides income support for employees on low earnings with families. This preserves the incentive to remain in employment in circumstances where the employee might only be marginally better off than if he or she were claiming other social welfare payments.

FIS is calculated on the basis of 60% of the difference between the income limit for the family size and the net income of the person(s) raising the child(ren). The combined income of a couple (married or unmarried) is taken into account. Net income for FIS purposes comprises total family income less tax, employee PRSI, health contribution, income levy, and superannuation contributions.

The issue of how the proposed deduction from the remuneration of public servants will be treated for FIS purposes will be addressed in the context of forthcoming legislation to be presented by the Minister for Finance.

Social Welfare Benefits.

347. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the changes she will make to the mortgage interest supplement scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5790/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The supplementary welfare allowance scheme provides for a weekly or monthly supplement to be paid in respect of mortgage interest. The purpose of the mortgage interest supplement is to provide short term support to eligible people who are unable to meet their mortgage interest repayments in respect of a house which is their sole place of residence. The supplement assists with the interest portion of the mortgage repayments only.

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

There are currently over 8,500 people in receipt of mortgage interest supplement, an increase of 4,400 (108%) over the number in payment at end 2007.

New provisions relating to mortgage interest supplement were included in the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2008. These provisions were inserted to clarify the legal basis for the regulations governing the payment of mortgage interest supplement.

The current mortgage interest supplement scheme provides a short-term “safety net” within the overall social welfare scheme to ensure that people do not suffer hardship due to loss of employment. However, in view of the current economic environment, the Department has commenced a review of the administration of the mortgage interest supplement scheme. The main purpose of the review is to consider how, in the current economic environment, the mortgage interest supplement scheme can best meet its objective of catering for those who require assistance on a short-term basis, where they are unable to meet mortgage interest repayments on their sole place of residence. Legislative and operational issues arising in the existing mortgage interest scheme will also be examined and any necessary amendments made to the regulations.

Family Support Services.

348. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs her views, in view of the increasing strain on counselling services for families in County Wicklow, on extending the recently announced grant scheme for counselling services to a centre (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5793/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Family Support Agency provides funding through a Scheme of Grants to voluntary and community organisations providing marriage and relationship counselling, marriage preparation courses, child counselling in relation to parental separation and bereavement counselling and support on the death of a family member. The focus of the scheme is on the development of support services in the community for families to enhance stability in family life and to assist families and their members deal with difficult circumstances, which they may experience.

Over €11m was made available under the Scheme for 2008 and 600 organisations received funding. The budget for the Counselling Grants Scheme in 2009 is €11.89m. A press release was issued to the national press in November 2008, while a letter issued directly to organisations that had previously received funding. It was also advertised on the website of the Family Support Agency.

There have been almost 590 applications. Last year 24 groups in Wicklow received funding totalling almost €125,000. No application for funding has been received from the organisation referred to by the Deputy.

As part of the overall budget of €11.89m to support counselling services, funding of over €7.8m for 29 major organisations (including Accord and MRCS) who have been identified for multi-annual funding was recently announced. The balance of applications for funding are currently being processed and there will be a further announcement on funding for these in the coming months.

It is open to individuals who feel in need of counselling support to approach their local service provider. A guide to local organisations providing counselling and support can be found on the Family Support Agency’s website at <http://www.fsa.ie/supportdirectory/sfdir—06.pdf>

Smarter Travel Policy.

349. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs her Department's work place travel plans; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5855/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Department operates a travel pass scheme encouraging staff members to use public transport in lieu of car transport thus helping to reduce the level of carbon emissions. Official travel by staff members is continually monitored to ensure that such travel is kept to the minimum commensurate with the need for them to effectively perform their functions. Where feasible, staff members use public transport when travelling on official business.

In addition, the Department is currently analysing the options for the implementation of the recent Budget measure for the introduction of a tax exempt scheme for the provision of bicycles by employers to employees which is designed to encourage people to cycle to work.

In recent years all the Department's new buildings are provided with bicycle parks as part of their standard fit-out.

Social Welfare Benefits.

350. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of claims which have been dealt with by community welfare officers in each area over the past three years; the extra resources made available to the service to cope with the extra demands due to the economic downturn and the delay in processing jobseeker claims; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5881/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) and Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) schemes are administered by the Community Welfare division of the Health Service Executive (HSE) on behalf of the Department Social and Family Affairs. The operational arrangements for the processing of applications and the payment to qualifying individuals, is a matter for the respective community welfare division areas. The number of claims processed by the community welfare division over the past three years is shown in the following tabular statement. This information has been produced from the Department's IT system and includes Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) and Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) claims in payment and terminated. It does not include applications for medical cards processed on behalf of the HSE nor does it include any claims where no entitlement was established.

The issue of increased demand on existing resources is a matter for the HSE. The department is committed to working closely with the HSE in ensuring effective delivery of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme and associated income support payments. It is open to the HSE at anytime to approach the department to review its allocation for staff and funding associated with delivery of these services.

However, the question of any increase in expenditure for staffing within the Community Welfare Service above that currently provided would have to be considered in the context of overall Government policy on public service manpower levels.

Extra staff have been assigned to the Department's social welfare local offices and process improvement initiatives are being implemented with a view to reducing processing times for jobseekers claims. These measures should help to relieve some of the pressure on the Community Welfare Service.

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Workloads by CWS Area 2006-2008

	2006 Workload	2007 Workload	2008 Workload
Dublin Mid Leinster	310,923	328,974	399,489
Dublin North East	391,566	411,011	475,171
South	340,936	346,271	418,542
West	308,970	330,375	396,446
Total	1,352,395	1,416,631	1,689,648

Note: These figures include claims registered, in payment and terminated on the Department's IT systems.

351. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the various wage subsidy schemes in operation by her Department; the basis on which funding will be accessed under these schemes; the number of employees who benefit from each such scheme at present, and for each month in 2007 and 2008; the amount spent on each such scheme in 2007 and 2008 on a total basis, and per employee supported basis; the amount budgeted for same in 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [5888/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Department of Social and Family Affairs does not operate a wage subsidy scheme for employers but it provides a range of employment supports available to persons in receipt of welfare payments. These are designed to assist and facilitate people on social welfare payments to return to the active labour force.

The BTWA scheme is designed to assist the long-term unemployed, lone parents, people with disabilities and other social welfare recipients to return to work. There are two strands to the scheme; the back to work enterprise allowance (BTWEA) for the self-employed people and the back to work allowance (BTWA) for employees. Participants who become employees receive a tapered percentage of their social welfare payment over a three year period and self employed people receive it for a four year period. Participants may also retain entitlement to certain other secondary benefits. These allowances provide a monetary incentive for people who are dependant long-term on social welfare payments to make the return to work financially attractive and viable.

To qualify for the back to work allowance an application must be submitted in advance and the person must be in receipt of a qualifying payment for a specific length of time immediately prior to commencing employment.

The qualifying payments and main conditions are as follows:

- jobseeker's allowance/benefit for two years and aged over 23 years. Applicants must also establish an entitlement to jobseeker's allowance.
- one-parent family payment, disability allowance, blind person's pension, carer's allowance, farm assist, invalidity pension, unemployability supplement, pre-retirement allowance, widows/widowers non contributory pension, deserted wife's benefit/allowance, and prisoners wife's allowance for at least 15 months (12 months if aged 50 or over).
- illness benefit for at least 3 years

At the end of December 2008 there were 8,160 approx. recipients of back to work allowance; 4,600 in receipt of the self employed strand and some 3,560 in receipt of the employee strand.

The estimated final spend for 2008 is €70.8 million and the budget estimate for 2009 is €80.3 million.

Employers who take on new employees who receive the back to work allowance are eligible for an exemption from the employers' share of the PRSI contribution for a maximum of two years.

The department also operates an in-work payment to low paid workers through the family income supplement (FIS) scheme. The scheme is designed to provide support for people, with families, who are on low earnings. This preserves the incentive for them to remain in employment in circumstances where they might be only marginally better off than if they were claiming other social welfare payments. At the end of December 2008 there were 27,798 people in receipt of FIS. Final expenditure on FIS for 2008 is expected to be €177.34 million based on an average claimload of 22,520. The budget for 2009 is €211.63 million based on an estimated average claimload of 31,000.

One of the qualifying conditions for receipt of FIS is that the customer must be in paid employment of at least 38 hours every fortnight or 19 hours per week. This condition must be satisfied on an ongoing basis. If the customer works less than 38 hours every fortnight, he/she cannot qualify for FIS. Application forms are available on-line at www.welfare.ie or through local Social Welfare Offices or through the Department's local leaflet request line.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment funds and operates a wage subsidy scheme through FÁS. It provides financial incentives to employers, outside the public sector, to employ disabled people who work more than 20 hours per week.

Child Support.

352. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the reason no early child care supplement payments were made in January 2009. [6024/09]

356. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost to the State in 2008 of the early child care supplement; and the cost to the State of payments made in respect of non-resident children. [6100/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 352 and 356 together.

The Early Childcare Supplement [ECS] is administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs on behalf of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The total expenditure on the ECS in 2008 was €477.2m. The expenditure on ECS in 2008 for non-resident children was approximately €4.5m.

Up to the end of 2008, ECS was paid quarterly at a rate of €275 per quarter. The last payment for 2008 was made on the 8th December, in respect of the months, October, November and December. As announced in budget 2009, the ECS is now paid monthly, in arrears, at a rate of €92 per month. The payment due for January 2009 was paid, in arrears, on the 9th February.

Pension Provisions.

353. **Deputy Edward O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs her views on the anomaly which exists for people who entered insurable employment prior to marriage and who did not become employed again until recent years where the number of PRSI contributions paid is divided into the number of years since first entering insurable employment and which leaves them entitled to a reduced pension, even though they may have only worked for a few years prior to marriage (details supplied). [6033/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): In order to qualify for a state pension contributory a person must satisfy a number of qualifying conditions which include commencing insurable employment at least 10 years before pension age, payment of a minimum of 260 qualifying contributions and achieving a yearly average of at least 10 qualifying contributions, paid or credited, over their working life. To determine the yearly average a person's contribution record is averaged from 1953, or from the year of starting insurable employment, if later, to the end of the tax year before reaching pension age. The person concerned achieved a yearly average of 17, which is sufficient to entitle her to 75% of the state pension (contributory) at the current personal rate of €172.70 per week, with effect from 21 August 2008. In order to qualify for the maximum rate a yearly average of 48 contributions is required.

It is accepted that the average contributions test can have an impact on pension entitlements, particularly where a person has a significant gap in their overall record. The Green Paper on pensions considered a number of issues related to the qualifying conditions for a social welfare contributory pension including the contributions test. A framework for future pensions policy is being developed and the issue of contributions will be addressed in that context. It is expected that the framework will be finalised shortly.

Social Welfare Benefits.

354. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be approved for jobseeker's benefit. [6038/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The person concerned applied for a jobseeker's benefit payment on 22 December 2008. His social insurance contribution records for years 2006 and 2007 are incomplete and are currently being investigated. On completion of enquiries a decision will be made as soon as possible and he will be notified of the outcome. In the meantime, his Local Office has contacted him regarding a possible entitlement to jobseeker's allowance.

Under Social Welfare legislation decisions in relation to claims and insurability of employment must be made by Deciding Officers and Appeals Officers. These officers are statutorily appointed and I have no role in regard to making such decisions.

Question No. 355 answered with Question No. 341.

Question No. 356 answered with Question No. 352.

Social Insurance.

357. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the position regarding an Irish citizen married to a United States citizen in the United States and returning to Ireland, whereby the spouse wishes to apply for a PPS number; the reason a person such as the spouse is not being provided with a PPS number; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6124/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The PPS Number is a unique identifier for access to services provided by Government Departments and other public bodies. PPS Numbers are issued following a controlled allocation procedure to ensure that a person receives only one number and that the number is allocated on foot of information that is accurate and verified. Proof and evidence of identity is a vital element of the registration procedure and must be established before a PPS Number is allocated. The means by which a person may prove their identity varies according to the person's nationality.

There are, however, no nationality conditions attached to obtaining a PPS Number. Resident applicants, irrespective of their nationality, who have not previously been allocated a PPS Number should complete an Application Form (REG1), available only in our network of local offices and submit the appropriate proof of identity documents. Non-resident applicants, unable to attend one of our local offices, may make an application to the Client Identity Services Division of the Department.

If the Deputy wishes to forward details of the case in question, including the individual's personal details and the office where the application was made, the case will be examined to establish the reasons for the refusal.

Social Welfare Offices.

358. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when the extra appointments due to be made to the social welfare office in Ballina will be in place. [6134/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Department recently undertook a review of the staffing levels in Local Offices due to the continued increased number of claims for jobseeker's payments. One additional post, at Clerical Officer level, is to be assigned to Ballina Local Office. Arrangements are in train to assign one Clerical Officer to the Ballina office.

Social Welfare Benefits.

359. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of non-EU citizens claiming jobseeker's benefit and jobseeker's allowance; the number on jobseeker's benefit for more than 12 months and 18 months, respectively; the number who have signed on for jobseeker's benefit since its restriction to a 12-month payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [6143/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Non-EU nationals living in Ireland are entitled to work here provided they have the appropriate visa. Where a person employed on a work permit loses his/her job they may qualify for a jobseeker's payment for the unexpired period of the work permit. In all cases, non-EU nationals who qualify for a jobseeker's payment must satisfy all the conditions of the schemes. In this respect, they are treated no differently to EU nationals.

At the end of January 2009 there were 6,507 jobseeker's benefit and 3,543 jobseeker's allowance claimants on the Live Register from non-EU countries. Of the 6,507 jobseeker's benefit claimants, 2,412 made their claim on or after the 15th October 2008 when the changes to the jobseeker's benefit scheme announced in Budget 2009 were introduced. 84 non-EU claimants have been in receipt of jobseeker's benefit for longer than 12 months. The maximum length of a Jobseeker's claim is 15 months where the claim was made prior to 15th October 2008.

Ministerial Travel.

360. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the cost of foreign travel, accommodation and related ministerial and official expenses associated with St. Patrick's Day 2008; and the plans relating to St. Patrick's Day 2009 and their projected cost. [6163/09]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Much careful consideration is given to determining the Ministerial programmes for St. Patrick's Day to ensure that Ireland's economic, trade, social and cultural interests are effectively represented and promoted. In 2008,

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the then Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Martin Cullen attended the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Atlanta, United States of America. The total cost of the visit, including the cost for the two officials who accompanied him, was €21,133.

The St. Patrick's Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised and projected costs cannot be determined at this stage. The cost of the individual programmes and accompanying delegations will, in all cases, be kept to a reasonable minimum. In view of the current difficult economic climate, the potential provided by these visits to promote trade and business opportunities will be maximised and will be a key component of the 2009 programmes.

Naval Service Vessels.

361. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Defence if he received recommendations from the board of Coiste an Asgard regarding the recovery of the *Asgard II*; when he will make a decision on whether to salvage the vessel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5660/09]

368. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Defence when he will make a decision on the future of the *Asgard II*; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6170/09]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O'Dea): I propose to take Questions Nos. 361 and 368 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, I was asked to defer my final determination in this matter pending the receipt and consideration of some material from a third party. That material has been received and is being examined. I will be announcing my decision in the coming days regarding the question of whether or not to proceed with the salvage of Asgard II.

Ministerial Transport.

362. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Defence the number of times the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government availed of the Government jet or other State-owned aircraft since becoming Minister in 2007; the date and cost of each trip taken; the destination of each trip; the reason for the trip; the persons who accompanied him on these trips; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5750/09]

363. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Defence the number of times a person (details supplied) has availed of the Government jet or other State-owned aircraft; the reason for, the cost, the destination and the date of each trip taken since they came to office in 2007; the persons who accompanied them on each trip; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5751/09]

364. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Defence the number of times the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources availed of the Government jet or other State-owned Government aircraft since becoming Minister in 2007; the date and cost of each trip taken; the destination of each trip; the reason for travelling; the persons who accompanied him on these trips; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5752/09]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O'Dea): I propose to take Questions Nos. 362 to 364, inclusive, together.

The Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Mr. John Gormley T.D., and Minister of State Trevor Sargent T.D., have not availed of the Ministerial Air Transport Service since being appointed in June 2007.

The Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Eamon Ryan T.D. has availed of the Ministerial Air Transport Service twice since June 2007: The Minister and one official from his Department travelled Baldonnell — Edinburgh — Baldonnell on the Learjet 45 on 25-26 September 2008. Minister Ryan's time on board for this mission totalled 1 hour 20 minutes. The Minister and three officials from his Department travelled from Brussels to Baldonnell on the Gulfstream IV on 8 December 2008. Minister Ryan's time on board for this mission totalled 1 hour 30 minutes. On both occasions the flights were shared with other Ministers and officials. My Department does not hold records with regard to the purpose of each trip.

With regard to cost, my Department follows the normal practice in the aviation business of costing aircraft by reference to the cost per flying hour under either of two headings:

- (a) The direct cost, i.e. the costs which are additional to those associated with having the aircraft and which only arise when the aircraft is flown including maintenance, fuel and support services; and
- (b) The total cost, i.e. the direct cost plus the costs associated with having the aircraft, i.e. depreciation and personnel costs.

The costs associated with Air Corps aircraft used in provision of Ministerial Air Transport Service are as follows:

Aircraft	Average Direct Cost Per Hour	Average Total Cost Per Hour
	€	€
Gulfstream	4,050	7,890
Learjet	1,270	2,950

Smarter Travel Policy.

365. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Defence his Department's work place travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5847/09]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O'Dea): As a measure to incentivise the use of public transport, the Travel Pass Scheme was introduced in the Civil Service on 1 January 2002. To date a number of civil servants in my Department have availed of this Scheme. It is the general policy in my Department that, when travelling on official duties, officials should, as far as possible, use public transport when available.

My Department supports the Government's Smarter Travel Policy, launched by the Minister for Transport on 5 February, which recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable.

Defence Forces Reserve.

366. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Defence the cost to the State of the FCA in 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6092/09]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O'Dea): Subhead D of the Defence Vote includes payments for Reserve Defence Force (RDF) training, gratuities, allowances and also includes grants paid into unit funds. The outturn on the Subhead for 2007 was €8,839,000. As the RDF is an integral part of the Defence Forces a range of other costs are spread across a number

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of Subheads. These costs are being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy in the near future.

Ministerial Travel.

367. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Defence the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related Ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick's Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick's Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6155/09]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O'Dea): In response to the Deputy I wish to state that I did not travel abroad for St. Patrick's Day in 2008. The then Minister of State for Defence and Government Chief Whip, Mr. Tom Kitt, T.D., travelled abroad on St. Patrick's Day in 2008 to represent Ireland in Vienna in his capacity as Government Chief Whip. The Department of the Taoiseach covered the necessary travel and subsistence costs. Minister Kitt was accompanied by his Private Secretary at a cost of €618 to the Department of Defence.

While the St. Patrick's Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised, I have no plans to travel abroad for St. Patrick's Day this year. If the Minister of State for Defence and Government Chief Whip, Mr. Pat Carey, T.D., participates it will be in his capacity as Government Chief Whip and Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach.

In view of the current difficult economic climate, the potential provided by these visits to promote trade and business opportunities will be maximised and will be a key component of the 2009 programmes.

Question No. 368 answered with Question No. 361.

Election Management System.

369. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the measures of political reform that will be introduced to demonstrate that politicians are willing to play their share in tackling the economic crisis, particularly in relation to unvouched expenses and political donations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5649/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): In so far as matters within the responsibility of my Department are concerned, I will shortly publish a Bill to introduce spending limits, which will be in force for the local elections that are to take place on 5 June 2009. The purpose of introducing spending limits is to create as level a playing field as possible to ensure that candidates of modest means are not put at a disadvantage in contesting an election. It will also bring local elections in line with other electoral codes where spending limits already apply. The Programme for Government contains a commitment to establish an independent Electoral Commission which will, inter alia, examine the issue of financing of the political system. I have recently published, for consultation, a scoping study on the establishment of an Electoral Commission.

National Monuments.

370. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the cost of the State legal representation in the matter of High Court and Supreme Court cases taken in relation to an application for a licence to dive and survey the wreck of RMS Luisitania; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6121/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I refer to the reply to Question Nos. 439 and 458 of 10 February 2009. Information on the cost of the State's legal representation in these cases is a matter for the Chief State Solicitor's Office, and is not available in my Department.

Water Pollution.

371. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the legislation under which he introduced exclusion zones for farming around wells; the consultation which took place in advance of this measure; if his attention has been drawn to the problems this is causing to some farmers who will lose a considerable amount of their workable land as a result; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6167/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The EU Nitrates Directive aims to protect all waters against pollution from agricultural sources. Particular care is required for the protection of public health in the case of waters which serve as the source of drinking water. The European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2006 and 2007 implement the Directive in Ireland and provide statutory support for good agricultural practice to protect waters against pollution from agricultural sources. The Regulations were made following full consultation with interested parties.

The Regulations do not provide for exclusion zones for farming around wells. However, Article 17(2) of the Regulations includes a prohibition on the application to land of organic fertiliser or soiled water within specified distances from any borehole, spring or well used for the abstraction of drinking water. The specified distance for larger water supply schemes (serving 500 or more persons) is 200 metres and for smaller supplies is 100 metres or 25 metres, depending on the size of the supply. Article 17(3) of the Regulations provides that where farmyard manure is held in a field prior to landspreading, it shall not be placed within 250 metres of any borehole, spring or well supplying drinking water to 50 or more persons. In the case of smaller supplies the specified distance is 50 metres.

These prohibitions are necessary for the protection of sources of drinking water generally. However, in the case of specific abstraction points, Article 17(5)(a) of the Regulations provides that a local authority may, following consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency, specify an alternative distance following prior investigations and where the authority is satisfied that it is appropriate for the protection of waters being abstracted at that point.

Election Management System.

372. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he has made a policy decision in relation to the use of posters on behalf of candidates in the forthcoming local and European elections; if so, the policy; if he has made a decision in relation to the amount of spend by candidates and political parties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5552/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I have recently informed the Government that on foot of the public consultation in autumn 2008 on election posterage, I intend to initiate pilot schemes in a number of local authority areas during the upcoming local and European elections. These pilot schemes will investigate how four options identified through the consultation process would work in practice. The pilot schemes will test:

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- The use of biodegradable and/or colour coded plastic ties;
- The display of posters in designated areas only;
- Restricting the total number of posters per candidate;
- Restricting the number of posters per candidate to 2 (back to back) per pole.

Details on participating local authorities will shortly be finalised and the specific detail of the pilot schemes will be agreed on an individual basis with each of the local authorities involved. It is my intention to ask all candidates, local and European, in each of the participating areas to participate in the scheme so that it is as comprehensive and representative as possible.

I am also reviewing the litter legislation to ensure there is absolutely no doubt that posters cannot be erected before an election has been called, and I will bring forward an amendment if necessary.

In relation to spending limits, I recently announced that all candidates standing in the local elections to be held on 5 June 2009 will be subject to limits on election expenditure. For the 34 County and City Councils, a sliding scale with four separate spending limits, based on the population within each individual electoral area, will apply. A top limit of €15,000 will apply in the most populated areas, with limits of €13,000, €11,500 and €9,750 to apply to candidates in other county and city council electoral areas, depending on their population. A standard spending limit will apply to all 80 of the borough and town councils. Candidates standing for election to these local authorities will be subject to a spending limit of €7,500 in all cases. I will shortly publish a Bill to give effect to these spending limits, which will be in force for the local elections.

Water and Sewerage Schemes.

373. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the plans he has to introduce a grant scheme to upgrade septic tanks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5555/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The Programme for Government included a commitment in regard to a scheme of support for the replacement and upgrade of septic tanks older than fifteen years with newer systems. Having regard to current budgetary constraints, it is not possible to make provision for such a scheme in 2009, and the timeframe for pursuing this commitment will remain under ongoing review.

EU Directives.

374. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the status of the review at EU level of the Nitrates Directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5556/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I am not aware that the Nitrates Directive is currently subject to review by the European Commission. However, the Commission will present an implementation report for the period 2004-07 to the Council and the European Parliament during 2010.

Planning Issues.

375. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the grants in relation to naming of estates with Irish names that are paid by Government; and the checks that are put in place to ensure that correct spellings are used. [5557/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): My Department does not provide grants in relation to the naming of residential estates, nor am I aware of any such grants paid by other Departments. Under Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, planning authorities may attach conditions to planning permissions in relation to appropriate naming and numbering of, and the provision of appropriate signage for, proposed developments. I have no function in this matter.

Building Regulations.

376. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if there are grants available for persons hoping to carry out building energy ratings assessor training programmes; the reason the registration fee for assessors is so high which may be prohibitive for some persons who wish to carry out this type of work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5588/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The European Communities (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2006 — 2008, which transposed the EU Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings into Irish Law, require a building of any class which is offered for sale or letting since 1 January 2009 to have a Building Energy Rating (BER) Certificate, unless otherwise exempted by the Regulations. Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) is designated as the issuing authority under the Regulations and is responsible for the general administration of the BER system.

BER Certificates can only be produced by fully trained, qualified and registered BER Assessors. In order to qualify as a BER Assessor, a person must have a qualification equivalent to National Certificate Level 6 in construction studies and undergo a short duration BER training course with an SEI-approved training provider. Persons who successfully complete the training course, which includes an end of course examination, may then register with SEI as a BER Assessor.

I am not aware of any grant schemes along the lines referred to in the Question. However, I am advised by SEI that some of the 20 BER training providers listed on SEI's website may have entered into funding arrangements with FÁS, the State training and employment agency.

The fee for registration with SEI as a BER Assessor is €1,000 for the first year, with an annual renewal fee of €100 thereafter. In the case of companies, the registration fee is reduced to €500 in respect of the registration of a second and subsequent BER Assessor. All registration fees are used solely for the purposes of the development, maintenance and operation of the BER scheme, which is expected to be self-financing, and for this reason the fees are considered necessary and appropriate.

Housing Projects.

377. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount he will spend on the capital assistance scheme and the capital loan and subsidy scheme in 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5596/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Housing authorities have been provided with provisional allocations for my Department's Capital Assistance and Capital Loan & Subsidy Schemes for 2009. However, these provisional allocations may be subject to further possible amendment, and it is the intention to issue final allocations for 2009 in April, following completion of a series of Housing Action Plan meetings with local authorities which is due to start in early March.

378. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government that status of an application in respect of funding for a housing project (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5598/09]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): An application for funding under the Capital Assistance Scheme for a project at this location was received from Cork County Council by my Department in late 2004. Since then, my Department has engaged with the Council with a view to resolving certain technical and procurement issues attaching to the application. In December 2008 further information was requested from the Council and a response is awaited.

Planning Issues.

379. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the measures he is taking to ensure that the wildlife habitats in Toomes, County Louth are not being destroyed by the building of the proposed 450 megawatt turbine plant nearby; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5615/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Full planning permission was granted on 30 May 2008 for the building of a Combined Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) power plant in Toomes, Co. Louth. Conditions relating to habitats were attached to planning permission.

The site at Toomes mostly comprises abandoned pasture but includes areas of wet grassland, wet woodland and birch woodland, which are of ecological interest although the site is not designated for protection under Irish or European law.

My Department advised the proposers of the project on how to minimise the impact on the habitats within the site. As a result, the plans were amended to retain woodland habitat and to allow a vegetated corridor along the perimeters to the site.

As part of pre-planning discussions, the proposers also agreed to purchase an extra 1.7Ha of wet grassland and wet woodland habitat immediately to the east of the development to compensate for loss of habitat within the footprint of the development. Environmental consultants have recently prepared a management plan for this compensatory habitat.

Consultants have also carried out badger and bat surveys of the site. No badger sets were found and although a minimal amount of bat activity was recorded, no bat roosts were observed. Consultants have recently received a licence from my Department to relocate frog spawn from the proposed development site to within the compensatory habitat.

Election Management System.

380. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 218 of 5 February 2009, the local authority areas that are being asked to pilot the measures regarding the control of postering for elections and referenda in 2009. [5618/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):

Details on participating local authorities have yet to be finalised. My Department is liaising with the County & City Managers Association in this regard, and details of participating local authorities and the specific pilot schemes they intend to introduce will be made available when finalised.

Waste Management.

381. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount of food waste that is disposed of to landfill on an annual basis with a breakdown of same per county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5682/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):

National waste statistics for all waste streams are independently produced and published by the EPA. National Waste Reports have been published in respect of the years 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004 and 2006 with interim reports published for 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2007 respectively. These reports are available on the Agency's website: www.epa.ie.

While there is no specific information available to my Department on the volumes of food waste consigned to landfill, the National Waste Reports provide data in relation to the organic fraction of the municipal waste stream. Organic waste, in broad terms, is taken to mean food and garden waste arising in the domestic and commercial sectors.

The recent National Waste Report 2007, published in January 2009, estimated that a total of 839,806 tonnes, or 91.4%, of organic waste was landfilled in 2007. Improving our recovery rates for organic waste represents a considerable challenge and one that must be addressed as a matter of urgency if Ireland is to achieve its prescribed diversion targets for biodegradable municipal waste under Directive 99/31/EC on the landfill of waste (the Landfill Directive).

Meeting these targets will entail doubling the existing levels of diversion of biodegradable municipal waste, which includes organic waste, from landfill by 2010 with exponential increases in diversion in the subsequent target years of 2013 and 2016 respectively.

Following extensive consultations, a National Strategy on Biodegradable Waste was published in April 2006 which sets out measures aimed at the separate collection, recovery and recycling of biodegradable municipal waste with a view to achieving the progressive diversion of biodegradable municipal waste from landfill in accordance with our international obligations. The Strategy envisages that 80% of biodegradable municipal waste will be diverted from landfill by 2016, with the separate collection and subsequent biological treatment of organic waste to generate compost having a critical role to play in minimising the use of landfill into the future. The Programme for Government contains a commitment to implementation of the National Strategy.

In 2008, a circular issued to all local authorities to drive forward the roll out of brown bins for domestic householders and to promote the use of home composting. I have also signalled my intention to introduce primary legislation to allow for significant increases in the landfill levy to act as a further deterrent to landfill and a regulatory impact analysis for this purpose has now been completed. In addition, my Department is working with industry towards the development of a statutory instrument to require the source segregation and appropriate treatment of food waste arising in the commercial sector. This, I believe, has the potential to divert significant amounts of food waste from landfill towards more sustainable and environmentally beneficial practices.

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I am confident that all of the above measures will contribute significantly to the achievement of the targets for the diversion of biodegradable municipal waste from landfill and in an overall reduction in our use of landfill.

Waste Disposal.

382. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to a licence issued for the waste held (details supplied) as required under the European Directives on waste. [5689/09]

383. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the steps he has taken on foot of the decision of 17 June 2003 which gave a mandate requiring his Department to co-ordinate all legal actions in relation to a site (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5690/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I propose to take Questions Nos. 382 and 383 together.

Irish Steel was sold to Ispat Mexicana S.A. de C.V. in 1996 and renamed Irish Ispat. After a difficult trading period, Irish Ispat Limited went into liquidation in June 2001. In 2002, the liquidator initiated proceedings under section 290 of the Companies Acts to disclaim the lease. In early 2003 the liquidator exercised a break clause in the lease to allow him vacate the lands held under the lease. He was constrained by injunction to remain on site for a further period in order properly and legally to dispose of certain waste materials.

The Ministers for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Defence and Communications, Marine and Natural Resources issued related proceedings against the liquidator and the company in voluntary liquidation seeking clean-up orders under section 58 of the Waste Management Act, 1996. Those orders sought to oblige the company to discontinue engaging in the holding, recovery or disposal of waste on the lands comprised in the lease, to carry out remediation works to mitigate or remedy any effects of the holding, recovery or disposal of waste and to put in place an effective ongoing monitoring and inspection system, following remediation.

As noted above the liquidator was able to disclaim the lease due to a break clause which came into effect and therefore the only remaining part of the liquidator's application was his request to disclaim the Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) Licence. The judgement on 29 July 2004 found as a matter of fact that the IPC licence was granted after the company had ceased production of steel and that the conditions of the licence could not be applied retrospectively.

My Department has continued to exercise responsibility for the care and maintenance of the site, with Cork County Council acting as the Department's agent in that regard. This has necessarily included elements of site clearance to avoid negative environmental impact and for reasons of health and safety. It has also involved an extensive site investigation to determine the extent of environmental damage and to guide further Government consideration of the future development/use of the site. I will shortly bring a Memorandum to Government with proposals in that regard.

Waste Management.

384. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if all local authorities have completed the register of contaminated sites; if any have not done so; and the action he is proposing to ensure compliance. [5691/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): A policy direction issued from my Department on 3 May 2005 in regard to local authorities, in the course of reviewing their statutory waste management plans, complying with the requirements of section 22 of the Waste Management Acts by preparing an inventory and risk assessment of all non-licensed closed landfills where disposal or recovery activities have taken place. To assist local authorities in this process, the EPA has developed a dedicated web site. However the web site is not, nor is intended to be, a register of contaminated sites.

Under the Waste Management (Certification of Historic Unlicensed Waste Disposal and Recovery Activity) Regulations 2008 local authorities are obliged to identify and register by 30 June 2009 all closed unlicensed landfills which were operated by them during the period 15 July 1977 to 27 March 1997, i.e. in the period between the adoption of relevant EU requirements and their having full effect in Ireland through the waste licensing system now the statutory responsibility of the EPA. The Agency are to prescribe the particulars to be entered in the register and the form and manner in which such information is to be entered and maintained, and will shortly do so.

Local authorities are also required, under section 26(2) of the Acts, to identify and assess sites at which waste disposal activities were carried out that to a significant extent involved hazardous waste. The EPA in 2007 published a Code of Practice for Environmental Risk Assessment for Unregulated Waste Disposal Sites. The code provides the framework for local authorities to establish any environmental risk posed by such sites.

Natural Heritage Areas.

385. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his Department's policy on compensation for existing activities in Natura 2000 sites that are found to have adverse impacts on protected species or habitats, specifically detailing the policy and compensation paid to date and any payments anticipated for, but not limited to, turf cutting, fish farming, and forestry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5692/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Provision is made in Regulation 20 of the EC (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997, for the payment of compensation to landowners and/or users of land who suffer an actual financial loss as a result of Natura 2000 designations and I envisage that compensation will continue to be payable on that basis.

To date, my Department has paid some €24 million in compensation to landowners and/or turbary rights holders in bogs designated as Natura 2000 sites or Natural Heritage Areas. These monies include costs of acquisition of freehold and turbary rights within raised bog Special Areas of Conservation. Further monies are available to farmers who operate within Natura 2000 sites under my Department's Farm Plan Scheme.

386. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will provide a status report on the protected habitats and the protected species at a location (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5693/09]

387. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the expenditure to date and the estimate of the funds required to ensure the

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conservation status of the protected species and habitats as a result of the placing of a tanking solution at a site (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter [5694/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I propose to take Questions Nos. 386 and 387 together.

During the planning stage of this project my Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) raised concerns that placing the road in a cutting could potentially have adverse impacts on Pollardstown Fen, which is a Special Area of Conservation. This view was accepted by the National Roads Authority and Kildare County Council, and it was decided that potential impacts could be reduced by constructing a tank around the road.

Monitoring since construction of the bypass has shown that impacts have been confined to a small but significant area of the Fen and the major feature of concern has been a reduction in the population of the protected species *Vertigo geyeri*. While some habitats (Alkaline fen, Tufa springs) have been affected to some extent, the impacts involved are not considered to be significant, and may have been caused by the combined effects of climatic conditions during the monitoring period, and the construction of the bypass. The final monitoring report on the Kildare bypass is expected this year and may provide further clarification on these issues and whether there will be any permanent impact on water levels in the Fen.

Information regarding the cost of the tanking solution and of the monitoring and remedial work undertaken to date by the National Roads Authority and Kildare County Council is not available to my Department. My Department is currently developing a management plan for Pollardstown Fen Special Area of Conservation which will take account of the impact of this project, and address the ongoing work required to ensure that favourable conservation status of the site is achieved and maintained.

Local Authority Housing.

388. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he plans to make provision in the voluntary housing schemes for the purchase of individual houses by tenants; and the matters that were agreed under the housing policy framework, Building Sustainable Communities, to pilot a tenant purchase scheme for some new voluntary homes under the scheme. [5696/09]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): The provision of accommodation by approved voluntary and co-operative housing bodies is an integral part of my Department's overall response to delivering on social housing need. Local authorities and approved housing bodies are working in close co-operation to deliver an expanded range of social housing options and a wide range of accommodation types to meet the needs of low-income families and persons with special housing needs.

There is no provision at present in the voluntary housing schemes sector for the purchase of individual houses by tenants. However, the Government's housing policy statement, Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities, indicated that consideration would be given in consultation with the voluntary and co-operative sector, to piloting a tenant purchase scheme for some new voluntary homes based on the incremental purchase model. The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which is expected to commence Second Stage very shortly, includes provisions for the introduction of an incremental purchase scheme. The issues arising in relation to the

introduction of such a scheme for the voluntary housing sector are being considered in consultation with the Irish Council for Social Housing.

Environmental Policy.

389. **Deputy Seán Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the size and scale of projects under Irish law that require an environmental impact assessment; the size and scale of developments that require an environmental impact assessment under EU directives; the scale of projects that require EIAs in other EU countries; if the scale of projects that require EIAs here is in line with other EU countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5701/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Council Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effect of certain public and private projects on the environment (as amended in 1997 and 2003) specifies projects which, by virtue of their nature, size or location are likely to have significant effects on the environment and should be subject to an environmental impact assessment (EIA).

Article 4(1) of the Directive requires projects listed in Annex I of the Directive to be subject to EIA, while Article 4(2) provides that for projects listed in Annex II of the Directive, Member States may determine, either through case by case examination or by setting thresholds or criteria, or both, whether such projects are to be subject to EIA.

The provisions of the EIA Directive are transposed into Irish legislation by the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. Schedule 5 of the 2001 Regulations specifies relevant development for the purposes of Part X of the Act, which deals with EIA. In accordance with the Directive, certain thresholds have been set below which development need not necessarily be subject to EIA. However, where a planning application for sub-threshold development is submitted to a planning authority, that authority may, where it considers that the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, require the submission of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Similarly, in the case of an appeal relating to a planning application for sub-threshold development, An Bord Pleanála may, where it considers that the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, require the submission of an EIS.

My Department does not have detailed information on the position regarding EIA requirements in the other 26 EU Member States.

Ministerial Appointments.

390. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the appointments he has made to public bodies since the Government was formed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5704/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): A number of different statutory processes are involved in appointments to State bodies and boards. In some cases statutory selection procedures must be followed or nominations must be sought from independent nominating panels before appointments are made by the Government or by me, as Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. In other cases only particular public office holders may be appointed to certain boards. In a number of situations, only some appointments to the body concerned are made by me, or appointments

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are made with the consent of the Minister for Finance, or following consultation with the Minister for Finance or Minister for Education and Science, as appropriate.

In the context of the above, the information requested in relation to appointments made by me since the Government was formed is set out in the following table:

Name of State Body/Board	Number of Appointments Made
Affordable Homes Partnership	2
An Bord Pleanála	1
Building Regulations Advisory Body	7
An Chomhairle Leabharlanna	13
Dublin Docklands Development Council	2
Fire Services Council	1
Heritage Council	5
Housing Finance Agency	1
Irish Water Safety	1
Limerick Northside Regeneration Agency	17
Limerick Southside Regeneration Agency	17
Local Government Computer Services Board	2
Local Government Management Services Board	2
National Building Agency	1
Private Residential Tenancies Board	5
Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland	5
Rent Tribunal	7

Water and Sewerage Schemes.

391. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if the Burncourt and Fethard regional water schemes in South Tipperary will be separated to allow for the Burncourt scheme to go for tender in view of the significant delay that the Fethard scheme will have in order to secure its abstraction orders. [5736/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): These schemes are included for funding in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2007-2009.

In December 2008, I approved South Tipperary County Council's Design Review Report, which proposed to procure new water treatment plants for both Burncourt and Fethard as a single Design Built Operate contract and to provide the other elements of the schemes by traditional procurement. No further proposals in relation to either scheme have been received by my Department from the Council.

Ministerial Staff.

392. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the number of people employed in his constituency offices; the pay scale of each employee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5753/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The information requested is set out in the table below.

Grade	Number of staff
Personal Assistant-Higher Executive Officer	1
Personal Secretary-Executive Officer	0.5 × 2
Executive Officer	2
Clerical Officer	2.5

The salary scales for all administrative grades are available on the Department of Finance website (www.finance.gov.ie).

Fire Stations.

393. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position of an application for funding by North Tipperary County Council for a fire service facility in Cloughjordan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5762/09]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael P. Kitt): The provision of funding for a fire station at Cloughjordan will be considered under future programmes having regard to the overall availability of resources, the spread of existing facilities and competing demands of fire authorities for available funds under the fire services capital programme. In autumn 2008, the fire authority indicated that improvement to the fire station at Templemore was their first priority, Cloughjordan was second priority and the construction of a workshop at Nenagh was third priority.

394. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if, in view of the concerns existing in Bray, County Wicklow, relating to the fire service, he will confirm that he has satisfied himself that the level of provisions in Bray is satisfactory for the needs of the town and surrounding areas; when the three reports into the deaths of the two firefighters in Bray will be released; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5794/09]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael P. Kitt): The provision of a fire service in its functional area, including the establishment and maintenance of a fire brigade, the assessment of fire cover needs, the provision of a premises and the making of such other provisions as it considers necessary or desirable, is a statutory function of individual fire authorities under section 10 of the Fire Services Act 1981. My Department's role is one of supporting and assisting local authorities in delivering fire services through the setting of general policy and the provision of capital funding.

I have not been informed by an Garda Síochána or the Health and Safety Authority when their reports will be completed or if they will be published. I have asked Wicklow County Council to make the findings of its investigation, when completed, available to my Department.

Smarter Travel Policy.

395. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his Department's work place travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5850/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): As part of my Department's participation in the Dublin Transportation Office's One Small Step campaign, a Workplace Travel Plan was launched in October 2008. The aim of the Plan is to:

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encourage greater staff use of sustainable transport options when travelling to and from work; and ensure that, where practicable, staff opt for sustainable transport options when conducting business on behalf of the Department.

In introducing the plan, the Department is committed to: reviewing the travel patterns of staff, particularly in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA); encouraging a change of attitudes and behaviours, where possible, around travel options to and from work; reducing the reliance on the car as a means of transport to and from work, particularly in the GDA, and promoting, where possible, the healthier, sustainable options of walking or cycling for all or part of the journey; reducing the carbon footprint of the Department by reducing carbon emissions from staff car usage in the context of their work; promoting the use of public transport to cut down on emissions and traffic.

In the context of official travel, it is Departmental policy that public transport should be used wherever possible where it is deemed necessary to travel for business purposes. Staff should only use their cars to travel to and from meetings in the following circumstances: where no suitable public transport (e.g., train or bus) is available; where public transport is available only at equal or greater expense; where the use of public transport would result in the loss of official time which it is necessary to avoid.

Local Authority Housing.

396. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his plans to establish a scheme in which local authorities would enter into long-term leasing arrangements with developers to address housing waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5858/09]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): I recently announced new arrangements for the delivery of social housing whereby housing authorities may enter into long-term leases of private dwellings as a means of meeting housing need. My Department has outlined the details of these new arrangements in a circular which I have requested be sent to the Deputy.

The purpose of the new arrangements is to provide a wider range of supply options to authorities to meet housing need. In addition, while taking advantage of the greater availability of private stock for rental, the use of leasing will allow for more efficient and effective use of available public resources and will maximize the levels of social housing that can be achieved.

The main features of the new arrangements are as follows: housing authorities will enter into leasing arrangements with property owners for periods of between 10 — 20 years; the leases will be for unfurnished dwellings; the lease type will be full ‘repair and insure’ lease with the housing authority responsible for insurance, maintenance and upkeep; the accommodation leased will be used to house persons on the local authority’s waiting list and tenants will be local authority tenants or in some cases tenants of voluntary bodies; leased properties must comply with Government housing policy of promoting sustainable communities and must have regard to the concentration of social housing within the proposed area.

Waste Management.

397. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if his Department and the Department of Finance have agreed to permit Dublin City Council to enter into a contract with a third party to design, build and operate a 650,000 tonne incinerator located on the Poolbeg Peninsula, the cost of which is estimated at many

hundreds of million Euro without either his Department or the Department of Finance having sight of the contract before approval by Dublin City Council; if his Department or the Department of Finance are acting as the ultimate guarantor of payment on behalf of Dublin City Council to the contractor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5866/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):

The facility in question is provided for in the Dublin regional waste management plan for which the four Dublin local authorities have statutory responsibility under the Waste Management Acts. Section 60(3) of the Waste Management Act, 1996 precludes the Minister from exercising any power or control in relation to the performance in particular circumstances by a local authority of a function conferred on it under the Act.

In view of the project's status as a prospective public private partnership, my Department was involved in certifying that the procurement was conducted in accordance with public policy on the procurement of infrastructure in this way. The Department by letter dated 14 September 2005 advised Dublin City Council, which acts as lead authority for the project, that having considered the submissions received in respect of the procurement process there was no objection to Dublin City Council proceeding to enter into contractual arrangements with the selected private partner. My Department and the National Development Finance Agency had representation on the project board established to manage the procurement process. The project board did not have a role in regard to the contractual arrangements subsequently entered into by Dublin City Council. Accordingly, neither my Department nor the Department of Finance have had sight of, or are a party to this contract.

Local Authority Housing.

398. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the names and location of housing estates that were taken in charge each year from 2004 to 2008 by Meath County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5886/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): My Department does not collect information on the names and locations of housing estates taken in charge by planning authorities.

Housing Schemes.

399. **Deputy Michael Noonan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he has allocated a sum of €12.6 million for the purchase of property (details supplied) in County Limerick for the development of a wet house; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6014/09]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): My Department's involvement with the voluntary and co-operative housing schemes relates primarily to the provision of funds for individual projects. The administration of the schemes, including the detailed appraisal of new applications, the management of the planning and procurement stages of projects and the certification that projects comply with the terms and conditions of the funding schemes, are the responsibility of the relevant local authority. The Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) provides funding to approved housing bodies of up to 100% of the cost of accommodation for the elderly, the homeless and persons with special housing needs, including those with an intellectual or physical disability.

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My Department recently approved the application by Limerick City Council for CAS funding in the amount of €12.6 million for the provision, by Arlington Novas, of up to 63 units of accommodation at Clyde House, Limerick.

Housing Aid for the Elderly.

400. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 528 and 1115 of 27 January 2009, if the Health Service Executive is processing all remaining applications under the former housing aid for the elderly scheme or if a decision on all remaining applications will be jointly made by the Health Service Executive and local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6027/09]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): Following the cessation of the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme from 1 August 2008, it was agreed between my Department and the Health Service Executive, that all applications on hand at that date will be processed by the Health Service Executive under the provisions of the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme. I expect to make an allocation to the Health Service Executive shortly in the respect of the processing of these claims.

Dublin Docklands Development Authority.

401. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the concerns relating to the operations of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority arising from the decision to engage with a private developer to purchase the Irish Glass Bottle site at Poolbeg including the conflict of interest of the DDDA board relating to this decision; and the action he will take to investigate these matters. [6031/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I am aware of concerns, expressed most recently at the meeting of the Joint Committee on the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on 10 February 2009, regarding the involvement of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority in the purchase of the site concerned, and related conflicts of interest on the part of members of the Board of the Authority.

The Authority was established in 1997 with the general duty to secure the social, economic and physical regeneration of the Dublin Docklands Area. To this end, it has engaged in extensive business transactions involving the purchase, management, development and sale of lands in the area. The Authority considered it necessary to become involved in the purchase of the Irish Glass Bottle (IGB) site because of its key location on the Poolbeg Peninsula and its significant development potential. The value of the site has been affected by the recent downturn in property values, but the Authority is satisfied that, as a long term investment, it will bring substantial benefits in terms of high quality physical development and community gain.

My Department has been advised by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority that, in accordance with the Authority's Code of Conduct, certain members of the Executive Board of the Authority declared conflicts of interest regarding funding arrangements for the purchase of the IGB site, and did not participate in the relevant decision making process.

Local Authority Housing.

402. **Deputy Christy O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local

Government if a home choice loan is available to those who have been approved affordable sites from a local authority and hope to build their family home, and for those people hoping to buy affordable housing from a local authority. [6037/09]

404. **Deputy Christy O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if there is evidence that a clause, whereby a local authority has a first claim on an affordable site bought by a family hoping to build their family home, is proving an impediment for those people when they seek a home choice loan. [6044/09]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 402 and 404 together.

The Home Choice Loan scheme is available to first time buyers of new houses or self-builds, subject to a maximum loan of €285,000 or maximum LTV of 92% (whichever is the lesser). A minimum income requirement of €40,000 for single applicants and €50,000 for joint applicants applies.

The low cost sites scheme is targeted at lower income households such as households approved for social housing by a local authority, local authority tenants or tenant purchasers, or certain tenants of voluntary housing associations. Such households may be eligible for normal local authority house purchase loans, the income eligibility limits for which are €40,000 for a single income household and €100,000 for a dual income household.

Under article 3(2) of the Housing (Home Choice Loan) Regulations 2008 the Home Choice Loan scheme is not available to prospective purchasers of affordable housing, households availing of the Shared Ownership Scheme or households wishing to purchase under the Tenant Purchase Scheme.

Register of Electors.

403. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his views on allowing the people who may be on holidays during upcoming polling days for local and European elections to avail of a postal vote which would be allowed on production of proof that the person had a holiday booked and was therefore unable to be present at their local polling station during polling day; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6039/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): In order to be able to vote at elections and referenda in this jurisdiction, a person's name must be entered in the register of electors for a constituency in the State in which the person ordinarily resides.

Postal voting is provided for in electoral law in respect of certain categories of person who are entered in the register of electors. The Electoral Act 1992 provides for postal voting by wholtime members of the Defence Forces, members of the Gardaí, and Irish diplomats serving abroad and their spouses. Subsequent legislation enacted by the Oireachtas has extended postal voting to other categories: electors living at home who are unable to vote because of a physical illness or a physical disability (the Electoral (Amendment) Act 1996); electors whose occupation, service or employment makes it likely that they will be unable to vote in person at their local polling station on polling day — in these cases, the law provides for completion of the necessary voting documentation at a Garda station (the Electoral Act 1997); full-time students registered at their home who are living elsewhere while attending an educational institution in the State (the Electoral Act 1997); certain election staff employed at the poll outside the constituency where they reside (the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2001); and electors who because

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of the circumstances of their detention in prison pursuant to an order of a court are likely to be unable to go in person on polling day to vote (the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2006).

While electoral law is subject to ongoing review, there are no proposals to alter the existing arrangements along the lines referred to in the Question.

Question No. 404 answered with Question No. 402.

Offshore Islands.

405. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if funds are in place to acquire all lands and for the conservation of the village ruins on An Bhlascaoid Mhór; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6057/09]

406. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the process in place for the conservation of the village ruins and island buildings on An Bhlascaoid Mhór; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6058/09]

407. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the progress he has made in acquiring all lands on An Bhlascaoid Mhór; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6059/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I propose to take Questions Nos. 405 to 407, inclusive, together.

I made funding available to the Office of Public Works (OPW) for the purchase of the majority land holding on the Great Blasket Island. This purchase has now been completed.

The OPW will be responsible for the management, conservation and promotion of the property and will carry out initial protection/conservation works to structures which form part of the abandoned village. A detailed management plan, agreed with local stakeholders, will guide the future management of the Island. The possibility of acquiring further land holdings on the Island will be kept under review in light of the overall financial and budgetary position.

Property Management Companies.

408. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his plans to confer greater responsibility and autonomy on residents in respect of management fees; the nature of these plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6095/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): My Department has no function in relation to the running of property management companies in general, or the issue of management charges in particular. Property management companies, comprising the owners of dwellings, are generally constituted under the Companies Acts and are required to operate in compliance with company law, which comes under the area of responsibility of the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Management charges are primarily a matter for individual management companies and my Department does not have a role in this or other aspects of company governance.

The Government has recently approved, the drafting of the general scheme of the Multi-Unit Developments Bill 2009, this will address a range of matters arising from the Law Reform Commission's report of June 2008, other than planning issues which I will deal with in the forthcoming Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill.

Planning Issues.

409. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the date he signed off on the draft guidelines for planning authorities on the planning system and flood risk management; the date he announced these guidelines to the media and the public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6106/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I refer to the reply to Question No. 245 of 11 February 2009.

I approved and issued draft Guidelines for Planning Authorities on the Planning System and Flood Risk Management for public consultation on 23 September 2008.

Local Authority Funding.

410. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if his Department has provided an allocation to a local authority (details supplied) in County Westmeath for the replacement or renovation of a local facility and amenity; if this sum is provided by way of grant or loan to the authority; the conditions attached to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6139/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): No allocation had been provided by my Department in respect of this project.

Ministerial Travel.

411. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related Ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick’s Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick’s Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6158/09]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I attended the St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in London in 2008. The total cost of the visit for the official travelling party was €8,995.

Minister of State Batt O’Keeffe represented the Government at the Chicago St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in 2008. The total cost of the visit for the official travelling party was €25,498.

All arrangements and costs associated with Minister of State Tony Killeen’s visit to Mexico for St. Patrick’s Day 2008 were undertaken by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The St. Patrick’s Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised and projected costs cannot be determined at this stage.

Departmental Schemes.

412. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the mechanism available to applicants to access application forms for the proposed new insulation grant programme; if there are impediments or guidelines that prohibit recipients of other grants from local authorities previously from receiving the new grants; if there is an age limit on persons who can receive such a grant; when the scheme will commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5732/09]

413. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when details of the national insulation programme will be announced; when the

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scheme will be up and running; if contractors will be required to register with his Department in advance of grants being awarded; the way such a process will be implemented; the way the scheme will be verified; the persons by whom it will be verified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6052/09]

421. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will make a statement regarding the recently announced grants for home insulation; the amount of funds available for this scheme in 2009; and the locations where applicants should apply for these grants. [5719/09]

429. **Deputy Seán Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the grant schemes available for home insulation and particularly for older houses and for older people; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5909/09]

437. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the type of grants available to individuals to assist them in installing heat conservation measures and for insulated doors, windows and so on in their dwelling houses; the amount of the grants available and the eligibility criteria attached thereto; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6142/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 412, 413, 421, 429 and 437 together.

On the 8th of February last, together with the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, I launched the National Insulation Programme for Economic Recovery. The Programme entails a three pronged approach to addressing the legacy of older housing with poor energy efficiency standards.

The Home Energy Saving (HES) Scheme is the largest element of the Programme with a budget of €50 million in 2009. This scheme has the potential to support the upgrade of in excess of 27,500 homes in 2009. Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) estimates that demand for this scheme could ultimately exceed 100,000 homes.

Homeowners can expect to save up to €700 per year on their energy bills if they install the full suite of measures available under the scheme. The scheme offers grants of up to 40% of the typical cost of energy efficiency upgrade measures, varying depending on the measure concerned. A list of eligible measures and fixed grant rates is set out in the following table.

Measure	Fixed grant rate
	€
Roof Insulation	250
Cavity Wall Insulation	400
Internal Wall Insulation	2,500
External Wall Insulation	4,000
High Efficiency Boiler with Heating Controls Upgrade	700
Heating Controls Upgrade Only	500
Building Energy Rating Assessment	200

The HES Scheme has been launched now in order to allow installers who wish to participate in the scheme, to register with SEI. Registered contractors will be required to sign up to a code of conduct and comply with a range of terms and conditions to ensure the quality of work

carried out under the scheme. They will also have to carry a specified level of insurance and be fully tax compliant. SEI will be implementing a quality assurance and inspection programme to ensure compliance with these requirements. Contractors wishing to register with the scheme may contact SEI at 1850 927000 or at hescontractor@sei.ie.

The scheme is open to anybody owning a house that was built prior to 2006. Homeowners and landlords will be able to apply under the scheme from next month. In the meantime, homeowners can register their interest with SEI on 1850 927000 or at hes@sei.ie. Homeowners may arrange to have a building energy rating carried out immediately, if they wish, but this is not a requirement for participation in the scheme. However, homeowners should not take any action on the other measures until they have received grant approval from SEI.

Where a homeowner previously received a grant from a local authority or any other source to upgrade the energy efficiency of the home, they can still be eligible for a grant under the HES Scheme, provided further significant eligible works are necessary. They cannot receive a grant towards efficiency measures already installed, whether previously grant-aided or not.

The National Insulation Programme for Economic Recovery will greatly assist those on low incomes or in social housing. The second element of the Programme, the Warmer Homes Scheme (WHS), is designed to assist private households on low incomes, such as those in receipt of Fuel Allowance, Invalidity or Disability Benefit. The scheme for the installation of a range of energy efficiency measures, including cavity wall insulation, attic insulation, a boiler lagging jacket, draught proofing measures and Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs). Advice is also provided to householders on minimising energy use. The WHS provides these measures free or at a nominal cost to the householder.

I have made available some €20 million to the WHS in 2009. This greatly increased level of funding is expected to support energy efficiency interventions in up to 15,000 low income homes in this year alone. There are 20 community based organisations (CBOs) currently delivering the WHS, and this represents just over two-thirds of the country. Under our initiative to extend the scheme nationwide in 2009, SEI plans to commence the introduction of new CBOs to the scheme from the end of March 2009.

A number of improvements to the WHS are gradually being introduced this quarter, including a new free-phone service designed to assist eligible homeowners in identifying their nearest provider. If outside of current coverage, their details will be recorded and notified as soon as the service becomes available in their area. In addition, a new website will be launched to allow homeowners, neighbours or relatives find out more information about the WHS and other grant schemes available in their area.

Further information on the WHS is available by calling 1800-250204, by emailing warmerhomes@sei.ie or at www.sei.ie/Grants/Warmer_Homes_Scheme.

The third element of the National Insulation Programme for Economic Recovery will involve providing similar energy efficiency upgrade measures in social housing. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government will be making further announcements on this element of the programme in due course.

The National Insulation Programme has the potential to contribute to the creation of 4,000 direct and indirect jobs thus contributing to the Government's priority objective of maintaining and creating employment as part of economic renewal.

Fisheries Protection.

414. **Deputy Pádraic McCormack** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will review the recent decision to ban eel fishing which is a tradition

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for many families, is part of Ireland's culture and heritage and will result in further job losses; his views on whether the scientific report on which the decision was made is based on limited data, that no other significant fishing country is proposing an outright ban and Ireland accounts for about 0.5% and 2% of the total European catch; if eel fishermen will be compensated for the loss of their livelihoods; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6119/09]

415. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reason a hardship fund was provided for some fishermen and not for others (details supplied). [5565/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Power): I propose to take Questions Nos. 414 and 415 together.

In compliance with European Council Regulation No.1100/2007 establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel, a draft Eel Management Plan was submitted to the EU Commission for approval. Given the critical status of the eel stock, as demonstrated in the assessment contained in the draft Eel Management Plan, a number of management measures have been identified as necessary to reach the targets set in the Regulation, including closure of the commercial and recreational fishery from 2009.

I have been advised by the Marine Institute that eel data used in the determination of historical and current silver eel escapement, as required under the Regulation, included time series of juvenile recruitment, adjusted declared fisheries catches, estimates of turbine mortalities, silver eel escapement and sizes, ages and growth rates of brown and silver eel.

Models were used to assess current Irish escapement compared to historical. I am advised that these models employed a system of transferring from data rich situations to data poor situations by using regression modelling, a process similar to that used in salmon stock advice. The draft plan provides for undertaking an array of scientific surveys over the coming years to improve information on the fishery and the status of stocks. Under the Regulation, all aspects of the Plan must be reviewed in 2012. This review will consider, inter alia, whether the eel fishery and market could be reopened in light of the data gathered in the interim and the performance of stocks.

I am not aware of the content of as yet largely unpublished plans submitted by other Member States in response to their obligations under the EC regulation. Over the coming months, these, along with Ireland's draft plan, have to be evaluated by the European Commission as to their adequacy in delivering the objectives of the Eel Regulation. Clearly the status of stocks in other Member States will differ from that of Ireland's, depending on local conditions and therefore their plans may make different recommendations. All must however, clearly demonstrate how they would achieve the targets necessary for recovery of the European eel stocks. Scientific advice by the International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES) recommends that all exploitation and other anthropogenic impacts on production and escapement of eels should be reduced to as close to zero as possible until stock recovery is achieved. Ireland's draft Eel Management Plan relies upon the most up-to-date information available in its response to this advice.

The latest available international catch data from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (for 2005), indicate that Ireland's reported yield was 2.6% of the total. The latest a corrected estimate from ICES indicates that Ireland was responsible for 4% of the EU catch.

There is no property right attaching to public eel licences and consequently the issue of compensation is not relevant or appropriate, given that the proposed closure of the fishery is

being applied for conservation reasons under the Fisheries Acts. While I have no funds at my disposal for a hardship fund for commercial eel fishermen, the Central Fisheries Board is actively investigating alternative opportunities to assist eel fishermen in diversification efforts. Some eel fishermen will also have the opportunity to tender for the trap and transport operations to be managed by the ESB under the Plan.

Postal Network.

416. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if An Post has completed its review of its network; if it has presented its findings and recommendations to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5628/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The review of the post office network is a matter for An Post and I understand that the company has yet to complete this work. It is Government policy that An Post remains a strong and viable company, in a position to compete in a liberalised market, provide a high quality, nationwide postal service and maintain a nationwide, customer-focused network of post offices.

Semi-State Bodies.

417. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the powers he possesses in relation to the hiring and firing of senior executives and management staff at the ESB; the powers he has in relation to freezing the pay of ESB workers in the current economic crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5650/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I have no powers in relation to the appointment and dismissal of senior executives and management staff at the ESB, nor do I have any powers in relation to determining the pay of ESB workers. The appointment and dismissal of the Chief Executive is a matter for the Board but the remuneration and allowances are subject to my approval and the consent of the Minister for Finance in accordance with section 7 of the Electricity (Supply) (Amendment) Act, 1988.

Offshore Exploration.

418. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will make a statement on a matter (details supplied). [5657/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Power): Exploration for petroleum is an expensive and high risk activity usually carried out by the private sector under licence from States. The stability of the regulatory regime is an important factor in attracting exploration investment. The terms applicable to successful exploration are made known in advance and have varied from time to time. Variations, which can be upwards or downwards, normally apply only to licences granted after the variation is announced. There is intense competition for exploration investment and the terms on offer have to take this fact into account. When a commercial discovery is declared, it is demised to the exploration company under a Petroleum Lease, which incorporates the conditions under which the exploration took place.

The Petroleum Lease between the State and the developers of the Corrib Gas Field was negotiated in line with the Department's "Licensing Terms for Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration and Development" and was entered into in 2001. It sets down the obligations of the parties to the lease in a range of matters and can only be amended by agreement of all parties. The lease is a confidential legal agreement and is not available to the public.

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The Petroleum Lease for the Corrib Gas field has not been subject to legal proceedings and as to whether the lease could be contested legally would be a matter for the Courts should such an occasion arise. Tax treatment of profits from the gas field is governed by the Finance Acts.

Ministerial Appointments.

419. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the appointments he has made to public bodies since the Government was formed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5705/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): In the time available it has not been possible to compile a full list of appointments made by me during the term of the current Government. My Department is compiling the data sought by the Deputy in this regard, and I shall forward it to him as soon as possible.

Departmental Expenditure.

420. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position in relation to Parliamentary Question No. 241 of 4 February 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5715/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I refer to my response to Parliamentary Question No. 241 of 4 February 2009 where the Deputy was advised that it was not possible to assemble the information requested in the time available. My Department is still in the process of identifying and assembling the information and I will revert to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 421 answered with Question No. 412.

Telecommunications Services.

422. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position in relation to the provision of broadband for an area (details supplied); the names of the service providers which provide broadband in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5730/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I understand that the Kilmacanogue general area is served by the service providers mentioned by the Deputy and listed in the table below. I cannot provide information as to service provision for the specific road in the area. I suggest the Deputy contacts the service providers directly in this regard.

Platform	Service Provider	Website	Phone
DSL	BT	http://www.btireland.ie	1800 923 923
	Digiweb DSL	http://dsl.digiweb.ie	1800 28 58 28
	Eircom DSL	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Imagine Broadband	http://www.imagine.ie	1890 92 92 92
	Irish Broadband	http://www.irishbroadband.ie	1890 56 44 56
	Perlico	http://www.perlico.com	1890 25 21 48
Mobile	3 Ireland	http://www.three.ie/broadband/index.htm	1800 330 333
	O2 Ireland	http://www.o2.ie/broadband	1800 886 086

Platform	Service Provider	Website	Phone
Satellite	Applied Solutions	http://www.ADSLnow.ie	1890 924 854
	Avonline	http://www.avonlinebroadband.co.uk	0044 800 073 1102
	Broadband Wherever	http://www.broadbandwherever.net	0044 800 068 3358
	Cross Country Broadband Ltd	http://www.crosscountrybroadband.com	053 925 5428
	Digiweb Satellite	http://broadband.digiweb.ie	042 939 3300
	e3 Broadband	http://www.e3broadband.ie	1850 303 333
	ehotspot	http://www.ehotspot.ie	0044 1262 409 109
	Eircom	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Fastnet Broadband Satellite	http://www.fastnetbroadband.com	01 2303 746
	Media Satellite Ireland Ltd	http://www.mediasat.ie	1850 202 144
	National Broadband Ltd	http://nbb.ie	045 982 130
	Orblink	http://www.orblink.ie	01 860 1995
	Pure Telecom Satellite	http://www.puretelecom.ie	01 289 5555
	Satellite Broadband Ireland. Ltd	http://www.satellitebroadbandireland.ie	044 937 2514

Energy Prices.

423. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the steps he has taken to reduce the cost of electricity here; the timescale in place that will see a reduction in price; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5749/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The regulation of ESB customer supply electricity tariffs is the statutory responsibility of the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) under the Electricity Regulation Act 1999.

I welcome the fact that the CER announced on 1 December 2008 that there would be no further increase in the price of gas from January 2009 and that there would be a small average decrease from that month of just less than 1% in the price of electricity supplied by ESB Customer Supply. This decision is reflective of recent easing in international fossil fuel prices, which follows a period of exponential increases in global oil, gas and coal prices. I also welcome the substantial rebate being provided by ESB to all electricity customers, irrespective of supplier, which has helped to stabilise electricity prices for 2009.

The CER is required to examine the costs underlying the regulated tariffs to ensure they are cost reflective. However, I believe that we can lower energy costs to consumers in a non-distortionary fashion, through an expedited review of tariffs. To achieve this, I have asked the energy regulator to undertake an immediate review of options to bring forward a reduction in electricity prices. I expect this review to be completed by the end of this month. As I have previously stated, if current trends in energy prices particularly gas, continue, I would expect a double-digit cut in electricity and gas prices to become a reality later this year.

I would stress that the large commercial sector, which covers approximately 35% of the electricity market by volume, is not subject to price regulation. In this sector there is competition among the various independent suppliers. I understand that depending on the contracts in place in this sector, the benefits of reductions in the cost of gas can be passed on quickly to customers and that many of these large commercial customers are already benefitting from substantial reductions in electricity prices.

Encouraging a competitive energy supply is a key policy objective for the Government. Rising energy costs are a major concern for all sectors of the economy and for consumers. It is a major concern for the European Union and globally. In this context, I welcome Sustainable

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Energy Ireland's report on Understanding Electricity and Gas Prices in Ireland, published in September 2008, which provides a valuable insight into the drivers of higher energy costs in our market. In particular, it underlines the imperative to reduce Ireland's dependence on imported fossil fuels and our exposure to volatile international market prices for these commodities.

The Government's Energy Policy Framework and the Programme for Government set out the actions being taken to deliver security, sustainability and competitiveness of energy supply. We must use energy far more efficiently, deliver on our ambitious renewable targets and progress vital strategic energy infrastructure such as the East West Electricity Interconnector. Initiatives in all these areas are being progressed.

Broadcasting Licences.

424. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding community radio stations, whose licences expire before the Broadcasting Bill is introduced; if there is an option to extend their current licence until the Bill is passed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5835/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The Broadcasting Commission of Ireland has statutory responsibility under Part III of the Radio and Television Act 1988, as amended, for the award or renewal of sound broadcasting contracts to community radio stations. As such I have no role in relation to contract award decisions.

The Broadcasting Bill 2008, which is currently before the Houses of the Oireachtas, assigns responsibility for the award of community sound broadcasting contracts to the proposed Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. Section 178(8) of the Bill provides for the continuance of any sound broadcasting contracts entered into by the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland on the establishment of the BAI.

Smarter Travel Policy.

425. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his Department's work place travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5845/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): My Department supports the Government's Smarter Travel Policy, launched by the Minister for Transport in February and which recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable.

To encourage use of public transport, my Department operates a Travel Pass Scheme open to all members of staff, which facilitates the processing and issuing of annual passes by relevant public transport operators and direct salary deduction to cover costs. This year, 58 staff members are availing of the scheme.

Secure bicycle storage and shower facilities are also provided at the Dublin offices to facilitate staff cycling and walking to work. My Department will also be implementing the Budget 2009 announcement on the provision of bicycles and equipment via employers to employees who agree to use the bicycles to cycle to work.

Also, in 2008, my Department implemented a scheme whereby a number of bicycles have been provided, with the appropriate safety equipment, for official use on business travel within

Dublin city. I am very pleased to report that the uptake on the use of these bicycles has been encouraging and is reducing dependency on taxis, particularly for city centre travel.

My Department also provides a number of car parking spaces in both Cavan and Dublin to facilitate those staff who drive to work. Those spaces located in Dublin will be subject to taxation provisions announced in Budget 2009.

Biofuels Emissions.

426. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his views on fears over the long-term health risks of biofuels; if his attention has been drawn to the fears that the emissions from biofuels could result in a build up of chemicals in the immediate atmosphere causing increased photochemical smog and increasing the occurrence risk of respiratory diseases such as asthma; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5865/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I am aware of a range of international studies that have investigated the possibility of adverse health implications from the use of biofuels. Only very limited evidence has emerged to support the theory that biofuel emissions pose a long term risk to public health.

My Department is in regular contact with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, which has responsibility for air quality and emissions, and both Departments will continue to monitor research in this area.

Broadcasting Services.

427. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to rectify the omission which has resulted in the Irish in England being the only national grouping without the benefit of access to a country of origin television channel, despite numerous promises to restore a previous facility which was discontinued some years ago; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5899/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): Up to 2001 a private subscription channel, Tara Television provided a means for the Irish community in parts of Britain to access some of RTE's programming. This was not an RTÉ service but a private company in which RTÉ contributed its programming as a means of investment in this commercial venture. Unfortunately Tara Television did not manage to attract sufficient subscribers and ceased to broadcast in 2001.

Subsequently the Report on the Task Force on Emigration recommended the public service remits of RTÉ and TG4 be amended to allow for the provision and public funding of broadcasting services to Irish communities in England.

Section 3(1)(b) of the Broadcasting Act 2007 requires RTÉ to establish and maintain a television broadcasting service and a sound broadcasting service, which services shall be made available, insofar as the RTÉ Authority considers reasonably practicable, to Irish communities outside of the island of Ireland.

Section 14 of the 2007 Act amends section 28(8) of the 2001 Act to allow RTÉ to use public funds drawn from television licence fee income for the purposes of providing the new television service. Section 14 also amends subsection (10) of section 28 to require the RTÉ Authority to report to the Minister on its use of public funding for such a purpose.

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RTÉ fulfils its obligation under section 3 of the Broadcasting (Amendment) Act 2007 in a variety of ways and using a variety of broadcast platforms.

In relation to television RTÉ has focussed on internet access to certain programming and is considering an i-player service in the future.

RTÉ has also been planning to launch a television service on the UK Freesat platform. This international television service is expected to show Irish TV programming for which they own the copyright. RTÉ has indicated that it has contracted with Freesat for space on the platform. However, they have advised me that as a result of the rapidly worsening economic conditions and falling advertising revenue, they will need to postpone the launch of this service.

Telecommunications Services.

428. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reason Eircom has decided to and has been allowed to remove telephone boxes from small towns and villages in rural Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5901/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The regulation of telecommunications operators, including the regulation of Universal Service Obligations is the responsibility of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), in accordance with the requirements of the Communications Regulation Act 2002 and regulations, which transpose the EU Regulatory Framework for Electronic Communications.

In accordance with Regulation 7 of the European Communities (Electronic Communications Networks and Services) (Universal Service and Users' Rights) Regulations, S.I. No. 308 of 2003, eircom is designated as the Universal Service Provider. Under Regulation 5 of these Regulations, eircom is obliged to ensure that public payphones are provided to meet the reasonable needs of end-users in terms of geographical coverage, the number of telephones and the quality of services.

In 2006, ComReg published an Information Notice — “Universal Service Obligation — Removal/Relocation of Public Pay Telephones” (No. 06/14) outlining the criteria and procedures for the removal/relocation of public payphones. In accordance with this notice, eircom is obliged to notify ComReg and the relevant local authorities of its intentions to remove specific payphones. Eircom must also post a notice on the relevant public payphone for a minimum period of 6 weeks to clearly inform users of the intention to remove the payphone, proposed date of cessation of service, location of alternative public payphones, eircom's contact details and the timeframe to allow for the making of comments in relation to the removal of individual phoneboxes. Eircom is obliged to take full account of all comments received and reconsider the proposals, if appropriate.

I understand from ComReg, that eircom has signalled that their intention to remove 2,151 payphones is based on the fact that there has been a steady decline in their usage over the past number of years. The rationalisation is based on the fact there is little or sometimes no traffic being generated on the line and they have become financially unviable. eircom is currently engaged in a period of consultation with the general public and interested parties regarding the removal of the payphones. This consultation period runs until 16th March 2009.

Question No. 429 answered with Question No. 412.

Energy Resources.

430. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the target set nationally to obtain energy from natural resources; the percentage of the energy needs here which will be obtained from renewable energy sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6010/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The accelerated development of renewable energy resources is a key priority for the Government. The displacement of fossil fuels and the integration of renewable energy into the national energy mix is a key imperative for future energy security and sustainability, and the reduction of emissions.

The Government has set ambitious targets to increase the contribution of renewable energy as follows:

- the electricity sector to 40% by 2020
- 12% of the heat sector by 2020 and
- 10% of the transport sector by 2020.

These targets are fully reflected in the overall renewable energy target set for Ireland's under the new EU Renewable Energy Directive.

Alternative Energy Projects.

431. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the incentives available for persons installing solar energy solutions on private homes or commercial buildings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6011/09]

433. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if it is intended to provide a legislative framework to encourage or require the installation of photo voltaic/thermal panels on private homes or business premises; if in the future new constructions will be required to incorporate renewable energy solutions; the incentives available to encourage the use of renewable energy solutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6054/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 431 and 433 together.

The initiation of a pilot trial by Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) of micro and small-scale generation technologies is designed to investigate and test technical, market and regulatory issues associated with the deployment of micro-generation technologies including installation, network connection and operation, and generation. Grant aid for up to 50 pilot installations, will be provided as part of the programme.

A call for expression of interest is currently open for the Low Carbon Housing Programme administered by SEI. In addition to having a minimum requirement of a Building Energy Rating of A2 or higher the targets also include provision for onsite generation.

The Revised Building Regulations brought into force in July 2008 now include a compulsory renewable energy component for all new houses. This will not only ensure that renewables are integrated into the housing stock but will also encourage individuals to consider a range of

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renewable options when purchasing a new home. This is further underpinned by the introduction of the Building Energy Rating which provides information to house purchasers on energy performance and to which renewables energy systems will contribute.

The Greener Homes Scheme, administered by SEI, provides grant support to individuals wishing to install renewable energy heating technologies in their homes. This scheme, in operation since early 2006, has already established a very strong supply industry for renewable energy products, services and fuels while the application of strict product standards and installer training and quality schemes has ensured that consumers are informed in relation to their choices.

The Renewable Heat (ReHeat) and CHP Programmes, also provide assistance for the deployment of renewable heating systems in industrial, commercial, public and community premises.

Departmental Agencies.

432. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the membership of State agencies under his Department; if any board members have served more than two terms; if there are cases where a chief executive subsequently became chairman; if one or more members of the audit committee in each case has specific financial expertise; and if the companies disclose necessary action to remedy significant failings in internal controls. [6017/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I am assembling the information required by the Deputy and will revert to him as soon as possible.

I can, however, inform the Deputy that in one case (the Electricity Supply Board) the Chief Executive subsequently became Chairman in 1991.

The make-up, qualifications and actions of audit committees within the agencies is a day-to-day operational matter for the agencies themselves.

Question No. 433 answered with Question No. 431.

Telecommunications Services.

434. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when villages (details supplied) in County Cork will receive broadband under the national broadband scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6071/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): Broadband services are available from competing service providers over multiple platforms, including DSL (telephone lines), cable, fixed wireless, and mobile. Ballynoe, Castlemartyr, Killeagh, Rathcormack, Ballycotton and Shanagarry, County Cork, are currently served by at least one service provider and do not fall within the National Broadband Scheme (NBS) coverage area. The following table is a list of the service providers for the stated areas.

My Department has entered into a contract with “3”, a Hutchison Whampoa company, for the delivery of the NBS. 3 will be required to provide services to all residences and businesses that are within the NBS area and who seek a service.

3 are currently planning the construction and rollout of the required infrastructure for the purposes of the provision of the service. Challenging roll out targets have been agreed with 3.

Services will begin to be rolled out in April 2009 and the entire NBS area must be covered by September 2010.

The general areas of Conna and Ballymacoda, County Cork, will be covered by the NBS. Details of the areas to be covered by 3 under the NBS are available at www.three.ie/nbs.

Area/Platform	Service Provider	Website	Phone
<i>Ballynoe</i>			
Mobile	O2 Ireland	http://www.o2.ie/broadband	1800 886 086
Wireless	C Tek		1570 600 636
Satellite	Applied Solutions	http://www.ADSLnow.ie	1890 924 854
	Avonline	http://www.avonlinebroadband.co.uk	0044 800 073 1102
	Broadband Wherever	http://www.broadbandwherever.net	0044 800 068 3358
	Cross Country Broadband Ltd	http://www.crosscountrybroadband.com	053 925 5428
	Digiweb Satellite	http://broadband.digiweb.ie	042 939 3300
	e3 Broadband	http://www.e3broadband.ie	1850 303 333
	ehotspot	http://www.ehotspot.ie	0044 1262 409 109
	Eircom	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Fastnet Broadband Satellite	http://www.fastnetbroadband.com	01 2303 746
	Media Satellite Ireland Ltd	http://www.mediasat.ie	1850 202 144
	National Broadband Ltd	http://nbb.ie	045 982 130
	Orblink	http://www.orblink.ie	01 860 1995
	Pure Telecom Satellite	http://www.puretelecom.ie	01 289 5555
	Satellite Broadband Ireland. Ltd	http://www.satellitebroadbandireland.ie	044 937 2514
<i>Castlemartyr</i>			
Mobile	3 Ireland	http://www.three.ie/broadband/index.htm	1800 330 333
Wireless	AirWave InterNet	http://www.airwaveinternet.net	021 4882 277
Satellite	Applied Solutions	http://www.ADSLnow.ie	1890 924 854
	Avonline	http://www.avonlinebroadband.co.uk	0044 800 073 1102
	Broadband Wherever	http://www.broadbandwherever.net	0044 800 068 3358
	Cross Country Broadband Ltd	http://www.crosscountrybroadband.com	053 925 5428
	Digiweb Satellite	http://broadband.digiweb.ie	042 939 3300
	e3 Broadband	http://www.e3broadband.ie	1850 303 333
	ehotspot	http://www.ehotspot.ie	0044 1262 409 109
	Eircom	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Fastnet Broadband Satellite	http://www.fastnetbroadband.com	01 2303 746
	Media Satellite Ireland Ltd	http://www.mediasat.ie	1850 202 144
	National Broadband Ltd	http://nbb.ie	045 982 130
	Orblink	http://www.orblink.ie	01 860 1995
	Pure Telecom Satellite	http://www.puretelecom.ie	01 289 5555
	Satellite Broadband Ireland. Ltd	http://www.satellitebroadbandireland.ie	044 937 2514
<i>Killeagh</i>			
DSL	BT	http://www.btireland.ie	1800 923 923
	Digiweb DSL	http://dsl.digiweb.ie	1800 28 58 28
	Eircom DSL	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Imagine Broadband	http://www.imagine.ie	1890 92 92 92
	Irish Broadband	http://www.irishbroadband.ie	1890 56 44 56
	Perlico	http://www.perlico.com	1890 25 21 48
Mobile	3 Ireland	http://www.three.ie/broadband/index.htm	1800 330 333

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Area/Platform	Service Provider	Website	Phone
Wireless	AirWave InterNet	http://www.airwaveinternet.net	021 4882 277
Satellite	Applied Solutions	http://www.ADSLnow.ie	1890 924 854
	Avonline	http://www.avonlinebroadband.co.uk	0044 800 073 1102
	Broadband Wherever	http://www.broadbandwherever.net	0044 800 068 3358
	Cross Country Broadband Ltd	http://www.crosscountrybroadband.com	053 925 5428
	Digiweb Satellite	http://broadband.digiweb.ie	042 939 3300
	e3 Broadband	http://www.e3broadband.ie	1850 303 333
	ehotspot	http://www.ehotspot.ie	0044 1262 409 109
	Eircom	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Fastnet Broadband Satellite	http://www.fastnetbroadband.com	01 2303 746
	Media Satellite Ireland Ltd	http://www.mediasat.ie	1850 202 144
	National Broadband Ltd	http://nbb.ie	045 982 130
	Orblink	http://www.orblink.ie	01 860 1995
	Pure Telecom Satellite	http://www.puretelecom.ie	01 289 5555
	Satellite Broadband Ireland. Ltd	http://www.satellitebroadbandireland.ie	044 937 2514
<i>Rathcormack</i> DSL	BT	http://www.btireland.ie	1800 923 923
	Digiweb DSL	http://dsl.digiweb.ie	1800 28 58 28
	Eircom DSL	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Imagine Broadband	http://www.imagine.ie	1890 92 92 92
	Irish Broadband	http://www.irishbroadband.ie	1890 56 44 56
	Perlico	http://www.perlico.com	1890 25 21 48
Mobile	3 Ireland	http://www.three.ie/broadband/index.htm	1800 330 333
	O2 Ireland	http://www.o2.ie/broadband	1800 886 086
Wireless	C Tek		1570 600 636
Satellite	Applied Solutions	http://www.ADSLnow.ie	1890 924 854
	Avonline	http://www.avonlinebroadband.co.uk	0044 800 073 1102
	Broadband Wherever	http://www.broadbandwherever.net	0044 800 068 3358
	Cross Country Broadband Ltd	http://www.crosscountrybroadband.com	053 925 5428
	Digiweb Satellite	http://broadband.digiweb.ie	042 939 3300
	e3 Broadband	http://www.e3broadband.ie	1850 303 333
	ehotspot	http://www.ehotspot.ie	0044 1262 409 109
	Eircom	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Fastnet Broadband Satellite	http://www.fastnetbroadband.com	01 2303 746
	Media Satellite Ireland Ltd	http://www.mediasat.ie	1850 202 144
	National Broadband Ltd	http://nbb.ie	045 982 130
	Orblink	http://www.orblink.ie	01 860 1995
	Pure Telecom Satellite	http://www.puretelecom.ie	01 289 5555
	Satellite Broadband Ireland. Ltd	http://www.satellitebroadbandireland.ie	044 937 2514
<i>Ballycotton</i> Mobile	O2 Ireland	http://www.o2.ie/broadband	1800 886 086
Satellite	Applied Solutions	http://www.ADSLnow.ie	1890 924 854
	Avonline	http://www.avonlinebroadband.co.uk	0044 800 073 1102
	Broadband Wherever	http://www.broadbandwherever.net	0044 800 068 3358
	Cross Country Broadband Ltd	http://www.crosscountrybroadband.com	053 925 5428
	Digiweb Satellite	http://broadband.digiweb.ie	042 939 3300
	e3 Broadband	http://www.e3broadband.ie	1850 303 333
	ehotspot	http://www.ehotspot.ie	0044 1262 409 109

Area/Platform	Service Provider	Website	Phone
	Eircom	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Fastnet Broadband Satellite	http://www.fastnetbroadband.com	01 2303 746
	Media Satellite Ireland Ltd	http://www.mediasat.ie	1850 202 144
	National Broadband Ltd	http://nbb.ie	045 982 130
	Orblink	http://www.orbblink.ie	01 860 1995
	Pure Telecom Satellite	http://www.puretelecom.ie	01 289 5555
	Satellite Broadband Ireland. Ltd	http://www.satellitebroadbandireland.ie	044 937 2514
<i>Shanagarry</i>			
Mobile	O2 Ireland	http://www.o2.ie/broadband	1800 886 086
Satellite	Applied Solutions	http://www.ADSLnow.ie	1890 924 854
	Avonline	http://www.avonlinebroadband.co.uk	0044 800 073 1102
	Broadband Wherever	http://www.broadbandwherever.net	0044 800 068 3358
	Cross Country Broadband Ltd	http://www.crosscountrybroadband.com	053 925 5428
	Digiweb Satellite	http://broadband.digiweb.ie	042 939 3300
	e3 Broadband	http://www.e3broadband.ie	1850 303 333
	ehotspot	http://www.ehotspot.ie	0044 1262 409 109
	Eircom	http://www.eircom.ie	1800 242 633
	Fastnet Broadband Satellite	http://www.fastnetbroadband.com	01 2303 746
	Media Satellite Ireland Ltd	http://www.mediasat.ie	1850 202 144
	National Broadband Ltd	http://nbb.ie	045 982 130
	Orblink	http://www.orbblink.ie	01 860 1995
	Pure Telecom Satellite	http://www.puretelecom.ie	01 289 5555
	Satellite Broadband Ireland. Ltd	http://www.satellitebroadbandireland.ie	044 937 2514

435. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if roll-out of broadband under the national broadband scheme has commenced in view of the fact that a contractor has been appointed to deliver the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6072/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): My Department has entered into a contract with “3”, a Hutchison Whampoa company, for the delivery of the National Broadband Scheme (NBS). 3 will be required to provide services to all residences and businesses that are within the NBS area and who seek a service. 3 is currently planning the construction and rollout of the required infrastructure for the purposes of the provision of the service. Challenging roll out targets have been agreed with 3. Services will begin to be rolled out in April 2009 and the entire NBS area must be covered by September 2010.

Details of the areas to be covered by 3 under the NBS are available at www.three.ie/nbs.

Energy Prices.

436. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the steps he will take to ensure that the consumer receives the benefit of competition and competitive prices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6080/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The Energy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 provides for the assignment of responsibility in relation to gas safety matters, to the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER). Statutory Instrument No 68 of 2008 made on 11 March 2008 provided, inter alia, for the commencement

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of those provisions of the Act concerning the regulation of the activities of gas installers with respect to safety and related matters.

As part of the new gas safety regime, the CER has recently appointed the Register of Gas Installers of Ireland (RGII). The RGII is responsible for registering gas installers and regulating their activities with respect to safety. It is expected that this new regulatory system will be fully operational by mid year. At that time, gas works may only be carried out by registered installers, in accordance with safety requirements specified by the CER.

I understand that Bord Gáis Networks currently maintains a Register of Gas Installers as a transitional measure towards the new mandatory regime. That register consists of gas installers and service agents, who have completed the required gas installation safety training and provide the necessary insurance cover to carry out gas installations to the required industry standard. The register includes a list of dedicated engineers who service domestic gas boilers. The charge for this service has increased from €99 (not €90 as stated by the Deputy) to €105 over the past year.

Gas service agents operate in a fully competitive market and customers are not obliged to have domestic boilers serviced by engineers from the register. The CER has no function in regard to charges imposed by gas service agents.

Question No. 437 answered with Question No. 412.

Ministerial Travel.

438. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related Ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick’s Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick’s Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6153/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I wish to advise the Deputy that the total cost associated with my travel to Paris for St. Patrick’s Day 2008 was €1,833. My trip to Paris was for a period of two days. The breakdown of this cost is outlined in the following table. I was not accompanied by officials from my Department. My plans for St. Patrick’s Day this year are not yet finalised.

Description	Costs
	€
Flights	518
Hotel	730
Subsistence	243
Bike Hire	4
Gifts	338
Total	1,833

Telecommunications Services.

439. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the roll-out broadband will take place at Kilmeady telephone exchange, County Limerick. [6338/09]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): My Department has entered into a contract with “3”, a Hutchison Whampoa company, for the delivery of the National Broadband Scheme (NBS). 3 is currently planning the construction and rollout of the required infrastructure for the purposes of the provision of the service. Challenging roll out targets have been agreed with 3. Services will begin to be rolled out in April 2009 and the entire NBS area must be covered by September 2010.

While the DSL enablement of exchanges for broadband purposes is a matter for the private sector owners of the relevant exchanges, the general area of Kilmeeedy will be covered by the NBS.

Harbours and Piers.

440. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make funding available to upgrade and improve the pier at Renard, Cahirciveen, County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6055/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The pier at Renard is the property of Kerry County Council and responsibility for its repair and upkeep rests with the Local Authority in the first instance.

My Department has however received an application from Kerry County Council for funding under my Department’s 2009 Fishery Harbours and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme for improvements at the pier.

This application together with all other applications for funding under the 2009 Fishery Harbours and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme will be given consideration subject to available exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Grant Payments.

441. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be granted the farm waste management grant. [5563/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The arrangements for payment of grants under the Farm Waste Management Scheme on a phased basis have been confirmed with 40 per cent being paid this year as claims are approved. A further 40 per cent will be paid in early January 2010 and the remaining 20 per cent in January 2011. Payment of the initial 40 per cent to farmers will be made as expeditiously as possible.

Sugar Beet Sector.

442. **Deputy Edward O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when payment of the sugar beet entitlements will issue to persons (details supplied) in County Cork. [5583/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An official of my Department has been in direct contact with the persons named and has given them details of the payments already made to them under the various provisions of the EU Sugar Reform package. Subject to one further payment, which will issue shortly, the applicants will then have received their full entitlements under the EU Sugar Reform Package.

Farm Waste Management.

443. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will arrange early inspection under the farm waste management scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [5604/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The person concerned is an applicant for grant-aid under the Farm Waste Management Scheme. An inspection will be carried out in this case as soon as possible.

Grant Payments.

444. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be granted REP scheme four. [5609/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): REPS 4 is a measure under the current Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and is subject to EU Regulations which require the completion of detailed administrative checks on all applications. Payments are currently issuing to REPS 4 applicants whose applications required no correction following the administrative checks. Further payments will be made as applications are cleared.

445. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will be issued their REP scheme four payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5664/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): REPS 4 is a measure under the current Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before the first payments issue. The first payments for 2008 REPS 4 applications issued in the last week of January to those whose applications required no correction following the administrative checks. Further payments continue to be made as applications are cleared.

Queries have arisen during the administrative checks on the plan of the person named and it is currently under further examination.

446. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a farm waste management grant will be awarded to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5665/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The arrangements for payment of grants under the Farm Waste Management Scheme on a phased basis have been confirmed with 40 per cent being paid this year as claims are approved. A further 40 per cent will be paid in early January 2010 and the remaining 20 per cent in January 2011. Payment of the initial 40 per cent to farmers will be made as expeditiously as possible.

447. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their payment under REP scheme four; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5671/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): REPS 4 is a measure under the current Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before the

first payments issue. The first payments for 2008 REPS 4 applications issued in the last week of January to those whose applications required no correction following the administrative checks. Further payments continue to be made as applications are cleared.

Queries have arisen during the administrative checks on the plan of the person named and it is currently under further examination.

448. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason for the delay in payment of a REP scheme payment, which was due to be awarded in 2008 to a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will confirm that arrangements have been made for payment. [5702/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): REPS 4 is a measure under the current Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before the first payments issue. The first payments for 2008 REPS 4 applications issued in the last week of January to those whose applications required no correction following the administrative checks. Further payments continue to be made as applications are cleared.

Queries have arisen during the administrative checks on the plan of the person named and it is currently under further examination.

Horticulture Sector.

449. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the action he will take to ensure the continuing existence of a horticultural producer group (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5707/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The enterprise to which the Deputy refers is currently trading reduced volumes and its staff is on protective notice because its contracts with one of the major multiples have been wound down. These are commercial decisions made by private organisations and not something in which I would be entitled to intervene. I understand that the enterprise in question intends to continue in business. The enterprise has received substantial support from my Department under the NDP schemes. Part of the enterprise is recognised as a producer organisation and has also received EU aid for its operational programmes. If the enterprise continues in business, both these avenues are open to it for future assistance.

Bovine Diseases.

450. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if an individual herd owner has right of appeal in respect of test findings under the tuberculosis bovine animal testing system; the circumstances under legislation whereby reactor animals can be retested; the number of occasions and the circumstances in which this has happened in the past; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5724/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Article 6 of the Bovine Tuberculosis (Attestation of the State and General Provisions) Order 1989 S.I. No. 308 of 1989, as amended, provides that the test to be used for the detection of bovine TB shall be the intradermal tuberculin comparative test using PPD or HCSM bovine and avian tuberculins or a test specified in an authorisation in writing by the Minister. In infected herds, a supplementary test — the gamma interferon assay which has been authorised by me as an approved test- may

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be used by the Veterinary Inspector to identify additional animals which may be infected by tuberculosis and, in such cases, animals positive to this test will also, ordinarily, be removed as reactors.

Article 8 of the Bovine Tuberculosis (Attestation of the State and General Provisions) Order 1989, (S.I. No. 308 of 1989), as amended, provides that, where an animal has given a positive result to a test, it shall not be tested again with tuberculin. The Order does allow for retesting of reactor animals for experimental purposes but such experimental testing e.g. for new test development and/or potency checking of tuberculins, does not change the status of the reactor animals nor delay their removal from the farm.

The results of tuberculin tests carried out by approved veterinary practitioners are interpreted by Veterinary Inspectors in my Department's local District Veterinary Offices. Having taken into consideration test results, epidemiological factors, clinical symptoms and any other information available, the veterinary inspector will deem an animal to be a positive reactor where he or she believes or suspects it is affected with or is capable of infecting other animals with bovine tuberculosis and it will be removed from the herd and slaughtered. There is no provision for appeal by the herd owner as the decision to remove a reactor is based on veterinary opinion that the animal is infected.

However, on occasion a farmer, a veterinary practitioner or a veterinary inspector may raise queries about the result of a test in a herd and whether or not a particular treatment of an animal or animals may have affected the test result. In such cases, the circumstances will be investigated by the Veterinary inspectorate and taken into consideration when arriving at a decision as to whether the animal should be deemed to be a reactor.

Grant Payments.

451. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will issue payment for the farm waste management grant to a person (details supplied) in County Limerick. [5743/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The arrangements for payment of grants under the Farm Waste Management Scheme on a phased basis have been confirmed with 40 per cent being paid this year as claims are approved. A further 40 per cent will be paid in early January 2010 and the remaining 20 per cent in January 2011. Payment of the initial 40 per cent to farmers will be made as expeditiously as possible.

452. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the case of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick will be reviewed. [5744/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on the 15th May 2008. This application was selected for and was the subject of ground eligibility and full cross compliance inspection.

During the course of the cross-compliance inspection breaches, were found in the areas of Animal Identification & Registration, Food Hygiene and Animal Welfare. This resulted in an overall cross compliance penalty of 25% being applied to the 2008 Single Payment in accordance with the terms and conditions of the scheme.

A formal decision issued to the person named on 18th November 2008 that advised him of his right to seek a review of the decision within 21 days to the District Inspector and of his right to appeal the outcome of any such review to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Office. To date no review has been sought.

453. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a REP scheme payment will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5757/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The first 75% of his payment issued to the person named on 2nd February 2009. The balance will follow in due course.

454. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will receive their slatted house grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5758/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The arrangements for payment of grants under the Farm Waste Management Scheme on a phased basis have been confirmed with 40 per cent being paid this year as claims are approved. A further 40 per cent will be paid in early January 2010 and the remaining 20 per cent in January 2011. Payment of the initial 40 per cent to farmers will be made as expeditiously as possible.

455. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a slatted house grant will issue to persons (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5759/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The arrangements for payment of grants under the Farm Waste Management Scheme on a phased basis have been confirmed with 40 per cent being paid this year as claims are approved. A further 40 per cent will be paid in early January 2010 and the remaining 20 per cent in January 2011. Payment of the initial 40 per cent to farmers will be made as expeditiously as possible.

456. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food his views on releasing to farmers currently awaiting payment under the farm waste management scheme, original invoices submitted as part of their applications to facilitate those who are entitled to claim back VAT; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5789/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): In respect of grant applications made under the Farm Waste Management Scheme, I have made arrangements in my Department's local offices for the return, on request, to farmers of original invoices as soon as possible to facilitate any such farmers who require those invoices to claim VAT refunds from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.

457. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be awarded payment under the farm waste management scheme. [5797/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The arrangements for payment of grants under the Farm Waste Management Scheme on a phased basis have

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been confirmed with 40 per cent being paid this year as claims are approved. A further 40 per cent will be paid in early January 2010 and the remaining 20 per cent in January 2011. Payment of the initial 40 per cent to farmers will be made as expeditiously as possible.

Smarter Travel Policy.

458. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food his Department's workplace travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5843/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): My Department is aware of, and supports, the Government's Smarter Travel Policy, launched by the Minister for Transport on 5 February, which recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable. In particular, my Department supports greater flexibility in work patterns and eWorking.

Grant Payments.

459. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the position in relation to a grant application from a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [5860/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Under EU state aid rules the final year for awards under my Department's Capital Investment Scheme for the Marketing and Processing of certain agricultural products was 2008.

Following calls for proposals all aid applications went through a competitive assessment and evaluation process in which their strengths were assessed and ranked in line with the objectives of the Scheme. In the case of the horticulture sector 32 eligible applications were assessed and ranked in 2008 and the available funding was allocated to the 13 highest ranked projects. The project referred to was not one of these 13.

There is no indication that any of the awards granted will not be drawn down and in any event, it is not open to my Department to transfer an award from another proposal.

460. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon will receive payment; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5876/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): REPS 4 is a measure under the current Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before the first payments issue. The first payments for 2008 REPS 4 applications issued in the last week of January to those whose applications required no correction following the administrative checks. Further payments continue to be made as applications are cleared.

Queries have arisen during the administrative checks on the plan of the person named and it is currently under further examination.

Departmental Agencies.

461. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the membership of State agencies under his Department; if any board members have served more than two terms; if there are cases where a chief executive subsequently became chairman; if

one or more members of the audit committee in each case has specific financial expertise; and if the companies disclose necessary action to remedy significant failings in internal controls.
[6015/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Eleven Bodies come under the aegis of my Department. The table sets out the current membership of each of these Bodies together with details of those members who have served for two terms or more.

Body	Current Membership	Members — More than two terms
Teagasc	Dr Noel Cawley (Chair), Prof Patrick Fottrell, Margaret Sweeney, James J. Brett, Martin Heraghty, Derek Deane, Pdraig Gibbons, Frank O'Mahony, Stephen Flynn, Joe Fitzgerald	Prof Patrick Fottrell
Bord Bia	Dan Browne (Chair), Jackie Cahill, Ray Carolan, Noel Cawley, Vincent Cleary, Paul Cusack, Kieran Dunne, Frank Hayes, Joe Hyland, Katherine O'Leary, Brid Rogers,	Noel Cawley
Irish National Stud Company	Lady O'Reilly (Chair), Trevor Stewart, Mick Leavy, Dermot Weld, Patricia O'Kelly, John Osborne, Jim Beecher	Lady O'Reilly, Dermot Weld, Patricia O'Kelly, Jim Beecher
National Milk Agency	Denis Murphy (Chair), Eamonn Bray, Gerome Crowley, Donal Kelleher, Pdraig Mulligan, Donal Murphy, George Kearns, John O'Callaghan, Tony O'Driscoll, Frank Tobin, Walter Maloney, John Foster, Richard Donohue, Michael Kilcoyne	Eamonn Bray, Donal Kelleher, Pdraig Mulligan, George Kearns, John O'Callaghan, Walter Maloney, John Foster, Richard Donohue, Michael Kilcoyne
Coillte Teoranta	Brendan McKenna (Chair) David Gunning, Eugene Griffin, Dr Yvonne Scannell, Breffni Byrne, Alma Kelly, Frank Toal, Grainne Hannon, Philip Lynch	None
COFORD	Michael Lynn (Chair), Pat Hennessy, John Joe O'Boyle, Michael Glennon, Willie Fitzgerald, John McCarthy, Donal Whelan, Tim Crowley, Pierce Buckley, Nuala Ní Fhlatharta, Dymrna Furlong, Diarmuid McAree	None
Veterinary Council of Ireland	Barbara Bent, Meta Osborne, Lindy Vaughan, Deirdre Champion, Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, Grace Mulcahy, Melanie O'Donoghue, Seamus Quinn, PJ Rogan, John O'Rourke, William Cashman, Donal Connolly, Sean O'Laoide, Timothy F O'Leary, Patrick J Talty, Thomas Hanley, Joseph P Cassidy, Finbar Mulligan; Fergus Gallagher	Meta Osborne, Lindy Vaughan, PJ Rogan, John O'Rourke, Donal Connolly, Timothy O'Leary, Patrick Talty, Thomas Hanley
Bord Iascaigh Mhara	Rose McHugh (Chair), Seamus Dooley, Enda Bonner, Robert Molloy, Ivan S. Coulter, Michael Dempsey	None
Marine Institute	Jim Fennell (Chair), Terry Fleming, Dairine McFadden, Eleanor O'Higgins, Bernie Hannigan, Michael Walsh, Richie Flynn	None
Sea Fisheries Protection Authority	Peter Whelan (Chair), Andrew Kinneen, Michael O'Mahony	None
Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board	Mark O'Connell (Chair), Mario Minehane, Sean Murphy, Lorcán Ó'Cinnéide, Karin Dubsky, Damian McDonald, Deirdre MacGabhann	Mario Minehane, Sean Murphy, Lorcán Ó Cinnéide

In respect of Chief Executive Officers subsequently serving as Chairperson's of that Board, only one instance can be found. Brendan Kelly who resigned from Bord Iascaigh Mhara in April 1981 served in the dual role of Chief Executive Officer and Chairperson of the Board.

Under the Code of Practice for State Bodies, each Chairperson in addition to the provision of an annual report and accounts, is obliged to provide the Minister with a comprehensive

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report covering that Body's activities. This report includes affirmation that all appropriate procedures for financial reporting, internal audit, procurement and asset disposals are being carried out and were necessary, an explanation for failure to comply with these requirements and stating any corrective action taken or contemplated.

Grant Payments.

462. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when will a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their payment under the farm improvement scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6034/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The person concerned is an applicant under the Farm Improvement Scheme. Payment of grant-aid will issue shortly from my Department.

463. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason for the delay of REP scheme four to a person (details supplied) in County Louth. [6050/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): REPS 4 is a measure under the current Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before the first payments issue. The first payments for 2008 REPS 4 applications issued in the last week of January to those whose applications required no correction following the administrative checks. Further payments continue to be made as applications are cleared.

Queries have arisen during the administrative checks on the plan of the person named and it is currently under further examination.

464. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when payment will be made available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6088/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): REPS 4 is a measure under the current Rural Development Programme 2007-13 and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before the first payments issue. The first payments for 2008 REPS 4 applications issued in the last week of January to those whose applications required no correction following the administrative checks. Further payments continue to be made as applications are cleared.

Queries have arisen during the administrative checks on the plan of the person named and it is currently under further examination.

Aquaculture Licences.

465. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the options available to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal who wishes to sell their two salmon licences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6093/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The assignment of an aquaculture licence by the licensee to a third party requires the consent of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Also, a proposed significant change in the shareholding or

control of a limited company holding an aquaculture licence requires the consent of the Minister.

Grant Payments.

466. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when single farm payments will be made in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6105/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 10th May 2008.

This application was selected for and was the subject of ground eligibility inspection.

During the course of the ground inspection, discrepancies were found with parcel number H20905018 resulting in this parcel being rejected. As there is an over declaration of over 20% no payment will be made under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme for the year in question.

The person named was informed of these findings on the 2nd November 2008 and of his right to seek a review of this decision within 21 days.

At present this file is under review with the relevant District Inspector and the person named will be duly notified of the outcome. The person named will also have the right to appeal the outcome of this review should he continue to be dissatisfied, to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Unit.

467. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a slatted house grant will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6108/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The arrangements for payment of grants under the Farm Waste Management Scheme on a phased basis have been confirmed with 40 per cent being paid this year as claims are approved. A further 40 per cent will be paid in early January 2010 and the remaining 20 per cent in January 2011. Payment of the initial 40 per cent to farmers will be made as expeditiously as possible.

468. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will receive the cow welfare scheme payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6116/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): To date, payments totalling €691.42 in respect of 9 animals have issued to the person named. Two animals are ineligible for payment as the Dams were less than 22 months of age at the time of calving. The remaining 9 animals applied for showed errors on the Animal Events System. The Suckler Herd Section of my Department has written to the person named, and officials will be in contact shortly with a view to resolving the matter.

469. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason a returned cheque in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway has not been reissued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6117/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): A payment to the representatives of the person named will issue within the next 10 days.

Poultry Industry.

470. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there are restrictions in place regarding the keeping of poultry in private residential gardens in Dublin City; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6128/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Apart from requirements to comply with relevant welfare legislation and to register as a flockowner under the Diseases of Animals Act 1966 (Registration of Poultry Premises) Order 2005, there are no restrictions in place regarding the keeping of poultry in private residential gardens in Dublin City under legislation operated by my Department.

The Deputy may wish to contact the relevant Local Authority to ascertain the position regarding any restrictions applicable under Local Authority legislation.

Fishing Vessel Decommissioning Scheme.

471. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the amount paid out under the recent fishing boat decommissioning scheme with a breakdown on a county basis; the number of boats that were decommissioned under this scheme; if persons who availed of this scheme were prohibited from re-investing in new fishing boats; if provision was made in the scheme to assist in the re-training of those made redundant as a result of this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6135/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): A total of 46 vessels have been approved for decommissioning under the recent fishing boat decommissioning scheme at a total cost of €36.6 million. Together these vessels represent a total capacity decommissioned of 6,913 Gross tonnes and 19,356 kilo watts. The number of decommissioning grants and the total grant aid per county is a matter for Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), which is responsible for administering the Decommissioning Scheme.

Persons who availed of this decommissioning scheme were not prohibited from re-investing in new or second-hand fishing boats. To attempt otherwise would not be practicable. However, for the person who decommissioned their vessel and capacity to re-invest would require that they purchase existing capacity on the fleet register equivalent to the size of the vessel they are introducing to the fleet. In this way the net reduction in fleet capacity aimed for through decommissioning is not affected by any individuals decision to re-invest

In relation to the re-training of those made redundant as a result of this scheme, it is worth noting that all fishing vessel crewmembers are eligible to apply for BIM's training programmes, including those serving on vessels that have been decommissioned. Some fishermen from decommissioned vessels have or are presently upgrading their qualifications with BIM and there are also opportunities to retrain for the aquaculture sector, for which many of the skills learned in the fishing industry are relevant. FÁS also provides training for fishing vessel crewmembers who wish to leave the fishing industry for a new career opportunity.

Ministerial Travel.

472. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the cost in regard to foreign travel, accommodation and related ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick's Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick's Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6151/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Please see the following details of costs associated with St Patrick's Day 2008:

Name	Destination	Amount
		€
Minister Coughlan	Dubai	3,332.57
Spouse	Dubai	3,332.57
Private Secretary	Dubai	3,332.57
<i>Official Expenses</i>		
Gifts		55.71
Hospitality		210.52
Executive Lounge, Dublin Airport		300.00

I am scheduled to travel to Germany for St Patrick's Day 2009 however projected costs for this trip are not yet available.

Grant Payments.

473. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the position regarding an application for the waste management grant by a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and when payment will issue. [6342/09]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The arrangements for payment of grants under the Farm Waste Management Scheme on a phased basis have been confirmed with 40 per cent being paid this year as claims are approved. A further 40 per cent will be paid in early January 2010 and the remaining 20 per cent in January 2011. Payment of the initial 40 per cent to farmers will be made as expeditiously as possible.

Commercial Product Testing.

474. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Science the legislation which is in place to prevent the use of school pupils in the testing of commercial products; the plans there are to review the legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5553/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): As the Deputy will be aware, under Section 15 of the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school and is therefore responsible for making decisions as to the types of activities in which the school gets involved. So the decision as to whether to accept sponsorship, partake in promotions or engage with research is one for the Board of Management to take. And naturally, the Board of Management should only engage in activities that are in the best interests of their students.

My Department has provided guidance to schools about commercialism and the need for schools to strike a balance between the benefit to be gained from positive links with businesses while at the same time protecting children and their parents from inappropriate marketing etc. In this regard it is important that pressure is not placed on parents or pupils to buy particular products.

In relation to the testing of commercial products, I do not think it is necessary for commercial organisations to engage in testing of products within schools. There are plenty of opportunities to test products outside of the school environment where parents are present to decide what they do and do not want their children to participate in. However, as I previously outlined, it is a matter for each Board of Management to make this decision having regard to the best interests of their pupils.

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If parents have a difficulty with any such activities in their school, they should raise the matter with the Board of Management of the school.

The issue of pupils being involved in the testing of commercial products can be dealt with at local school level and should not require further legislation.

Educational Disadvantage.

475. **Deputy Pádraic McCormack** asked the Minister for Education and Science if his Department will review the application in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Galway for funding under the DEIS scheme which is due to cease later in 2009 and for full recognition from DEIS as this school has participated in various schemes under the disadvantaged areas scheme over the years and are dependent on support from DEIS to continue their various courses which benefit both students and parents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5566/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): The school to which the Deputy refers is among a number of schools that were judged by an independent identification process in 2005 not to have a sufficient level of disadvantage among their pupils to warrant their inclusion in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the Action Plan for Educational Inclusion. The next identification process is scheduled to be held at the end of the current DEIS programme which runs from 2005-2010. There will not be an opportunity before this to be included in the current DEIS programme of supports.

A review mechanism was put in place in 2006 to address the concerns of schools that did not qualify for inclusion in DEIS but regarded themselves as having a level of disadvantage which was of a scale sufficient to warrant their inclusion in the programme. The review process operated under the direction of an independent person, charged with ensuring that all relevant identification procedures were properly followed in the case of schools applying for a review. The review was concluded and the results were notified to schools in August 2006. The school in question applied for a review at that time but regrettably the school was unsuccessful in qualifying for inclusion in DEIS.

This school retained resources, including financial and a shared Rural Co-ordinator post under pre-existing schemes and programmes for addressing educational disadvantage. When DEIS was introduced, a commitment was given as a concessionary measure to this, and a number of other schools in similar circumstances, that they would retain a level of support for the duration of the DEIS Initiative.

Given the current volatile and challenging economic climate, difficult decisions had to be made in Budget 2009 in order to contain public sector spending. One of these decisions was to advance the withdrawal of such supports from non DEIS schools to the beginning of the next school year.

The main focus of Social Inclusion measures will be to retain resources in DEIS schools. There is a need to focus targeted resources on the schools in most need and this approach is in line with the broad thrust of the recommendations of the Comptroller and Auditor General which are set out in his report on Primary Disadvantage of 2006, which recommended that my Department should focus its educational disadvantage measures on those schools serving the most disadvantaged communities.

School Accommodation.

476. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools and the

number of classroom units within each school in County Clare that are availing of accommodation under the temporary accommodation scheme; the average rental cost of each unit per annum in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5567/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Details held by this Department of the schools in Co. Clare renting prefabricated units are given in the following tabular statement. As the Deputy will see from the details provided, there are 26 schools renting a total of 70 prefab units. The average annual rental cost per prefab unit in Co. Clare is €11,210. As the Deputy will appreciate the cost per unit will vary depending on the size, type and age of each unit.

The Deputy will be aware that demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years, with the appointment of 6,000 extra teachers in the primary sector alone since 2002. It will continue to be necessary for prefabricated accommodation to be provided because competing priorities mean that it will not always be possible to have a permanent accommodation solution in place in a short timeframe.

Co. Clare — Temporary Prefab Accommodation

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
04919H	St John’s NS	Cratloe, Clare	Pre-fab
04919H	St John’s NS	Cratloe, Clare	Pre-fab
08241P	Scropul NS	Mullagh, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
13418J	Ballyea NS	Ennis, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
13625O	Kilnamona NS	Kilnamona, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
13870E	Kilkishen NS	Ennis, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
14111L	Cross NS	Kilrush, Kilrush, Clare	Pre-fab
14757N	Scoil na Mainstreach	Quin, Clare	Pre-fab
14830U	Barefield NS	Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
14830U	Barefield NS	Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
14830U	Barefield NS	Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
15042A	Ennis NS	Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
15042A	Ennis NS	Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
15301V	Kildysart NS	Ennis road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
15301V	Kildysart NS	Ennis road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
16186G	Inch NS	Ennis, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
16677C	CBS Bunscoil Inis Senior School	Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
16677C	CBS Bunscoil Inis Senior School	Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
16677C	CBS Bunscoil Inis Senior School	Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
16908S	Sixmilebridge NS	Sixmilebridge, Clare	Pre-fab
16908S	Sixmilebridge NS	Sixmilebridge, Clare	Pre-fab
16908S	Sixmilebridge NS	Sixmilebridge, Clare	Pre-fab
16908S	Sixmilebridge NS	Sixmilebridge, Clare	Pre-fab
16946D	Parteen NS	Parteen, Clare	Pre-fab
16946D	Parteen NS	Parteen, Clare	Pre-fab
17583V	Knockanean NS	Knockanean, Clare	Pre-fab
17583V	Knockanean NS	Knockanean, Clare	Pre-fab
17583V	Knockanean NS	Knockanean, Clare	Pre-fab
17583V	Knockanean NS	Knockanean, Clare	Pre-fab
17583V	Knockanean NS	Knockanean, Clare	Pre-fab
18190H	St Cronan’s NS	Carron, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab

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Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
18526O	Ballycar NS	Newmarket-on-Fergus, Clare	Pre-fab
18639E	Ballynacally NS	Ennis, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19247S	St. Conaire’s NS	Shannon, Clare	Pre-fab
19247S	St. Conaire’s NS	Shannon, Clare	Pre-fab
19247S	St. Conaire’s NS	Shannon, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19559L	Scoil Chríost Rí	Cloughleigh Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
19849U	GS Donncha Rua	Bóthar Linne, Sionna, Clare	Pre-fab
19849U	GS Donncha Rua	Bóthar Linne, Sionna, Clare	Pre-fab
19849U	GS Donncha Rua	Bóthar Linne, Sionna, Clare	Pre-fab
19849U	GS Donncha Rua	Bóthar Linne, Sionna, Clare	Pre-fab
20041C	St. Senan’s Conv	Kilrush, Clare	Pre-fab
20041C	St. Senan’s Conv	Kilrush, Clare	Pre-fab
20041C	St. Senan’s Conv	Kilrush, Clare	Pre-fab
20075T	St. Mochulla’s NS	Tulla, Clare	Pre-fab
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
20086B	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Clare	Pre-fab
20245S	Scoil Mhainchin, Ennistymon NS	Ennistymon, Clare	Pre-fab
20245S	Scoil Mhainchin, Ennistymon NS	Ennistymon, Clare	Pre-fab
20245S	Scoil Mhainchin, Ennistymon NS	Ennistymon, Clare	Pre-fab
20245S	Scoil Mhainchin, Ennistymon NS	Ennistymon, Clare	Pre-fab
20313J	Mol an Oige NS	Ennistymon, Clare	Pre-fab
20313J	Mol an Oige NS	Ennistymon, Clare	Pre-fab
20313J	Mol an Oige NS	Ennistymon, Clare	Pre-fab
20313J	Mol an Oige NS	Ennistymon, Clare	Pre-fab

Higher Education Grants.

477. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will review a decision to refuse a grant in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5571/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The decision on eligibility for student maintenance grants is a matter for the relevant assessing authority, either the local

authority or VEC, as appropriate. These bodies do not refer individual applications to my Department, except in exceptional circumstances.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a maintenance grant, or that the rate of maintenance grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to the relevant local authority or VEC.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by the relevant local authority or VEC and remains of the view that the body has not interpreted the schemes correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to my Department. My Department has received no appeal from the candidate referred to by the Deputy.

School Accommodation.

478. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools and the number of classroom units within each school in the Dublin South constituency area that are availing of accommodation under the temporary accommodation scheme; the average rental cost of each unit per annum in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5580/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My Department holds data on temporary accommodation on a county basis rather than a constituency basis. Details held by this Department of the schools in Dublin City and County renting prefabricated units are given in the following tabular statement. As the Deputy will see from the details provided, there are 103 schools renting a total of 279 prefab units. The average annual rental cost per prefab unit in Dublin City and County area is €14,893. As the Deputy will appreciate the cost per unit will vary depending on the size, type and age of each unit.

The Deputy will be aware that demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years, with the appointment of 6,000 extra teachers in the primary sector alone since 2002. It will continue to be necessary for prefabricated accommodation to be provided because competing priorities mean that it will not always be possible to have a permanent accommodation solution in place in a short timeframe.

Rental of Prefabricated Accommodation — Dublin

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
00697S	St. Brigid’s Mixed NS	Castleknock, Dublin	Pre-fab
00697S	St. Brigid’s Mixed NS	Castleknock, Dublin	Pre-fab
00697S	St. Brigid’s Mixed NS	Castleknock, Dublin	Pre-fab
00714P	Lucan BNS	Lucan, Dublin	Pre-fab
00752A	Central Model Senior Mixed NS	Marlborough St, Dublin	Pre-fab
01170G	Naul National School	Naul, Dublin	Pre-fab
01170G	Naul National School	Naul, Dublin	Pre-fab
01170G	Naul National School	Naul, Dublin	Pre-fab
01795A	Central Model Infants School	Marlborough St, Dublin	Pre-fab
03359N	Ballyroan Boys NS	Ballyroan Road, Rathfarnham, Dublin	Pre-fab
06200O	St Mary’s BNS	Grotto Place, Booterstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
09492W	Balscadden School	Balscadden, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
09492W	Balscadden School	Balscadden, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
09750S	St Joseph’s BNS	Terenure Road, Terenure, Dublin	Pre-fab
09932B	Stanhope St Convent	Manor St, Dublin	Pre-fab

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Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
12014D	St Andrew’s NS	Chapel Hill, Lucan, Dublin	Pre-fab
12014D	St Andrew’s NS	Chapel Hill, Lucan, Dublin	Pre-fab
14180H	Holmpatrick NS	Convent Lane, Skerries, Dublin	Pre-fab
15315J	St George’s NS	Hampton St, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
15569R	Scoil Moibhi	Skerries, Skerries, Dublin	Pre-fab
15618E	Sandford Parish NS	Sandford Close, Ranelagh, Dublin	Pre-fab
15618E	Sandford Parish NS	Sandford Close, Ranelagh, Dublin	Pre-fab
16461C	St Finian’s NS	Newcastle Lyons, Dublin	Pre-fab
16461C	St Finian’s NS	Newcastle Lyons, Dublin	Pre-fab
16461C	St Finian’s NS	Newcastle Lyons, Dublin	Pre-fab
16461C	St Finian’s NS	Newcastle Lyons, Dublin	Pre-fab
16461C	St Finian’s NS	Newcastle Lyons, Dublin	Pre-fab
16577V	St Brigid’s GNS	Old Finglas Rd, Glasnevin, Dublin	Pre-fab
16577V	St Brigid’s GNS	Old Finglas Rd, Glasnevin, Dublin	Pre-fab
16577V	St. Brigid’s GNS	Old Finglas Rd, Glasnevin, Dublin	Pre-fab
16860Q	Corpus Christi NS	Home Farm Rd, Drumcondra, Dublin	Pre-fab
16970A	St Molagas NS	Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16970A	St Molagas NS	Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16970A	St Molagas NS	Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16970A	St Molagas NS	Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16970A	St Molagas NS	Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16970A	St Molagas NS	Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16970A	St Molagas NS	Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16970A	St Molagas NS	Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16970A	St Molagas NS	Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16972E	SS Peter & Paul JNS	Chapel Street, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16972E	SS Peter & Paul JNS	Chapel Street, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
16972E	SS Peter & Paul JNS	Chapel Street, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
17055T	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Saggart, Dublin	Pre-fab
17055T	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Saggart, Dublin	Pre-fab
17055T	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Saggart, Dublin	Pre-fab
17055T	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Saggart, Dublin	Pre-fab
17083B	Scoil Mhuire gan Smal	Dublin 8, Dublin	Pre-fab
17472M	Hedgestown NS	Hedgestown, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17559B	St. Mary’s NS	Garristown, Dublin	Pre-fab
17569E	St Oliver Plunkett NS	Balrothery, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
17569E	St Oliver Plunkett NS	Balrothery, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
17683C	Scoil Mhuire Ogl 2	Crumlin Rd, Dublin	Pre-fab
17683C	Scoil Mhuire Ogl 2	Crumlin Rd, Dublin	Pre-fab
17683C	Scoil Mhuire Ogl 2	Crumlin Rd, Dublin	Pre-fab
17820J	Rolestown NS	Rolestown, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
17912O	St John Boscós SBS	Navan Rd, Dublin	Pre-fab
17912O	St John Boscós SBS	Navan Rd, Dublin	Pre-fab
17912O	St John Boscós SBS	Navan Rd, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17914S	St Oliver Plunkett	Grove Rd, Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17928G	SN N Sailbheastar NFA	Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17928G	SN N Sailbheastar NFA	Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17928G	SN N Sailbheastar NFA	Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17928G	SN N Sailbheastar NFA	Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17928G	SN N Sailbheastar NFA	Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17928G	SN N Sailbheastar NFA	Malahide, Dublin	Pre-fab
17944E	St Mary's School for deaf girls	Dominican Convent, Cabra, Dublin	Pre-fab
17944E	St Mary's School for deaf girls	Dominican Convent, Cabra, Dublin	Pre-fab
17953F	Edmondstown NS	Edmondstown, Rathfarnham, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17961E	Lusk NS	Chapel Rd, Lusk, Dublin	Pre-fab
17977T	Scoil Aine	All Saints Drive, Raheny, Dublin	Pre-fab
17978V	Naiscoil Ide	All Saints Drive, Raheny, Dublin	Pre-fab
17978V	Naiscoil Ide	All Saints Drive, Raheny, Dublin	Pre-fab
18046A	Scoil Bhríde BNS	Church Ave, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
18046A	Scoil Bhríde BNS	Church Ave, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
18046A	Scoil Bhríde BNS	Church Ave, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
18047C	Scoil Bhríde GNS	Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
18047C	Scoil Bhríde GNS	Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
18047C	Scoil Bhríde GNS	Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
18210K	St Michaels House Special School	College St, Baldoyle, Dublin	Pre-fab
18210K	St Michaels House Special School	College St, Baldoyle, Dublin	Pre-fab
18210K	St Michaels House Special School	College St, Baldoyle, Dublin	Pre-fab
18210K	St Michaels House Special School	College St, Baldoyle, Dublin	Pre-fab
18324C	St Brigid's GNS	Turret Rd, Palmerstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
18386B	Marist NS	Crumlin, Dublin	Pre-fab
18386B	Marist NS	Crumlin, Dublin	Pre-fab
18411U	St Marys NS	Bancroft Ave, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
18411U	St Marys NS	Bancroft Ave, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab

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Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
18412W	Scoil Phadraic C	Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab
18623M	Castleknoch NS	Main St, Castleknock, Dublin	Pre-fab
18632N	SN Eoin Bosco	Navan Rd, Dublin	Pre-fab
18671A	St Michaels House	16/17 Grosvenor Rd, Rathgar, Dublin	Pre-fab
18763F	St Michaels Special NS	Ballymun Rd, Dublin	Pre-fab
18778S	St. Mochta’s NS	Porterstown Road, Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
18778S	St. Mochta’s NS	Porterstown Road, Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
18778S	St. Mochta’s NS	Porterstown Road, Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
18778S	St. Mochta’s NS	Porterstown Road, Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
18778S	St. Mochta’s NS	Porterstown Road, Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
18815V	Our Lady of Lourdes	Rochestown Ave, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin	Pre-fab
18817C	Scoil Bhríde	Ranelagh, Dublin	Pre-fab
18976W	St Colmcilles BNS	Chapel Lane, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
18976W	St Colmcilles BNS	Chapel Lane, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
18977B	St Colmcilles GNS	Chapel Lane, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
18977B	St Colmcilles GNS	Chapel Lane, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
18977B	St Colmcilles GNS	Chapel Lane, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19066L	Loreto Primary	Dalkey, Dublin	Pre-fab
19220S	Scoil Ide	New Rd, Clondalkin, Dublin	Pre-fab
19221U	Scoil Aine	New Rd, Clondalkin, Dublin	Pre-fab
19221U	Scoil Aine	New Rd, Clondalkin, Dublin	Pre-fab
19221U	Scoil Aine	New Rd, Clondalkin, Dublin	Pre-fab
19259W	St. Patricks GNS	Foxrock, Dublin	Pre-fab
19319O	St Olafs NS	Balally Drive, Dundrum, Dublin	Pre-fab
19319O	St Olafs NS	Balally Drive, Dundrum, Dublin	Pre-fab
19319O	St Olafs NS	Balally Drive, Dundrum, Dublin	Pre-fab
19355S	Ballyowen Meadows	Beechpark, Stillorgan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19355S	Ballyowen Meadows	Beechpark, Stillorgan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19355S	Ballyowen Meadows	Beechpark, Stillorgan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19355S	Ballyowen Meadows	Beechpark, Stillorgan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19355S	Ballyowen Meadows	Beechpark, Stillorgan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19355S	Ballyowen Meadows	Beechpark, Stillorgan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19355S	Ballyowen Meadows	Beechpark, Stillorgan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19355S	Ballyowen Meadows	Beechpark, Stillorgan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19374W	Our Lady’s Grove NS	Goatstown Rd, Goatstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19374W	Our Lady’s Grove NS	Goatstown Rd, Goatstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19374W	Our Lady’s Grove NS	Goatstown Rd, Goatstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19390U	St. Marks SNS	Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19435Q	St Francis Xavier JNS	Roselawn Rd, Castleknock, Dublin	Pre-fab
19435Q	St Francis Xavier JNS	Roselawn Rd, Castleknock, Dublin	Pre-fab
19435Q	St Francis Xavier JNS	Roselawn Rd, Castleknock, Dublin	Pre-fab
19470S	St Francis Xavier JNS	Coolmine, Castleknock, Dublin	Pre-fab
19472W	St Marks JNS	Springfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19472W	St Marks JNS	Springfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19472W	St Marks JNS	Springfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19472W	St Marks JNS	Springfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19472W	St Marks JNS	Springfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
19474D	St Colmcilles JNS	1 Drone Ave, Knocklyon, Dublin	Pre-fab
19496N	St Fiachras JNS	Montrose Park, Beaumont, Dublin	Pre-fab
19515O	St. Teresa's NS	Balbriggan Rd, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19515O	St. Teresa's NS	Balbriggan Rd, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19515O	St. Teresa's NS	Balbriggan Rd, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19515O	St. Teresa's NS	Balbriggan Rd, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19535U	St Cronan's SNS	Brackenstown, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19535U	St Cronan's SNS	Brackenstown, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19535U	St Cronan's SNS	Brackenstown, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19535U	St Cronan's SNS	Brackenstown, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19535U	St Cronan's SNS	Brackenstown, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19535U	St Cronan's SNS	Brackenstown, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19545A	St Patricks JNS	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19574H	Divine Word NS	Marley Grange, Rathfarnham, Dublin	Pre-fab
19574H	Divine Word NS	Marley Grange, Rathfarnham, Dublin	Pre-fab
19601H	St Philip the Apostle JNS	Mountview, Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
19601H	St Philip the Apostle JNS	Mountview, Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
19605P	Scoil Mhuire JNS	Blakestown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19624T	St Catherine's NS	Kenure, Rush, Dublin	Pre-fab
19624T	St Catherine's NS	Kenure, Rush, Dublin	Pre-fab
19624T	St Catherine's NS	Kenure, Rush, Dublin	Pre-fab
19625V	Scoil Realt na Mara	Balbriggan Rd, Skerries, Dublin	Pre-fab
19625V	Scoil Realt na Mara	Balbriggan Rd, Skerries, Dublin	Pre-fab
19625V	Scoil Realt na Mara	Balbriggan Rd, Skerries, Dublin	Pre-fab
19628E	St Fiachras SNS	Montrose Park, Beaumont, Dublin	Pre-fab
19636D	St Patricks SNS	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19636D	St Patricks SNS	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19636D	St Patricks SNS	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19636D	St Patricks SNS	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19636D	St Patricks SNS	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
19643A	St Philips SNS	Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
19643A	St Philips SNS	Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
19643A	St Philips SNS	Clonsilla, Dublin	Pre-fab
19652B	Sacred Heart NS	Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19660A	Rush NS	Rush, Dublin	Pre-fab
19660A	Rush NS	Rush, Dublin	Pre-fab
19660A	Rush NS	Rush, Dublin	Pre-fab
19660A	Rush NS	Rush, Dublin	Pre-fab
19660A	Rush NS	Rush, Dublin	Pre-fab
19676P	Scoil Aine Naofa	Esker, Lucan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19676P	Scoil Aine Naofa	Esker, Lucan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19782O	St Brigids JNS	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19782O	St Brigids JNS	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19782O	St Brigids JNS	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19782O	St Brigids JNS	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19782O	St Brigids JNS	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin	Pre-fab
19817H	Scoil Mhuire	Woodview, Lucan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19817H	Scoil Mhuire	Woodview, Lucan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19817H	Scoil Mhuire	Woodview, Lucan, Dublin	Pre-fab

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
19834H	St Aidans NS	Brookfield, Dublin	Pre-fab
19834H	St Aidans NS	Brookfield, Dublin	Pre-fab
19834H	St Aidans NS	Brookfield, Dublin	Pre-fab
19834H	St Aidans NS	Brookfield, Dublin	Pre-fab
19865S	Archbishop Ryan JNS	Balgaddy, Lucan, Dublin	Pre-fab
19877C	Holy Family SNS	River Valley, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19877C	Holy Family SNS	River Valley, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19878E	Holy Rosary PS	Old Court Avenue, Firhouse, Dublin	Pre-fab
19878E	Holy Rosary PS	Old Court Avenue, Firhouse, Dublin	Pre-fab
19878E	Holy Rosary PS	Old Court Avenue, Firhouse, Dublin	Pre-fab
19878E	Holy Rosary PS	Old Court Avenue, Firhouse, Dublin	Pre-fab
19878E	Holy Rosary PS	Old Court Avenue, Firhouse, Dublin	Pre-fab
19878E	Holy Rosary PS	Old Court Avenue, Firhouse, Dublin	Pre-fab
19878E	Holy Rosary PS	Old Court Avenue, Firhouse, Dublin	Pre-fab
19898K	Scoil an Duinninigh	Draighnean, Feltrim, Swords, Dublin	Pre-fab
19907I	Gaelscoil Mologa	Clareville Road, Dublin	Pre-fab
19949B	Muslim NS	19 Roebuck Rd, Clonskeagh, Dublin	Pre-fab
19949B	Muslim NS	19 Roebuck Rd, Clonskeagh, Dublin	Pre-fab
19949B	Muslim NS	19 Roebuck Rd, Clonskeagh, Dublin	Pre-fab
20012S	Griffith Barracks Multi D School	The Old Guard House, South Circular Rd, Dublin	Pre-fab
20015B	Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna	Bothar Choltraí, Baile Munna, Dublin	Pre-fab
20015B	Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna	Bothar Choltraí, Baile Munna, Dublin	Pre-fab
20015B	Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna	Bothar Choltraí, Baile Munna, Dublin	Pre-fab
20020R	Gaelscoil Thaobh na Coille	Cill Tiarnáin, Dublin	Pre-fab
20020R	Gaelscoil Thaobh na Coille	Cill Tiarnáin, Dublin	Pre-fab
20020R	Gaelscoil Thaobh na Coille	Cill Tiarnáin, Dublin	Pre-fab
20020R	Gaelscoil Thaobh na Coille	Cill Tiarnáin, Dublin	Pre-fab
20035H	St. Gabriels NS	Cowper St, Dublin	Pre-fab
20043G	Gaelscoil Chnoc Liamhna	Sean Bhothar Chnoc Liamhna, Cnoc Liamhna, Dublin	Pre-fab
20047O	Gaelscoil Bharra	Ascal an Fhásaigh, Cabra, Dublin	Pre-fab
20047O	Gaelscoil Bharra	Ascal an Fhásaigh, Cabra, Dublin	Pre-fab
20056P	Gaelscoil Phadraig	Ascaill Shileann, Baile Breac, Dublin	Pre-fab
20056P	Gaelscoil Phadraig	Ascaill Shileann, Baile Breac, Dublin	Pre-fab
20056P	Gaelscoil Phadraig	Ascaill Shileann, Baile Breac, Dublin	Pre-fab
20056P	Gaelscoil Phadraig	Ascaill Shileann, Baile Breac, Dublin	Pre-fab
20056P	Gaelscoil Phadraig	Ascaill Shileann, Baile Breac, Dublin	Pre-fab
20056P	Gaelscoil Phadraig	Ascaill Shileann, Baile Breac, Dublin	Pre-fab
20056P	Gaelscoil Phadraig	Ascaill Shileann, Baile Breac, Dublin	Pre-fab
20056P	Gaelscoil Phadraig	Ascaill Shileann, Baile Breac, Dublin	Pre-fab
20139T	Inchicore NS	Sarsfield Road, Inchicore, Dublin	Pre-fab
20139T	Inchicore NS	Sarsfield Road, Inchicore, Dublin	Pre-fab
20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Tog NS	Portrane Rd, Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab
20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Tog NS	Portrane Rd, Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab
20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Tog NS	Portrane Rd, Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Tog NS	Portrane Rd, Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab
20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Tog NS	Portrane Rd, Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab
20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Tog NS	Portrane Rd, Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab
20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Tog NS	Portrane Rd, Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab
20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Tog NS	Portrane Rd, Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab
20161M	Donabate/Portrane Educate Tog NS	Portrane Rd, Donabate, Dublin	Pre-fab
20168D	Glasnevin Educate Together NS	Church Ave, Glasnevin, Dublin	Pre-fab
20190T	Holy Trinity NS	Glencairn Drive, The Gallops, Leopardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
20190T	Holy Trinity NS	Glencairn Drive, The Gallops, Leopardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
20190T	Holy Trinity NS	Glencairn Drive, The Gallops, Leopardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
20190T	Holy Trinity NS	Glencairn Drive, The Gallops, Leopardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
20190T	Holy Trinity NS	Glencairn Drive, The Gallops, Leopardstown, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20202A	Balbriggan Educate Together	Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab
20334R	Gaelscoil Ros Eo	Rush, Dublin	Pre-fab
60092U	Clonkeen College	Clonkeen Rd, Blackrock, Dublin	Pre-fab
60092U	Clonkeen College	Clonkeen Rd, Blackrock, Dublin	Pre-fab
60092U	Clonkeen College	Clonkeen Rd, Blackrock, Dublin	Pre-fab
70010V	Balbriggan Community College	Chapel Street, Balbriggan, Dublin	Pre-fab

Special Educational Needs.

479. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will support the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [5602/09]

481. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will support a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [5606/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 479 and 481 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for allocating resource teachers and special needs assistants to schools to support children with special needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support. I have arranged for the details supplied by the Deputy to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply.

All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child’s special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

Schools Building Projects.

480. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will proceed with an extension to a school (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5603/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My Department has approved the Stage 1 submission (i.e. Site Suitability, Site Report and Initial Sketch Scheme) for the school to which the Deputy refers and gave authorisation to progress to the next stage of architectural planning, which is Stage 2A (Developed Sketch Scheme).

The progression of all large scale building projects from initial design stage through to tender and construction, including this project, will be considered on an on-going basis in the context of my Department’s Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme.

Question No. 481 answered with Question No. 479.

School Accommodation.

482. **Deputy Deirdre Clune** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools and the number of classroom units within each school in the Cork South Central constituency area that are availing of accommodation under the temporary accommodation scheme; the average rental cost of each unit per annum in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5612/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My Department holds data on temporary accommodation on a county basis rather than a constituency basis.

Details held by this Department of the schools in Cork City and County renting prefabricated units are given in the following tabular statement. As the Deputy will see from the details provided, there are 116 schools renting a total of 282 prefab units. The average annual rental cost per prefab unit in Cork City and County area is €14,022. As the Deputy will appreciate the cost per unit will vary depending on the size, type and age of each unit.

The Deputy will be aware that demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years, with the appointment of 6,000 extra teachers in the primary sector alone since 2002. It will continue to be necessary for prefabricated accommodation to be provided because competing priorities mean that it will not always be possible to have a permanent accommodation solution in place in a short timeframe.

Prefab Rental — Primary & Post-Primary — Cork

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
00512D	St. Brigid's Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid's Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid's Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid's Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid's Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid's Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid's Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
01272O	Glandore NS	Glandore, Cork	Pre-fab
02114B	Ballygiblin NS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
02114B	Ballygiblin NS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
02452V	St Colman's NS	Cloyne, Cork	Pre-fab
02452V	St Colman's NS	Cloyne, Cork	Pre-fab
04118T	Bishop Ahern NS	Leamlara, Cork	Pre-fab
05477G	Scoil Naomh Seosamh	Laragh, Bandon, Cork	Pre-fab
05477G	Scoil Naomh Seosamh	Laragh, Bandon, Cork	Pre-fab
06342L	Vicarstown Mixed NS	Vicarstown, Cork	Pre-fab
07242M	Cloghroe NS	Cloghroe, Cork	Pre-fab
07242M	Cloghroe NS	Cloghroe, Cork	Pre-fab
07242M	Cloghroe NS	Cloghroe, Cork	Pre-fab
07242M	Cloghroe NS	Cloghroe, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10523O	Fermoy Adair NS	Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
11496T	Shandrum NS	Newtownshandrum, Charleville, Cork	Pre-fab
11992I	Whitegate Mixed NS	Whitegate, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
11992I	Whitegate Mixed NS	Whitegate, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
11992I	Whitegate Mixed NS	Whitegate, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
11992I	Whitegate Mixed NS	Whitegate, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
12004A	Mallon No1 NS	Shortcastle St, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
12015F	Liscarroll NS	Liscarroll, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
12041G	St. John the Baptist, Midleton NS	Dungourney Road, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
12041G	St. John the Baptist, Midleton NS	Dungourney Road, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
12395S	Rusheen NS	Rusheen, Coachford, Cork	Pre-fab
12446J	Glenahulla NS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
12447L	Baltdaniel NS	Newtwopothouse, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
12456M	Scoil Malaga	Timoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab

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Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab
12505W	Kilbarry NS	Kilbarry, Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
13031I	St Joseph’s Convent NS	Smith’s Rd, Rathluirc, Cork	Pre-fab
13031I	St Joseph’s Convent NS	Smith’s Rd, Rathluirc, Cork	Pre-fab
13234W	Cloughduv NS	Cloughduv, Crookstown, Cork	Pre-fab
13234W	Cloughduv NS	Cloughduv, Crookstown, Cork	Pre-fab
13375R	Scoil Bhríde	Cros Mhathúna, Bandon, Cork	Pre-fab
13375R	Scoil Bhríde	Cros Mhathúna, Bandon, Cork	Pre-fab
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab
13483U	SN Atha na Líonta	Mourneabbey, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
13483U	SN Atha na Líonta	Mourneabbey, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
13512B	Scoil Mhuire Lourdes	Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
13728B	Castletownshend NS	Castletownshend, Skibbereen, Cork	Pre-fab
13728B	Castletownshend NS	Castletownshend, Skibbereen, Cork	Pre-fab
13728B	Castletownshend NS	Castletownshend, Skibbereen, Cork	Pre-fab
13779S	Dromahane NS	Dromahane, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
13779S	Dromahane NS	Dromahane, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13976U	St Matthias National School	Ballydehob, Cork	Pre-fab
14052V	St Colmans BNS	Percival St, Kanturk, Cork	Pre-fab
14784Q	Scoil Phadraig Naofa	Dunmanway, Cork	Pre-fab
14839P	Clondrohid NS	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
15165Q	Ballintotas NS	Ballintotas, Castlemartyr, Cork	Pre-fab
15165Q	Ballintotas NS	Ballintotas, Castlemartyr, Cork	Pre-fab
15380U	Dromagh NS	Dromagh, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15563F	Lisheen NS	Church Cross, Skibereen, Cork	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
15563F	Lisheen NS	Church Cross, Skibereen, Cork	Pre-fab
15594Q	Grange NS	Grange, Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
15594Q	Grange NS	Grange, Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
15594Q	Grange NS	Grange, Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
15597W	St Colman's BNS	Macroon, Cork	Pre-fab
15597W	St Colman's BNS	Macroon, Cork	Pre-fab
15646J	Coomhala NS	Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
15701O	Bartlemy NS	Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
15781P	Ballintemple NS	Crab Lane, Ballintemple, Cork	Pre-fab
15792U	SN Naomh Micheál	Upper Glanmire, White's Cross, Cork	Pre-fab
16087E	Kealkil NS	Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
16087E	Kealkil NS	Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
16271U	Watergrasshill NS	Watergrasshill, Cork	Pre-fab
16271U	Watergrasshill NS	Watergrasshill, Cork	Pre-fab
16271U	Watergrasshill NS	Watergrasshill, Cork	Pre-fab
16339F	St Joseph's NS	The Mardyke, Cork	Pre-fab
16339F	St Joseph's NS	The Mardyke, Cork	Pre-fab
16684W	Bunscoil na mBraithre Criostai	Middleton, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16940O	Dunderrow NS	Dunderrow, Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
16940O	Dunderrow NS	Dunderrow, Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
16945B	Lisgriffin NS	Lisgriffin, Buttevant, Cork	Pre-fab
17011W	St Mochomóg's NS	Cappabue, Kealkill, Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
17103E	Scoil Chlochair Mhuire	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
17103E	Scoil Chlochair Mhuire	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
17112F	Ballyhea NS	Ballyhea, Charleville, Cork	Pre-fab
17112F	Ballyhea NS	Ballyhea, Charleville, Cork	Pre-fab
17152R	Knockskeagh NS	Clonakilty, Cork	Pre-fab
17168J	SN Inis Eoghain	Innishannon, Cork	Pre-fab
17251T	Oven's NS	Ovens, Cork	Pre-fab
17281F	Togher NS	Dunmanway, Cork	Pre-fab
17297U	St Fergal's NS	Killeagh, Cork	Pre-fab
17297U	St Fergal's NS	Killeagh, Cork	Pre-fab
17360B	SN Mhuire	Rathpeacon, Mallow Rd, Cork	Pre-fab
17360B	SN Mhuire	Rathpeacon, Mallow Rd, Cork	Pre-fab
17533G	Rahan NS	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17533G	Rahan NS	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17533G	Rahan NS	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17533G	Rahan NS	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17600S	Scartleigh NS	Saleen, Middleton, Cork	Pre-fab
17600S	Scartleigh NS	Saleen, Middleton, Cork	Pre-fab
17600S	Scartleigh NS	Saleen, Middleton, Cork	Pre-fab
17600S	Scartleigh NS	Saleen, Middleton, Cork	Pre-fab

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Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609n	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17639W	CBS PS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
17639W	CBS PS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
17639W	CBS PS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
17667E	Whitechurch NS	Whitechurch, Cork	Pre-fab
17667E	Whitechurch NS	Whitechurch, Cork	Pre-fab
17765E	Reenascreena NS	Reenascreena, Rosscarbery, Cork	Pre-fab
17765E	Reenascreena NS	Reenascreena, Rosscarbery, Cork	Pre-fab
17823P	Glantane NS	Glantane, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17921P	Moing na Míol	Clashbee, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17921P	Moing na Míol	Clashbee, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17972J	Killmurry NS	Ballymichael, Lissarda, Cork	Pre-fab
17993R	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (B) (Glasheen BNS)	School Avenue, Glasheen, Cork	Pre-fab
17993R	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (B) (Glasheen BNS)	School Avenue, Glasheen, Cork	Pre-fab
17993R	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (B) (Glasheen BNS)	School Avenue, Glasheen, Cork	Pre-fab
18000W	Scoil Mhuire Naofa	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
18000W	Scoil Mhuire Naofa	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
18000W	Scoil Mhuire Naofa	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
18100D	Lissagriffin NS	Gouleen, Skibbereen, Cork	Pre-fab
18128C	Scoil Mhuire NS	Kiskeam, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
18217B	Scoil Padre Pio	Churchfield, Cork	Pre-fab
18217B	Scoil Padre Pio	Churchfield, Cork	Pre-fab
18246I	Ballymoney NS	Ballineen, Cork	Pre-fab
18279A	Carrigaline No. 3 NS	Waterpark, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18279A	Carrigaline No. 3 NS	Waterpark, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18377A	St Joseph’s NS	Oliver Plunkett Hill, Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
18428O	Bailenóra NS	Bailenóra, Tobar an Iarla, Cork	Pre-fab
18428O	Bailenóra NS	Bailenóra, Tobar an Iarla, Cork	Pre-fab
18428O	Bailenóra NS	Bailenóra, Tobar an Iarla, Cork	Pre-fab
18468D	St Mary’s NS	Castledonovan, Drimoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
18483W	School of the Divine Child	Lavanagh Centre, Ballintemple, Cork	Pre-fab
18483W	School of the Divine Child	Lavanagh Centre, Ballintemple, Cork	Pre-fab
18497K	Scoil Inse Ratha	Little Island, Cork	Pre-fab
18497K	Scoil Inse Ratha	Little Island, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
18535P	St John's GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John's GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18713N	SN Fionán Reanna	Belgooly, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
19256Q	Scoil Ghobnatan	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
19351K	Cill Chriodain	Kilcredan, Ladysbridge, Cork	Pre-fab
19351K	Cill Chriodain	Kilcredan, Ladysbridge, Cork	Pre-fab
19351K	Cill Chriodain	Kilcredan, Ladysbridge, Cork	Pre-fab
19351K	Cill Chriodain	Kilcredan, Ladysbridge, Cork	Pre-fab
19381T	Rathmore NS	Baltimore, Skibereen, Cork	Pre-fab
19404F	Scoil Mhuire SN	Ballyhooly, Cork	Pre-fab
19404F	Scoil Mhuire SN	Ballyhooly, Cork	Pre-fab
19415K	Scoil an Athar Tadhg	Carraig na bhFear, Cork	Pre-fab
19415K	Scoil an Athar Tadhg	Carraig na bhFear, Cork	Pre-fab
19415K	Scoil an Athar Tadhg	Carraig na bhFear, Cork	Pre-fab
19557H	Caheragh NS	Caheragh, Drimoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
19637F	Scoil Fhionnbarra	Béal Athan Ghaorthaidh, Cork	Pre-fab
19637F	Scoil Fhionnbarra	Béal Athan Ghaorthaidh, Cork	Pre-fab
19760E	Scoil Triest	Lota, Glanmire, Cork	Pre-fab
19760E	Scoil Triest	Lota, Glanmire, Cork	Pre-fab
19760E	Scoil Triest	Lota, Glanmire, Cork	Pre-fab
19761G	St Peter's NS	Dungourney, Cork	Pre-fab
19801P	Drimoleague Junior School	Drimoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
19801P	Drimoleague Junior School	Drimoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
19839R	GS Uí Riordain	Cul Rua, Baile an Chollaigh, Cork	Pre-fab
19839R	GS Uí Riordain	Cul Rua, Baile an Chollaigh, Cork	Pre-fab
19839R	GS Uí Ríordáin	Cúl Rua, Baile an Chollaigh, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19906G	Cork School Project NS	Grattan St, Cork	Pre-fab
19978I	Maulatrahane Central NS	Leas, Skibereen, Cork	Pre-fab
19993E	GS an Ghoirt Alainn	Aibhinne Murmont, Gort Alainn, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20025E	GS Droichead na Banndan	Palún CLG, Droichead na Banndan, Cork	Pre-fab
20025E	GS Droichead na Banndan	Palún CLG, Droichead na Banndan, Cork	Pre-fab
20025E	GS Droichead na Banndan	Palún CLG, Droichead na Banndan, Cork	Pre-fab
20025E	GS Droichead na Banndan	Palún CLG, Droichead na Banndan, Cork	Pre-fab
20049S	Ringaskiddy Lower Harbour NS	Loughbeg, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
20049S	Ringaskiddy Lower Harbour NS	Loughbeg, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
20049S	Ringaskiddy Lower Harbour NS	Loughbeg, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab
20105C	Star of the Sea	Passage West, Cork	Pre-fab
20105C	Star of the Sea	Passage West, Cork	Pre-fab
20105C	Star of the Sea	Passage West, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20222G	Scoil Chuil-Aodha/Barr dInse	Ciul-Aosha, Maghcromtha, Cork	Pre-fab
20265B	Gaelscoil Chionn tSaile	Cappagh, Cionn tSaile, Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
20265B	Gaelscoil Chionn tSaile	Cappagh, Cionn tSaile, Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
20335T	Rochestown NS	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
20335T	Rochestown NS	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
20335T	Rochestown NS	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
20336V	Midleton Educate Together NS	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
20336V	Midleton Educate Together NS	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
62170B	Sacred Heart Sec School	Clonakilty, Cork	Pre-fab
62421A	Presentation Sec School	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
62421A	Presentation Sec School	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
62421A	Presentation Sec School	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
62421A	Presentation Sec School	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
62460K	St Francis College	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
62460K	St Francis College	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
62460K	St Francis College	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
62460K	St Francis College	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
62730N	St Patricks College	Gardiners Hill, Cork	Pre-fab
70930R	St Goban's College	Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
91499E	Kinsale Community School	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab

Schools Building Projects.

483. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Science further to an adjournment debate matter on 6 November 2008 in relation to a school (details supplied) in County Cork, the progress that has been made in providing additional accommodation; if the appeal of his Department's decision in the matter has been completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5619/09]

485. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will expedite an application by a school (details supplied) in County Cork for works under the capital works programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5625/09]

504. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he has received a request to receive a deputation from a school (details supplied) in County Cork; if and when he will be in a position to meet such a deputation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5872/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 483, 485 and 504 together.

The school to which the Deputies refer has applied to my Department for an extension project. As the Deputies will be aware, last week, I announced details of 43 major building projects to proceed to tender and construction and 25 high priority projects to commence architectural planning.

The project to which the Deputies refer was not included in this announcement for the commencement of architectural planning. Therefore, it is unlikely that it will be progressed in 2009.

The progression of all large scale building projects, including the project in question, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department's multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project at this time.

My Department will be responding shortly to a recent proposal from the school which includes a request for a meeting with officials.

Special Educational Needs.

484. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Education and Science his proposals for a

[Deputy Joe Costello.]

new residential development for blind and visually impaired children at a centre (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [5623/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I take it that the Deputy is referring to the proposed Centre of Excellence for Visually Impaired at St. Joseph’s School, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

The Deputy may be aware that a decision was taken in 2003 that the Centre as originally proposed should not proceed having regard to the low and declining pupil numbers in the school for the visually impaired and the development costs involved, estimated to be in excess of €30m. A scaled-down version of a National Centre was subsequently proposed, to be staffed by a range of professionals to provide expert in-house assessment such as speech and language therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, mobility therapy and ophthalmology as well as counselling, pre-school and outreach support services. The school is already resourced through the normal supports available to schools generally.

You will also be aware that in the context of inclusive education, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004 provides that a child (defined as a person who is not more than 18 years) with special educational needs must be educated in an inclusive setting unless such an arrangement is inconsistent with the best interests of the child or with the effective provision of education for those children with whom the child is to be educated.

In the past, children who were blind or had a visual impairment were unable to attend their local schools and had to travel distances to avail of specialised intervention. Today many of these children attend their local schools with additional special educational supports, where necessary. My Department, through the NCSE, funds additional teaching and special needs assistant support for these pupils where such additional supports are necessary. In addition, funding is provided for specialist equipment and/or assistive technology. My Department also funds the National Braille Production Centre which translates text books into Braille, Large Print and other formats. Current policy and best practice in regard to health service delivery for blind/visually impaired pupils is that they remain, and are supported, in their local communities.

I met with representatives from St. Joseph’s recently and a further meeting is being arranged to discuss the matter. My Department is willing to work with St. Joseph’s in the context of identifying any upgrading work required to the school that is consistent with the premises’ use for educational purposes. Any refurbishments will be considered in a prioritised manner. Along with all other areas of expenditure, the timing of these refurbishments is dependent on the resources available to the Government.

The responsibility for funding residential facilities rests with the health sector and the Deputy may wish to raise the matter directly with my colleague the Minister for Health and Children or Health Service Executive.

Question No. 485 answered with Question No. 483.

School Accommodation.

486. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools and the number of classroom units within each school in County Leitrim that are availing of accommodation under the temporary accommodation scheme; the average rental cost of each unit per annum in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5633/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Details held by this Department of the schools in Co Leitrim renting prefabricated units are given in the following tabular

statement. As the Deputy will see from the details provided, there are 3 schools renting a total of 9 prefab units. The average annual rental cost per prefab unit in Co Leitrim is €17,967. As the Deputy will appreciate the cost per unit will vary depending on the size, type and age of each unit.

The Deputy will be aware that demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years, with the appointment of 6,000 extra teachers in the primary sector alone since 2002. It will continue to be necessary for prefabricated accommodation to be provided because competing priorities mean that it will not always be possible to have a permanent accommodation solution in place in a short timeframe.

Rented Prefabricated Accommodation — Leitrim

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
17233R	St Clare's NS	Station Road, Manorhamilton, Leitrim	Pre-fab
17233R	St Clare's NS	Station Road, Manorhamilton, Leitrim	Pre-fab
19423J	St. Patrick's NS	Drumshambo, Leitrim	Pre-fab
19423J	St Patrick's NS	Drumshambo, Leitrim	Pre-fab
20212D	Gaelscoil Liatroma	Attifinlay, Cora Droma Ruisc, Leitrim	Pre-fab
20212D	Gaelscoil Liatroma	Attifinlay, Cora Droma Ruisc, Leitrim	Pre-fab
20212D	Gaelscoil Liatroma	Attifinlay, Cora Droma Ruisc, Leitrim	Pre-fab
20212D	Gaelscoil Liatroma	Attifinlay, Cora Droma Ruisc, Leitrim	Pre-fab
20212D	Gaelscoil Liatroma	Attifinlay, Cora Droma Ruisc, Leitrim	Pre-fab

487. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools and the number of classroom units within each school in County Sligo that are availing of accommodation under the temporary accommodation scheme; and the average rental cost of each unit per annum in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5634/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): Details of the schools in Co. Sligo renting temporary accommodation are given in the following tabular statement. The average annual rental cost per unit in 2007 was €10,815. From the information provided the Deputy will see that there were a total of 25 prefabricated units rented in 2007 by 11 schools. As the Deputy will appreciate the cost per unit will vary depending on the size, type and age of each unit. The Deputy will be aware that demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years, with the appointment of 6,000 extra teachers in the primary sector alone since 2002. It will continue to be necessary for prefabricated accommodation to be provided because competing priorities mean that it will not always be possible to have a permanent accommodation solution in place in a short timeframe.

Rental of Prefabricated Accommodation — Sligo

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
04487E	Achonry NS	Achonry, Tubbercurry, Sligo	Pre-fab
13242V	Castlerock NS	Castlerock, Adare, Sligo	Pre-fab
14636B	Scoil Naomh Eanna	Carraroe, Sligo	Pre-fab
15571E	Kilglass NS	Kilglass, Enniscrone, Sligo	Pre-fab
16492N	Rathlee NS	Rathlee, Easkey, Sligo	Pre-fab
18334F	Knockminna	Ballymote, Sligo	Pre-fab
18575E	Scoil Naomh Molaise	Grange, Sligo	Pre-fab

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
18575E	Scoil Naomh Molaise	Grange, Sligo	Pre-fab
18575E	Scoil Naomh Molaise	Grange, Sligo	Pre-fab
18575E	Scoil Naomh Molaise	Grange, Sligo	Pre-fab
18979F	Scoil Ursula	Strandhill Rd., Sligo	Pre-fab
18979F	Scoil Ursula	Strandhill Rd., Sligo	Pre-fab
18979F	Scoil Ursula	Strandhill Rd., Sligo	Pre-fab
19495L	Carbury	The Mall, Sligo	Pre-fab
19495L	Carbury	The Mall, Sligo	Pre-fab
19495L	Carbury	The Mall, Sligo	Pre-fab
19495L	Carbury	The Mall, Sligo	Pre-fab
19495L	Carbury	The Mall, Sligo	Pre-fab
19688W	Dromore West Central NS	Dromore West, Sligo	Pre-fab
20044I	Gaelscoil Chnoc Na Re	Baile Ui Dhugain, Sligo	Pre-fab
20044I	Gaelscoil Chnoc Na Re	Baile Ui Dhugain, Sligo	Pre-fab
20044I	Gaelscoil Chnoc Na Re	Baile Ui Dhugain, Sligo	Pre-fab
20044I	Gaelscoil Chnoc Na Re	Baile Ui Dhugain, Sligo	Pre-fab
20044I	Gaelscoil Chnoc Na Re	Baile Ui Dhugain, Sligo	Pre-fab
20044I	Gaelscoil Chnoc Na Re	Baile Ui Dhugain, Sligo	Pre-fab

488. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools and the number of classroom units within each school in County Roscommon that are availing of accommodation under the temporary accommodation scheme; the average rental cost of each unit per annum in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5635/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Details held by this Department of the schools in Co Roscommon renting prefabricated units are given in the following tabular statement. As the Deputy will see from the details provided, there are 13 schools renting a total of 20 prefab units. The average annual rental cost per prefab unit in Co Roscommon is €8,276. As the Deputy will appreciate the cost per unit will vary depending on the size, type and age of each unit. The Deputy will be aware that demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years, with the appointment of 6,000 extra teachers in the primary sector alone since 2002. It will continue to be necessary for prefabricated accommodation to be provided because competing priorities mean that it will not always be possible to have a permanent accommodation solution in place in a short timeframe.

Rental of Prefabricated Accommodation — Roscommon

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
01607T	Cornafulla NS	Cornafulla, Athlone, Roscommon	Pre-fab
01607T	Cornafulla NS	Cornafulla, Athlone, Roscommon	Pre-fab
14056G	Mount Talbot NS	Mount Talbot, Roscommon	Pre-fab
14056G	Mount Talbot NS	Mount Talbot, Roscommon	Pre-fab
14056G	Mount Talbot NS	Mount Talbot, Roscommon	Pre-fab
14356S	Lisaniskey NS	Ballydooley PO, Donamon, Roscommon	Pre-fab
14356S	Lisaniskey NS	Ballydooley PO, Donamon, Roscommon	Pre-fab
15083O	Scoil Mhuire	Convent Rd., Roscommon	Pre-fab
15083O	Scoil Mhuire	Convent Rd., Roscommon	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
15083O	Scoil Mhuire	Convent Rd., Roscommon	Pre-fab
15531P	Newtown NS	Creagh, Ballinasloe, Roscommon	Pre-fab
15531P	Newtown NS	Creagh, Ballinasloe, Roscommon	Pre-fab
15557K	Cloonfad NS	Cloonfad, Ballyhaunis, Roscommon	Pre-fab
16034G	Tulsk NS	Tulsk, Castlerea, Roscommon	Pre-fab
16127N	Gorthaganny NS	Carrowbehy, Castlerea, Roscommon	Pre-fab
17255E	Scoil na Mainistreach (Abbey NS)	Circular Rd, Roscommon	Pre-fab
17266J	St Mary's NS	Ballinagare, Castlerea, Roscommon	Pre-fab
17748E	SN Padraig Naofa	Dungar, An Caisleain Riabhach, Roscommon	Pre-fab
17748E	SN Padraig Naofa	Dungar, An Caisleain Riabhach, Roscommon	Pre-fab
18729F	Ballintleva NS	Curraghboy, Roscommon	Pre-fab
65100S	Scoil Mhuire	Strokestown, Roscommon	Pre-fab

Schools Building Projects.

489. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will support a matter in respect of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [5656/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): The proposed building project for the school to which the Deputy refers is at an advanced stage of architectural planning. As the Deputy will be aware, last week, I announced details of 43 major building projects to proceed to tender and construction and 25 high priority projects to commence architectural planning. The project to which the Deputy refers was not included in this announcement. Therefore, it is unlikely that it will be progressed in 2009. The progression of all large scale building projects, including the project in question, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department's multiannual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project at this time. I am pleased to inform the Deputy, however, that the Department has taken a decision in principle to replace a number of prefabs at the school and this matter is being progressed.

Pension Provisions.

490. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if an allowance will be made available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5663/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): The person in question is in receipt of a pension from my Department under the National School Teachers Spouses' and Children's Pension Scheme, as the spouse of a deceased teacher. Pension is not payable in respect of the person's granddaughter notwithstanding that the person is the child's guardian. Eligibility for children's pension under the scheme of which the deceased was a member is restricted to the children born of the member's marriage, children adopted by the member while in service and to step-children of the member where such children were dependent on the member while living. The provisions of the superannuation scheme are of general application and it is not open to me to depart from them in individual cases.

School Accommodation.

491. **Deputy Michael D'Arcy** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools and

[Deputy Michael D'Arcy.]

the number of classroom units within each school in the Waterford constituency area that are availing of accommodation under the temporary accommodation scheme; the average rental cost of each unit per annum in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
[5674/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): Details of the schools in Waterford renting temporary accommodation are given in the following tabular statement. As the Deputy will see from the details provided, there are 19 schools renting a total of 96 prefab units. The average annual rental cost per prefab unit in Waterford is €12,960. As the Deputy will appreciate the cost per unit will vary depending on the size, type and age of each unit. The Deputy will be aware that demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years, with the appointment of 6,000 extra teachers in the primary sector alone since 2002. It will continue to be necessary for prefabricated accommodation to be provided because competing priorities mean that it will not always be possible to have a permanent accommodation solution in place in a short timeframe.

Rental of Prefabricated Accommodation — Waterford

Roll No.	Name	Address
15046I	St Stephens	25 Patrick Street, Waterford
15046I	St Stephens	26 Patrick Street, Waterford
15318P	Glenbeg NS	Glenbeg, Dungarvan, Waterford
15318P	Glenbeg NS	Glenbeg, Dungarvan, Waterford
17159I	Garranbane NS	Dungarvan, Waterford
17525H	Light of Christ School	Dunmore East, Waterford
17535K	S.N. Fionnabhair (Fenor NS)	Fenor, Waterford
17535K	S.N. Fionnabhair (Fenor NS)	Fenor, Waterford
17535K	S.N. Fionnabhair (Fenor NS)	Fenor, Waterford
18094L	Scoil Mhuire	Abbeyside, Dungarvan, Waterford
18094L	Scoil Mhuire	Abbeyside, Dungarvan, Waterford
18167M	St Annes National School	Seafield, Kilmacthomas, Waterford
18235D	St Marys BNS	Ferrybank, Waterford
18235D	St Marys BNS	Ferrybank, Waterford
18235D	St Marys BNS	Ferrybank, Waterford
18380M	Faithlegg NS	Faithlegg, Waterford
19108B	St Martins Special School	Ballytrunkle Road, Waterford
19108B	St Martins Special School	Ballytrunkle Road, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford

Roll No.	Name	Address
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19629G	Holy Cross School	Ballycarnane, Tramore, Waterford
19726E	St James National School	Church Lane, Stradbally, Waterford
19885B	Gaelscoil Philib Barun	Cruabhaile Uachtarach, Tra Mhor, Waterford
19885B	Gaelscoil Philib Barun	Cruabhaile Uachtarach, Tra Mhor, Waterford
19885B	Gaelscoil Philib Barun	Cruabhaile Uachtarach, Tra Mhor, Waterford
19970P	Portlaw NS	Portlaw, Waterford
20076V	Bunscoil Bhothar na Naomh	Lismore, Waterford
20143K	Waterpark National School	Park Road, Waterford
20170N	Bunscoil Chill Mhic Thomaisín	Kilmacthomas, Waterford
64970U	Presentation Secondary School	Cannon Street, Waterford
64970U	Presentation Secondary School	Cannon Street, Waterford
64970U	Presentation Secondary School	Cannon Street, Waterford
64970U	Presentation Secondary School	Cannon Street, Waterford
68078U	Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge	Bothar Kilbarry, Waterford
68078U	Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge	Bothar Kilbarry, Waterford
68078U	Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge	Bothar Kilbarry, Waterford
68078U	Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge	Bothar Kilbarry, Waterford
68078U	Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge	Bothar Kilbarry, Waterford
68078U	Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge	Bothar Kilbarry, Waterford

School Staffing.

492. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science the way, in the absence of a redevelopment scheme at second level, he will proceed with removing the 200 teachers at post-primary level from the system as proposed by him in budget 2009. [5675/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): As part of the modernisation agenda for teachers under the Social Partnership Agreement Towards 2016 it was agreed to address the issue of redeployment of surplus teachers. Discussions on the arrangements that would apply in the case of second level schools commenced under the auspices of the Teachers Conciliation Council in March 2007. It was initially agreed that the discussions would take place in a sequenced manner and that the first issue to be discussed was the arrangements that would apply in the case of school closures. Those arrangements were agreed and have been implemented with effect from the end of the 2006/2007 school year. Discussions have now focused on agreeing arrangements that will apply in the case of teachers that become surplus in situations other than school closure such as changing enrolments or changed course or subject provision at individual school level.

Vocational Education Committees.

493. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he has made an order under section 10 of the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001 to grant vocational education committees the authority to operate two primary schools (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5680/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Draft legislation to put in place a legal framework which will facilitate the involvement of Vocational Education Committees

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

(VECs) in the provision of primary education is currently in preparation in my Department. No order has been made under Section 10 of the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001. Having considered the matter it has been decided that it is proper that the role and responsibility of VECs in relation to the patronage of primary schools should be set forth in primary legislation and brought before the Oireachtas in due course. As the Deputy will be aware, VECs currently operate in the area of further and continuing education. If their remit is to be expanded to encompass primary education it is desirable that this should be done by primary legislation setting out the nature and extent of their duties and voted upon by the Houses of the Oireachtas.

School Accommodation.

494. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools and the number of classroom units within each national and second level school in the Cork South West constituency area that are availing of accommodation under the temporary accommodation scheme; the average rental cost of each unit per annum in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5703/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My Department holds data on temporary accommodation on a county basis rather than a constituency basis. Details held by this Department of the schools in Cork City and County renting prefabricated units are given in the following tabular statement. As the Deputy will see from the details provided, there are 116 schools renting a total of 282 prefab units. The average annual rental cost per prefab unit in Cork City and County area is €14,022. As the Deputy will appreciate the cost per unit will vary depending on the size, type and age of each unit. The Deputy will be aware that demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years, with the appointment of 6,000 extra teachers in the primary sector alone since 2002. It will continue to be necessary for prefabricated accommodation to be provided because competing priorities mean that it will not always be possible to have a permanent accommodation solution in place in a short timeframe.

Prefab Rental — Primary & Post-Primary — Cork

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
00512D	St. Brigid’s Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid’s Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid’s Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid’s Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid’s Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid’s Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
00512D	St. Brigid’s Presentation Convent Primary	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
01272O	Glandore NS	Glandore, Cork	Pre-fab
02114B	Ballygiblin NS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
02114B	Ballygiblin NS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
02452V	St Colman’s NS	Cloyne, Cork	Pre-fab
02452V	St Colman’s NS	Cloyne, Cork	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
04118T	Bishop Ahern NS	Leamlara, Cork	Pre-fab
05477G	Scoil Naomh Seosamh	Laragh, Bandon, Cork	Pre-fab
05477G	Scoil Naomh Seosamh	Laragh, Bandon, Cork	Pre-fab
06342L	Vicarstown Mixed NS	Vicarstown, Cork	Pre-fab
07242M	Cloghroe NS	Cloghroe, Cork	Pre-fab
07242M	Cloghroe NS	Cloghroe, Cork	Pre-fab
07242M	Cloghroe NS	Cloghroe, Cork	Pre-fab
07242M	Cloghroe NS	Cloghroe, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10047I	Macroom Convent NS (St Joseph's)	Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
10523O	Fermoy Adair NS	Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
11496T	Shandrum NS	Newtownshandrum, Charleville, Cork	Pre-fab
11992I	Whitegate Mixed NS	Whitegate, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
11992I	Whitegate Mixed NS	Whitegate, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
11992I	Whitegate Mixed NS	Whitegate, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
11992I	Whitegate Mixed NS	Whitegate, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
12004A	Mallon No1 NS	Shortcastle St, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
12015F	Liscarroll NS	Liscarroll, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
12041G	St. John the Baptist, Midleton NS	Dungourney Road, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
12041G	St. John the Baptist, Midleton NS	Dungourney Road, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
12395S	Rusheen NS	Rusheen, Coachford, Cork	Pre-fab
12446J	Glenahulla NS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
12447L	Baltydaniel NS	Newtwopothouse, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
12456M	Scoil Malaga	Timoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab
12473M	Scoil Mhuire na nGrós (Greenmount Monastery NS)	Green Street, Cork	Pre-fab
12505W	Kilbarry NS	Kilbarry, Macroom, Cork	Pre-fab
13031I	St Joseph's Convent NS	Smith's Rd, Rathluirc, Cork	Pre-fab
13031I	St Joseph's Convent NS	Smith's Rd, Rathluirc, Cork	Pre-fab
13234W	Cloughduv NS	Cloughduv, Crookstown, Cork	Pre-fab
13234W	Cloughduv NS	Cloughduv, Crookstown, Cork	Pre-fab
13375R	Scoil Bhríde	Cros Mhathúna, Bandon, Cork	Pre-fab
13375R	Scoil Bhríde	Cros Mhathúna, Bandon, Cork	Pre-fab
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
13450F	Rushbrooke NS	Rushbrooke, Cobh, Cork	Pre-fab
13483U	SN Atha na Líonta	Mourneabbey, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
13483U	SN Atha na Líonta	Mourneabbey, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
13512B	Scoil Mhuire Lourdes	Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
13728B	Castletownshend NS	Castletownshend, Skibbereen, Cork	Pre-fab
13728B	Castletownshend NS	Castletownshend, Skibbereen, Cork	Pre-fab
13728B	Castletownshend NS	Castletownshend, Skibbereen, Cork	Pre-fab
13779S	Dromahane NS	Dromahane, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
13779S	Dromahane NS	Dromahane, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13889C	Shanbally NS	Shanbally, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
13976U	St Matthias National School	Ballydehob, Cork	Pre-fab
14052V	St Colmans BNS	Percival St, Kanturk, Cork	Pre-fab
14784Q	Scoil Phadraig Naofa	Dunmanway, Cork	Pre-fab
14839P	Clondrohid NS	Macroon, Cork	Pre-fab
15165Q	Ballintotas NS	Ballintotas, Castlemartyr, Cork	Pre-fab
15165Q	Ballintotas NS	Ballintotas, Castlemartyr, Cork	Pre-fab
15380U	Dromagh NS	Dromagh, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15484J	SN an Chroí Naofa	Glounthaune, Cork	Pre-fab
15563F	Lisheen NS	Church Cross, Skibereen, Cork	Pre-fab
15563F	Lisheen NS	Church Cross, Skibereen, Cork	Pre-fab
15594Q	Grange NS	Grange, Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
15594Q	Grange NS	Grange, Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
15594Q	Grange NS	Grange, Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
15597W	St Colman’s BNS	Macroon, Cork	Pre-fab
15597W	St Colman’s BNS	Macroon, Cork	Pre-fab
15646J	Coomhala NS	Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
15701O	Bartlemy NS	Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
15781P	Ballintemple NS	Crab Lane, Ballintemple, Cork	Pre-fab
15792U	SN Naomh Micheál	Upper Glanmire, White’s Cross, Cork	Pre-fab
16087E	Kealkil NS	Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
16087E	Kealkil NS	Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
16271U	Watergrasshill NS	Watergrasshill, Cork	Pre-fab
16271U	Watergrasshill NS	Watergrasshill, Cork	Pre-fab
16271U	Watergrasshill NS	Watergrasshill, Cork	Pre-fab
16339F	St Joseph’s NS	The Mardyke, Cork	Pre-fab
16339F	St Joseph’s NS	The Mardyke, Cork	Pre-fab
16684W	Bunscoil na mBraithre Criostai	Middleton, Cork	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16746S	Ballygarvan NS	Ballygarvan, Cork	Pre-fab
16940O	Dunderrow NS	Dunderrow, Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
16940O	Dunderrow NS	Dunderrow, Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
16945B	Lisgriffin NS	Lisgriffin, Buttevant, Cork	Pre-fab
17011W	St Mochomóg's NS	Cappabue, Kealkill, Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
17103E	Scoil Chlochair Mhuire	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
17103E	Scoil Chlochair Mhuire	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
17112F	Ballyhea NS	Ballyhea, Charleville, Cork	Pre-fab
17112F	Ballyhea NS	Ballyhea, Charleville, Cork	Pre-fab
17152R	Knockskeagh NS	Clonakilty, Cork	Pre-fab
17168J	SN Inis Eoghain	Innishannon, Cork	Pre-fab
17251T	Oven's NS	Ovens, Cork	Pre-fab
17281F	Togher NS	Dunmanway, Cork	Pre-fab
17297U	St Fergal's NS	Killeagh, Cork	Pre-fab
17297U	St Fergal's NS	Killeagh, Cork	Pre-fab
17360B	SN Mhuire	Rathpeacon, Mallow Rd, Cork	Pre-fab
17360B	SN Mhuire	Rathpeacon, Mallow Rd, Cork	Pre-fab
17533G	Rahan NS	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17533G	Rahan NS	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17533G	Rahan NS	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17533G	Rahan NS	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17600S	Scartleigh NS	Saleen, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
17600S	Scartleigh NS	Saleen, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
17600S	Scartleigh NS	Saleen, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
17600S	Scartleigh NS	Saleen, Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609n	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17609N	Scoil Bhríde	Rathcormac, Cork	Pre-fab
17639W	CBS PS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
17639W	CBS PS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
17639W	CBS PS	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
17667E	Whitechurch NS	Whitechurch, Cork	Pre-fab
17667E	Whitechurch NS	Whitechurch, Cork	Pre-fab
17765E	Reenascreena NS	Reenascreena, Rosscarbery, Cork	Pre-fab
17765E	Reenascreena NS	Reenascreena, Rosscarbery, Cork	Pre-fab
17823P	Glantane NS	Glantane, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17921P	Moing na Míol	Clashbee, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
17921P	Moing na Míol	Clashbee, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
17972J	Killmurphy NS	Ballymichael, Lissarda, Cork	Pre-fab
17993R	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (B) (Glasheen BNS)	School Avenue, Glasheen, Cork	Pre-fab
17993R	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (B) (Glasheen BNS)	School Avenue, Glasheen, Cork	Pre-fab
17993R	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smál (B) (Glasheen BNS)	School Avenue, Glasheen, Cork	Pre-fab
18000W	Scoil Mhuire Naofa	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
18000W	Scoil Mhuire Naofa	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
18000W	Scoil Mhuire Naofa	Carrigtwohill, Cork	Pre-fab
18100D	Lissagriffin NS	Gouleen, Skibbereen, Cork	Pre-fab
18128C	Scoil Mhuire NS	Kiskeam, Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
18217B	Scoil Padre Pio	Churchfield, Cork	Pre-fab
18217B	Scoil Padre Pio	Churchfield, Cork	Pre-fab
18246I	Ballymoney NS	Ballineen, Cork	Pre-fab
18279A	Carrigaline No. 3 NS	Waterpark, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18279A	Carrigaline No. 3 NS	Waterpark, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18377A	St Joseph’s NS	Oliver Plunkett Hill, Fermoy, Cork	Pre-fab
18428O	Bailenóra NS	Bailenóra, Tobar an Iarla, Cork	Pre-fab
18428O	Bailenóra NS	Bailenóra, Tobar an Iarla, Cork	Pre-fab
18428O	Bailenóra NS	Bailenóra, Tobar an Iarla, Cork	Pre-fab
18468D	St Mary’s NS	Castledonovan, Drimoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
18483W	School of the Divine Child	Lavanagh Centre, Ballintemple, Cork	Pre-fab
18483W	School of the Divine Child	Lavanagh Centre, Ballintemple, Cork	Pre-fab
18497K	Scoil Inse Ratha	Little Island, Cork	Pre-fab
18497K	Scoil Inse Ratha	Little Island, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18535P	St John’s GNS	Ballea Rd, Carrigaline, Cork	Pre-fab
18713N	SN Fionán Reanna	Belgooly, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
18829J	SN Chobh Chionn tSaile	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
19256Q	Scoil Ghobnatan	Mallow, Cork	Pre-fab
19351K	Cill Chriodain	Kilcredan, Ladysbridge, Cork	Pre-fab
19351K	Cill Chriodain	Kilcredan, Ladysbridge, Cork	Pre-fab
19351K	Cill Chriodain	Kilcredan, Ladysbridge, Cork	Pre-fab
19351K	Cill Chriodain	Kilcredan, Ladysbridge, Cork	Pre-fab
19381T	Rathmore NS	Baltimore, Skibereen, Cork	Pre-fab
19404F	Scoil Mhuire SN	Ballyhooly, Cork	Pre-fab
19404F	Scoil Mhuire SN	Ballyhooly, Cork	Pre-fab
19415K	Scoil an Athar Tadhg	Carraig na bhFear, Cork	Pre-fab
19415K	Scoil an Athar Tadhg	Carraig na bhFear, Cork	Pre-fab

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
19415K	Scoil an Athar Tadhg	Carraig na bhFear, Cork	Pre-fab
19557H	Caheragh NS	Caheragh, Drimoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
19637F	Scoil Fhionnbarra	Béal Athan Ghaorthaidh, Cork	Pre-fab
19637F	Scoil Fhionnbarra	Béal Athan Ghaorthaidh, Cork	Pre-fab
19760E	Scoil Triest	Lota, Glanmire, Cork	Pre-fab
19760E	Scoil Triest	Lota, Glanmire, Cork	Pre-fab
19760E	Scoil Triest	Lota, Glanmire, Cork	Pre-fab
19761G	St Peter's NS	Dungourney, Cork	Pre-fab
19801P	Drimoleague Junior School	Drimoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
19801P	Drimoleague Junior School	Drimoleague, Cork	Pre-fab
19839R	GS Uí Riordain	Cul Rua, Baile an Chollaigh, Cork	Pre-fab
19839R	GS Uí Riordain	Cul Rua, Baile an Chollaigh, Cork	Pre-fab
19839R	GS Uí Ríordáin	Cúl Rua, Baile an Chollaigh, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19881Q	GS Charraig Uí Leighin	Carraig Uí Leighin, Cork	Pre-fab
19906G	Cork School Project NS	Grattan St, Cork	Pre-fab
19978I	Maulatrahane Central NS	Leas, Skibereen, Cork	Pre-fab
19993E	GS an Ghoirt Alainn	Aibhinne Murmont, Gort Alainn, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20006A	GS Chloch na gCoillte	Scartagh, Cloch na gCoillte, Cork	Pre-fab
20025E	GS Droichead na Banndan	Palún CLG, Droichead na Banndan, Cork	Pre-fab
20025E	GS Droichead na Banndan	Palún CLG, Droichead na Banndan, Cork	Pre-fab
20025E	GS Droichead na Banndan	Palún CLG, Droichead na Banndan, Cork	Pre-fab
20025E	GS Droichead na Banndan	Palún CLG, Droichead na Banndan, Cork	Pre-fab
20049S	Ringaskiddy Lower Harbour NS	Loughbeg, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
20049S	Ringaskiddy Lower Harbour NS	Loughbeg, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
20049S	Ringaskiddy Lower Harbour NS	Loughbeg, Ringaskiddy, Cork	Pre-fab
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

Roll No.	Name	Address	Type
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab
20088F	Scoil Mhuire NS	Meenvane, Schull, Cork	Pre-fab
20105C	Star of the Sea	Passage West, Cork	Pre-fab
20105C	Star of the Sea	Passage West, Cork	Pre-fab
20105C	Star of the Sea	Passage West, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20106E	Scoil Niocláis	Frankfield Grange, Cork, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20107G	Gaelscoil Mhainistir na Corann	Ionad an Phobail, Mainistir na Corann, Cork	Pre-fab
20222G	Scoil Chuil-Aodha/Barr dInse	Ciul-Aosha, Maghcromtha, Cork	Pre-fab
20265B	Gaelscoil Chionn tSaile	Cappagh, Cionn tSaile, Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
20265B	Gaelscoil Chionn tSaile	Cappagh, Cionn tSaile, Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab
20335T	Rochestown NS	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
20335T	Rochestown NS	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
20335T	Rochestown NS	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
20336V	Midleton Educate Together NS	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
20336V	Midleton Educate Together NS	Midleton, Cork	Pre-fab
62170B	Sacred Heart Sec School	Clonakilty, Cork	Pre-fab
62421A	Presentation Sec School	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
62421A	Presentation Sec School	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
62421A	Presentation Sec School	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
62421A	Presentation Sec School	Mitchelstown, Cork	Pre-fab
62460K	St Francis College	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
62460K	St Francis College	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
62460K	St Francis College	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
62460K	St Francis College	Rochestown, Cork	Pre-fab
62730N	St Patricks College	Gardiners Hill, Cork	Pre-fab
70930R	St Goban’s College	Bantry, Cork	Pre-fab
91499E	Kinsale Community School	Kinsale, Cork	Pre-fab

Departmental Expenditure.

495. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding Parliamentary Question No. 267 of 4 February 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5716/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The information requested by the Deputy follows:

Date	Press Conference/ Launch	Location	Cost
<i>2007</i>			
26/01/2007	Press Briefing on Education Element of NDP	Gleneagles Hotel, Killarney	No Cost to Department
27/02/2007	Launch of New Internet Safety Initiatives	DES Marlborough Street	***
06/03/2007	Launch of Skills Strategy Report	Government Press Centre	***
13/03/2007	Launch of DES Evaluation of Relationships and Sexual Education	DES Marlborough Street	***
13/03/2007	Launch of New Internet Safety Initiatives	DES Marlborough Street	***
13/03/2007	Launch of Collaborative Project between ICEP and St Patricks College	Croke Park Conference Centre	No Cost to Department
28/03/2007	Launch of Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers	Davenport Hotel, Dublin	No Cost to Department
24/04/2007	Launch of Streetwise: Road Safety Programme	Dublin School	No Cost to Department
03/07/2007	Discussions with Leaving Certificate Students regarding State Exam Timetabling	DES Marlborough Street	***
05/09/2007	Launch of the Annual Report of the Schools's Business Partnership	DES Marlborough Street	***
07/11/2007	Launch of OECD International Conference 'Improving School Leadership'	Guinness Storehouse, Dublin	No Cost to Department
26/11/2007	Launch of WebWheel Website	DES Marlborough Street	***
28/11/2007	Launch of Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum	Harold Cross School	Costs covered by NCCA
04/12/2007	Launch of the PISA Results for Ireland	DES Marlborough Street	***
06/12/2007	Post Budget Briefing of the Education Partners	DES Marlborough Street	***
06/12/2007	Post Budget Briefing of the Media	Government Press Centre	***
<i>2008</i>			
18/01/2008	Launching Active School Awards	St.Clares NS Harolds Cross	No Cost to Department
29/01/2008	Launch of DVD Office of President	Holy Faith Sch Glasnevin	No Cost to Department
15/04/2008	Opening Austistic Disorders Conference Croke Park	Croke Park Conference Centre	€54,252.72 DES
29/04/2008	Launch of Transition Year Road Safety Programme	Government Press Centre	***
01/07/2008	Discussions with Leaving Cert Students Re Leaving Cert 2008	DES Marlborough Street	***
09/07/2008	Launching HEA National Access Plan	DES Marlborough Street	***
10/07/2008	Launch of ICT Strategy Review Group & ICT in Schools	DES Marlborough Street	€141.57 DES
23/09/2008	Launch of Annual Report of Schools Business Partnership	DES Marlborough Street	***
03/10/2008	Launch of Scoilnet Maps	Silversprings Hotel, Cork	No Cost to Department
03/10/2008	Launch of Looking at Geography	Cork	€733.10
10/10/2008	Launch of Project Maths	Scoil Mhuire, Kanturk	No Cost to Department

***Tea/Coffee costs may have been incurred.

Schools Building Projects.

496. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Science when he will make a capital allocation available for the building of a new school (details supplied) in County Cork; when the school authorities, including the board of management and principal will be informed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5728/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The project to which the Deputy refers involves the acquisition of additional land. The progression of the project, from site acquisition and initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multiannual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the further progression of the project at this time.

Computerisation Programme.

497. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Science further to Parliamentary Question No. 295 of 28 January 2009, if he will confirm whether the Mayo Education Centre has the services of a communication technology advisor for 2009. [5729/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The position regarding the ICT Advisory Service operating from the regional Education Centres is that following the Value for Money Review of the ICT Support Service for Schools undertaken by my Department, the ICT Advisor posts have not been renewed. Accordingly, there is no ICT Advisor post attached to Mayo Education Centre. This decision reflects the view that each school must plan and execute its own policy for ICT integration across the curriculum and that the resources utilised by the ICT Advisory Service would be better employed focussing supports for ICT leadership and change within each school. The National Centre for Technology in Education is working closely with the support services supported by my Department and the role of the school’s ICT co-ordinating teacher, with the support of the school principal, is being prioritised as central in the provision of ongoing ICT support and advice to teachers. The NCTE continues to provide advice and support to schools on the integration of ICT into teaching and learning and to provide a range of ICT continuing professional development courses for teachers, through the Education Centres.

Site Acquisitions.

498. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Education and Science further to Parliamentary Question No. 443 of 3 February 2009, if there is a delay in the transfer of the site of a school (details supplied) in County Galway; if so, the reason for same; and the steps he is taking to expedite the matter. [5747/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): As the Deputy will be aware, my Department recently wrote to City of Galway VEC instructing them to proceed with negotiations regarding the acquisition of a site for the school in question. I am advised that the VEC are progressing the matter.

Schools Building Projects.

499. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Science when he will make available a capital allocation for the redevelopment of a school (details supplied) in

County Cork; when the school authorities, including the board of management and principal will be informed; the length of time the construction period will last; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5755/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The School to which the Deputy refers applied for a large scale extension project. The long term accommodation needs of the school have been determined as an 8 classroom school. The progression of all large scale building projects, including this project, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multiannual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project at this time.

500. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Science his views, in view of his recent visit to the area, on whether the conditions at a school (details supplied) in Dublin 22 are suitable for children; if he will ensure the building of a proper school for these children will proceed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5766/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): As the Deputy will be aware, it is my Department’s intention to provide the school in question with a new building. In this regard, agreement has been reached to provide the new building on a V.E.C. owned site. As the Deputy will also be aware, last week, I announced details of 43 major building projects to proceed to tender and construction and 25 high priority projects to commence architectural planning. The project to which the Deputy refers was not included in this announcement for the commencement of architectural planning. Therefore, it is unlikely that it will be progressed in 2009. The progression of all large scale building projects, including the project in question, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multiannual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project at this time.

501. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Education and Science the progress made in building a permanent school for a school (details supplied) in Dublin 7; if he will replace the four worst prefabs in the meantime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5767/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The Office of Public Works (OPW) which acts on behalf of my Department in relation to site acquisitions generally had been requested to source a greenfield site for the school to which the Deputy refers. On foot of advertising, no proposals were received for a greenfield site in the area concerned. The OPW was then requested by my Department to look into the possibility of building a permanent school on the existing temporary site which is in the ownership of the local authority but leased to a sporting organisation. To pursue this proposal, meetings have taken place between my Department and the relevant local authority on the potential availability of the site and, last year, my Department wrote to the local authority with a proposal suggesting that a lease arrangement be put in place.

In January this year, officials from my Department again met with the local authority and representatives of the sporting organisation involved to further the Department’s request. My Department has confirmed its intention, as sought by the local authority, to enter into negotiations in relation to the terms of a lease for the lands needed. With regard to the replacement

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of temporary accommodation as an interim measure, at the end of last year, the school authority was advised to complete the appropriate application form in this regard. Consideration will be given to this matter when the application is received.

Smarter Travel Policy.

502. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Science his Department’s work place travel plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5848/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My Department is aware of, and supports, the Government’s Smarter Travel Policy, launched by the Minister for Transport on 5 February, which recognises the valuable role that workplace travel planning can play in making commuting travel patterns more sustainable.

The Deputy may be interested to know that my Department operates a Travel Pass Scheme which greatly enhances the benefits to employees of using public transport. In 2009, to date, 105 members of staff have availed of the Travel Pass Scheme.

Special Educational Needs.

503. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science the resources being made available to a person (details supplied) in County Cork in second level education; and if these resources will be improved. [5862/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): As the Deputy will be aware, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOS), for allocating resource teachers and special needs assistants to schools to support children with special needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support. I have arranged for the details supplied by the Deputy to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply.

All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child’s special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie

Question No. 504 answered with Question No. 483.

School Staffing.

505. **Deputy Seán Ardagh** asked the Minister for Education and Science the effect the recent budgetary adjustments have had on the teaching levels at a school (details supplied) in Dublin 12; the action taken to minimise their effects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5877/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The 2009 Budget required difficult choices to be made across all areas of public expenditure. These decisions were made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run. In this respect Education, while protected to a much greater extent than most other areas of public expenditure, could not be totally spared. The various impacts at school level were included in the Budget day announcements. Even with the budget measures in place there will still be a significantly increased borrowing requirement in 2009.

The staffing schedule for the 2009/2010 school year, Primary Circular 0002/2009, has been published on my Department's website at www.education.ie and my officials have written to all schools to notify them in this regard. The number of mainstream class teachers appropriate to a school for 2009/10 school year is determined by reference to the school's valid enrolment on 30 September, 2008. The schedule is a transparent and clear way of ensuring that schools are treated consistently and fairly and know where they stand.

The staffing schedule also makes provision for schools that are projecting significantly increased enrolments for September 2009 through the allocation of what are known as "developing posts". These classroom teaching posts are allocated to schools based on projected enrolments for September 2009 rather than on past enrolments for September 2008 which is the case for most schools. This allocation process for developing posts takes place during the Spring and Summer period when schools apply to the Department based on their projected enrolments for September 2009. The developing posts are allocated on a provisional basis initially and are confirmed following receipt from the school of actual enrolments in September 2009.

The staffing allocation to schools will also be impacted by any changes in the levels of support teachers such as for language support, special needs and social inclusion. The allocation process for some of these posts is currently underway. Language support posts are allocated during the Spring/Summer period on a provisional basis initially and are confirmed following receipt from the schools in September 2009 of actual enrolments of pupils requiring language support.

The allocation process includes appellate mechanisms under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. The final allocation to a school is also a function of the operation of the redeployment panels which provide for the retention of a teacher in an existing school if a new post is not available within the agreed terms of the scheme.

At this time the priority for my Department within the resources available to it is to carry out those processes in a timely manner. Diverting resources in order to create a staffing profile for the individual school as requested by the Deputy could not be justified and would in fact impede the process.

I have already put it on record that I have no difficulty in setting out for this House or for the public generally what the final impact is on the overall changes in aggregate teacher numbers in schools for the 2009/10 school year. I will set out the final position when the allocation processes have been completed.

Clár Tógála Scoileanna.

506. D'fhiafraigh Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh den Aire Oideachais agus Eolaíochta cén fáth nach bhfuil foirgneamh cuí ag Gaelscoil na Camóige, Cluain Dolcáin, Baile Átha Cliath, ar thug tú cuairt uirthi le déanaí, agus iad tar éis a bheith ag feitheamh le níos mó ná 15 bliana air. [5889/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): Mar is eol, gan dabht, don Teachta, tá sé ar intinn ag mo Roinnse foirgneamh nua a chur ar fáil don scoil atá i gceist. I dtaca leis seo, táthar tar éis teacht ar chomhaontú go soláthrófar an foirgneamh nua ar shuíomh a bhaineann leis an CGO.

Mar is eol chomh maith don Teachta, gan dabht, d'fhógair mé sonraí an tseachtain seo caite faoi 43 thionscadail mhóra caipitil a bheidh ag dul ar aghaidh chun tairisceana agus tógála agus 25 tionscadail ardtosaíochta a bheidh ag dul ar aghaidh chun pleanála ailtireachta.

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Ní raibh an tionscadal dá dtagraíonn an Teachta san áireamh sa bhfógra seo faoi thosú na pleanála ailtireachta. Dá bhrí sin, ní dócha go rachfar ar aghaidh leis i 2009.

Machnófar dul chun cinn gach uile tionscadal tógála ar scála mór, an tionscadal atá i gceist anseo san áireamh, ón gcéim dearaidh tosaigh go dtí céim na tógála, i gcomhthéacs Chlár Ilbhliantúil Tógála agus Athnuachana Scoile mo Roinne. I bhfianaise na n-éileamh iomaíocha atá á ndéanamh ar bhuiséad caipitil na Roinne faoi láthair, áfach, ní féidir fráma ama táscach a lua do chur ar aghaidh an tionscadail ag an am seo.

Schools Building Projects.

507. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools and the number of classroom units within each school in the Louth constituency area that are availing of accommodation under the temporary accommodation scheme; the average rental cost of each unit per annum in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5896/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Details of the schools in Co. Louth renting temporary accommodation are given in the attached tabular statement. The average annual rental cost per unit is €13,160. From the information provided the Deputy will see that there were a total of 77 prefabricated units rented by 31 schools.

The Deputy will be aware that demand for additional accommodation in schools has risen significantly over the last number of years, with the appointment of 6,000 extra teachers in the primary sector alone since 2002. It will continue to be necessary for prefabricated accommodation to be provided because competing priorities mean that it will not always be possible to have a permanent accommodation solution in place in a short time-frame.

Rented Prefabricated Accommodation — Louth

Roll No.	Name	Address
01434O	St Colmcilles NS	Tullydonnell, Togher
01434O	St Colmcilles NS	Tullydonnell, Togher, Louth
01554B	Ballapousta NS	Smarmore, Drogheda, Louth
01554B	Ballapousta NS	Smarmore, Drogheda, Louth
01554B	Ballapousta NS	Smarmore, Drogheda, Louth
13670T	Dulargy NS	Revensdale, Dundalk, Louth
14069P	Dun Dealgan NS	Jocelyn Street, Dundalk, Louth
14207B	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal	Kilsaran, Castlebrlillingham, Louth
14252G	Callystown National School	Clogherhead, Louth
14252G	Callystown National School	Clogherhead, Louth
15259C	St Malachys Girls Sch	Anne St., Dundalk, Louth
15259C	St Malachys Girls Sch	Anne St., Dundalk, Louth
15260K	St Malachys infant sch	Anne St., Dundalk, Louth
15260K	St Malachys infant sch	Anne St., Dundalk, Louth
15260K	St Malachys infant sch	Anne St., Dundalk, Louth
16208N	Termonfeckin Mixed NS	Termonfeckin, Drogheda, Louth
17059E	Iosaif na mBraithre	Geata an Domhnaigh, Droich, Louth
17195M	CBS Primary Dundalk	Chapel St., Dundalk, Louth
17195M	CBS Primary Dundalk	Chapel St., Dundalk, Louth

Roll No.	Name	Address
17195M	CBS Primary Dundalk	Chapel St., Dundalk, Louth
17726R	Tullyallen NS	Tullyallen, Drogheda, Louth
17726R	Tullyallen NS	Tullyallen, Drogheda, Louth
17726R	Tullyallen NS	Tullyallen, Drogheda, Louth
17862C	Realt na Mara Sois	Mill Street, Dundalk, Louth
17949D	SN Padraig Naofa	Bothar Brugha, Drogheda, Louth
17965M	SN Bhríde	Ardaghy, Omeath, Louth
18069M	St Josephs NS	Louth
18069M	St Josephs NS	Louth
18069M	St Josephs NS	Louth
18098T	Scoil N Bhríde C	Bothar Brugha, Drogheda, Louth
18098T	Scoil N Bhríde C	Bothar Brugha, Drogheda, Louth
18148I	Scoil Bhríde Lann Leire	Ardee Rd., Dunleer, Louth
18148I	Scoil Bhríde Lann Leire	Ardee Rd., Dunleer, Louth
18347O	SN San Nicolas	Nicholas Street, Dundalk, Louth
18504E	St Malachys Boys	Anne St., Dundalk, Louth
18504E	St Malachys Boys	Anne St., Dundalk, Louth
18635T	St Buite's NS	Tenure, Dunleer, Louth
18635T	St Buite's NS	Tenure, Dunleer, Louth
19215C	SN Ard Mhuire	Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Louth
19215C	SN Ard Mhuire	Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Louth
19215C	SN Ard Mhuire	Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Louth
19215C	SN Ard Mhuire	Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Louth
19215C	SN Ard Mhuire	Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Louth
19215C	SN Ard Mhuire	Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Louth
19223B	SN Padraig Naofa	Monasterboice, Drogheda, Louth
19223B	SN Padraig Naofa	Monasterboice, Drogheda, Louth
19479N	Rathmullen NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Louth
19479N	Rathmullen NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Louth
19479N	Rathmullen NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Louth
19479N	Rathmullen NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Louth
19479N	Rathmullen NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Louth
19479N	Rathmullen NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Louth
19673J	St Josephs NS	Avenue Rd., Dundalk, Louth
19678T	St Pauls Senior NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Louth
19678T	St Pauls Senior NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Louth
19678T	St Pauls Senior NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Louth
19892V	Gaelscoil Dhun Dealgan	Muirtheimhne Mor, Dun Dealgan, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth

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Roll No.	Name	Address
20146Q	Le Cheile Educate Together NS	Mornington Rd., Drogheda, Louth
20171P	Ardee Educate Together NS	Dundalk Rd., Ardee, Louth
20171P	Ardee Educate Together NS	Dundalk Rd., Ardee, Louth
20259G	St Francis NS	Blackrock, Louth
20259G	St Francis NS	Blackrock, Louth
63900R	St Vincents Secondary School	Seatown Place, Dundalk, Louth

508. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding a proposed extension to a school (details supplied) in County Cork. [6025/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The building project for the school to which the Deputy refers is at an early stage of architectural planning.

The progression of all large-scale building projects, including this project, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the further progression of the project at this time.

Special Educational Needs.

509. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of special needs teachers in County Mayo who will lose their jobs as result of his announcement in February 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6035/09]

510. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools in County Mayo that will be affected by his announcement of the withdrawal of special needs teachers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6036/09]

511. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will withdraw the cuts for children with special needs; and the amount of money being saved by these cuts. [6065/09]

520. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools in Dublin 8 which will be affected by the newly announced cuts to special needs classes; the cuts that will be imposed on each of these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6129/09]

521. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools in Dublin 10 which will be affected by the newly announced cuts to special needs classes; the cuts that will be imposed on each of these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6130/09]

522. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools in Dublin 12 which will be affected by the newly announced cuts to special needs classes; the cuts that will be imposed on each of these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6131/09]

523. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools in Dublin 20 which will be affected by the newly announced cuts to special needs classes; the

cuts that will be imposed on each of these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6132/09]

524. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools in Dublin 6W which will be affected by the newly announced cuts to special needs classes; the cuts that will be imposed on each of these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6133/09]

531. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science the south Tipperary schools that will be impacted by the decision to cut special teacher support for children with mild general learning disabilities; the number of staff across south Tipperary which will be lost as a result of this decision; and the number of children this will impact on in south Tipperary. [6339/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 509 to 511, inclusive, 520 to 524, inclusive, and 531 together.

I wish to advise the deputies that all primary schools have been allocated additional teaching resources to enable them support pupils with high incidence special educational needs including mild general learning disability (MGLD). All primary schools were given these additional teaching resources under the General Allocation Model of learning support/resource teaching introduced in 2005. Schools can decide how best to use this allocation based on the needs of the pupils. Most pupils with a MGLD are included in ordinary classes with their peers and are supported by their class teacher. The curriculum is flexible so that teachers can cater for the needs of children of different abilities.

The Deputies will be aware that allocations to schools typically increase or decrease depending on pupil enrolment. In the case of classes for MGLD the normal pupil teacher ratio that applies is 11:1. My Department however allows for a small reduction in this number and permits schools to retain a teaching post where it has a minimum of 9 pupils in the class. In the schools in question, the number of pupils dropped below this minimum. These schools therefore are no longer entitled to the teaching posts in these classes.

In 2005 when the General Allocation Model was introduced, schools with additional teachers in classes for MGLD were allowed to retain the teachers for these classes. Effectively, these schools received a double allocation. The number of these special classes has decreased over the years and schools have integrated the children into age-appropriate mainstream classes.

All of the other primary schools in the country who do not have classes for children with MGLD cater for these pupils from within the General Allocation Model.

It is not possible to give a precise cost of the posts concerned due to the varying salary costs of the teachers in question. However, it is estimated to be in the region of €6.8m.

The schools in question as requested by the Deputies are as follows:

School	Address
Scoil Iosa,	Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo
Mater Dei Primary School,	Basin Lane, James St, Dublin 8
Goldenbridge Convent,	Goldenbridge, Inchicore , Dublin 8*
Presentation Primary School	Blackpitts, Dublin 8*
St. Catherine’s West NS,	Donore Ave, South Circular rd, Dublin 8
S N Muire Gan Smal B,	Inchicore, Dublin 8*
Sancta Maria C B S,	Synge St, Dublin 8

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School	Address
Scoil na mBrathar,	Francis St, Dublin 8
Scoil Seamus C B S,	James St, Dublin 8
St. Audoens NS,	Cook Street, Dublin 8
Scoil Treasa Naofa,	Petrie Road, Donroe Avenue, Dublin 8
SN Louise de Marillac C,	Drumfin Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
SN Louise de Marillac,	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
SN Banrion na Naingéal 1,	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10*
Bainrion na N-Aingal 2,	Ballyfermot Upper, Dublin 10*
St. Gabriels NS,	Dominican Convent, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
St. Michaels NS,	Dominican Convent, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
St. Raphaels NS,	Dominican Convent, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Scoil Iosagain/Mhuire,	Mount La Salle, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Scoil Mhuire/Seosamh,	Mount La Salle, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Scoil Mhuire Ogh 1,	Loreto College, Crumlin Rd, Dublin 12
Muiré na Dea Coirle G,	Mourne Rd, Drimnagh, Dublin 12
Muiré na Dea Coirle INF,	Mourne Rd, Drimnagh, Dublin 12
Muiré Og 2 Loreto Con,	Crumlin Rd, Dublin 12*
St Peters,	Limekiln Rd, Greenhills, Dublin 12
St Pauls G N S,	Greenhills, Kimmage West, Dublin 12
Lady of Good Counsel NS,	Mourne Rd, Drimnagh, Dublin 12

*Schools due an additional post because of their disadvantaged categorisation.

No schools in South Tipperary, Dublin 6W and Dublin 20 are affected by my Department’s notification.

Schools Building Projects.

512. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Education and Science his plans to provide permanent accommodation in respect of a school (detail supplied) in County Kildare, currently housed in temporary accommodation; if a decision in respect of this school’s accommodation needs is imminent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6076/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I am pleased to advise that the school to which the Deputy refers has been included in my recent announcement of building projects that will progress to construction in 2009.

Officials of my Department will be in contact with the school authorities to advise on the most appropriate preparation schedule applicable on this project.

Schools Recognition.

513. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Education and Science the circumstances in which a school (details supplied) in County Kildare operating under temporary recognition from his Department may achieve full or permanent recognition; if full recognition of this school is imminent; if there are formal criteria within his Department outlining the number of students required to be enrolled in a school pending full recognition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6077/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My Department is guided by a Commission on School Accommodation (CSA) Report produced in 2004 on the “Criteria and Procedures for establishing and maintaining provision through the medium of Irish in second

level schools”. The report recommends that for an Irish Medium school to be recognised, it must have:

- An initial first year projected enrolment of 30 pupils;
- A projected average first year enrolment of 40 pupils over six years;
- A projected total enrolment of 250-300, six years after opening;
- Suitable accommodation; and
- Compliance with Section 10 of the Education Act, 1998

The Department has received an application for permanent recognition from the school to which the Deputy refers. The application is currently being considered and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority in due course.

School Transport.

514. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Science if a request for a change in school transport will be considered by his Department in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6078/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): My Department has consulted with Bus Éireann which operates the school transport service and has been advised that the existing service caters for the transport needs of the pupil referred to by the Deputy, in the details supplied.

If the parent wishes to submit a report on the background to this matter, my Department will be pleased to have it further investigated.

Schools Refurbishment.

515. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will sanction the appropriate funding required by a school (details supplied) in County Limerick. [6087/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I am please to inform the Deputy that the application from the school in question for emergency works funding in respect of windows and roof has been approved. The school management has been informed of the position.

Human Rights Issues.

516. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Science if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the UN General Assembly proclaimed the year commencing 10 December 2008 as the International Year of Human Rights Learning; his plans or initiatives to mark this occasion through supporting the development of human rights education here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6089/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I welcome the declaration by the United Nations of 2009 as the year of International Human Rights Learning. Human rights and active citizenship are issues which are fundamental principles which are at the heart of the curriculum at all levels.

In the primary curriculum, Human Rights is reflected in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), which plays an important role in developing an understanding of the democratic way of life and individual and group rights and responsibilities and provides opportunities for children to learn about, and actively participate in, the various communities to which they

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belong and to develop a sense of a shared commitment. Within the Secondary Curriculum, human rights are reflected in History Geography, Religious Education, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). CSPE is a Junior Certificate course in Active Citizenship, based on Human Rights and Social Responsibilities. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child are key documents which underpin this course.

My Department, through the Second Level Support Service (SLSS) has put in place a support service for CSPE. During 2008, in association with Amnesty International and the City of Dublin VEC Curriculum Development Unit, the CSPE support service produced and distributed “Celebrating the Universal Declaration on Human Rights”. The 2009 program of activities of the CSPE support service will include a focus on Human Rights Learning and will link with non-governmental organisations in a campaign focusing on displaced peoples. This campaign will also draw attention to other existing human rights resources.

Schools Building Projects.

517. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding an application for an extension to a school (details supplied) in County Galway; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that planning permission has been granted, and that there are accommodation problems at this school; when the necessary funding will be available to the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6114/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The project to which the Deputy refers is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning. The progression of all large scale building projects, including this project, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project at this time.

Departmental Expenditure.

518. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Science if his attention has been drawn to the impact which the Budget 2009 cuts will have on a school (details supplied) in County Westmeath; the steps he is taking to address this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6120/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The 2009 Budget required difficult choices to be made across all areas of public expenditure. These decisions were made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run. In this respect Education while protected to a much greater extent than most other areas of public expenditure could not be totally spared. The various impacts at school level were included in the Budget day announcements. Even with the Budget measures in place there will still be a significantly increased borrowing requirement in 2009. My Department is currently finalising the position of individual schools and Vocational Education Committees (VECs) in relation to their staffing and grant allocations.

The preparatory work for this has commenced with the processing of enrolment data that has been received from schools. The staffing allocation processes includes appellate mechanisms under which schools and VECs can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. In addition to the mainstream classroom teachers my Department also allocates teaching resources to schools for special needs and language support. The final allocation to a school/VEC is also a function of the operation of the redeployment panels which provide

for the retention of a teacher in an existing school if a new post is not available within the agreed terms of the scheme.

I have no difficulty in setting out for this House or for the public generally the overall changes on aggregate teacher numbers or on grant levels in schools/VECs for the 2009/10 school year. I will do this when the allocation processes have been completed. Furthermore the staffing schedule will be published and it is a transparent and clear way of ensuring that schools are treated consistently and fairly and know where they stand.

Special Educational Needs.

519. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Science if there is assistance or help available from her Department or elsewhere to assist a person (details supplied); the locations at which help might be available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6122/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): In addition to the maintenance grant schemes, other supports are available for students who may be marginally over the income limits. The Student Assistance Fund is designed to assist students who, having commenced a third-level course, experience financial hardship that may render them unable to continue their third-level studies. Applications for funding should be made by the individual student to the Access/Disability Officer in their Institution. The fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis. In addition, the Millennium Partnership Fund has been in operation since 2000. It provides support to students from disadvantaged areas with a view to improving participation and retention in further or higher education. Students may contact their local Area Partnership Companies and Community Partnerships for assistance as they have the responsibility of managing the fund locally. These Funds are administered on behalf of my Department by the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education in the Higher Education Authority and are funded by the Government under the National Development Plan 2007-2013. My Department is currently working with the National Access Office and Pobal in relation to the re-orientation of the Millennium Partnership Fund to support the development of a whole-community approach to equity of access to higher education. In this regard, a consultation process with community partnerships and other stakeholders is currently under way.

Questions Nos. 520 to 524, inclusive, answered with Question No. 509.

Schools Building Projects.

525. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Science if funding is allocated for the provision of a new school at a location (details supplied) in County Westmeath; the steps that have been taken to date to provide the new school to accommodate 32 teachers and a number of students; if discussions have taken place with the local authority to advance this school project; the reason there has been no progress made to date by all of the relevant parties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6138/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The Deputy will be aware that I recently announced 43 major building projects to proceed to tender and construction. The project to which the Deputy refers was not included in this announcement therefore, it is unlikely that this project will be progressed to construction in 2009. The progression of all large scale building projects, including the school to which the Deputy refers, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current

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competing demands on the capital budget of my Department it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project for this school at this time.

526. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Education and Science the stage at which projects at schools (details supplied) are at; if there is scope to move these projects further in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [6149/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The proposed building project for the schools to which the Deputy refers is currently awaiting the appointment of a Design Team. As the Deputy will be aware, last week, I announced details of 43 major building projects to proceed to tender and construction and 25 high priority projects to commence architectural planning.

The projects to which the Deputy refers was not included in this announcement. Therefore, it is unlikely that they will be progressed in 2009. The progression of all large scale building projects, including the projects in question, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the projects at this time.

Ministerial Travel.

527. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Science the cost in relation to foreign travel, accommodation and related Ministerial and official costs associated with St. Patrick’s Day 2008; and the plans related to St. Patrick’s Day 2009 and the projected cost. [6156/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My predecessor, Minister Hanafin, represented the Government in New York for the St. Patrick’s Day period in 2008. The overall cost of the visit was €17,169.44. Minister of State Seán Haughey represented the Government in Poland for the St. Patrick’s Day period in 2008. The overall cost of the visit was €3,210.04. The breakdown of costs associated with these official visits is set out in the table. The St. Patrick’s Day Ministerial programme for 2009 is not yet finalised and so projected costs cannot be determined at this stage.

Breakdown of Ministerial and official costs associated with official travel for St. Patrick’s Day 2008

Minister Hanafin: New York

	Flight Costs	Accommodation Charges	Transport costs	Other Expenses subsistence, tours etc	VIP Services	Official Gifts
	€	€	€	€	€	€
Minister Hanafin + 1	2,809.51 × 2	2,185.04	3,859.31	823.34	300	75.00
PSM	2,809.51	949.33		548.89		
Totals	8,428.53	3,134.37	3,859.31	1,372.23	300	75.00

Minister Haughey: Poland

	Flight Costs	Accommodation Charges	Transport costs	Other Expenses subsistence, tours etc	VIP Services	Official Gifts
	€	€	€	€	€	€
Minister Haughey	410.41	665.67	1,457.68	286.87	156.75	134.95
PSM	410.41	503.97		269.05		
Totals	820.82	1,169.64	1,457.68	555.92	156.75	134.95

School Attendance.

528. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of prosecutions taken by the National Education Welfare Board in respect of school attendance for each of the years since its inception. [6331/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 established the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) as the statutory body with responsibility for school attendance.

The general functions of the Board are to ensure that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education. The Board's network of Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) is the key means by which the Board delivers on its statutory remit to ensure that each child attends and benefits from education. EWOs deal with approximately 10,000 cases, involving children with reported school attendance difficulties, per annum. Officers work closely with the family, the school and other support services to address the particular issues for each child. The reasons for non attendance are many and complex and included are parents who fail to enrol their child in a school or to ensure that their child attends school regularly.

I have been advised by the NEWB that legal action for non attendance at school is taken when all other steps have failed and following consultation with the school and other services. Court action must ultimately be in the best interests of the child. A School Attendance Notice (SAN) is the first step in enforcing the law. When a school attendance notice is issued, the situation is monitored and the parent is given the opportunity to address the underlying issues. Occasionally, the involvement of other services with the family may be sufficient to bring about change. In exceptional cases, where there is no change and the child remains out of school, the Board will consider taking a prosecution. The first SANs for non attendance at school issued in 2005. A total of 775 SANs issued for the period 2005 to the end of 2008.

When a SAN issues the Board monitors the situation and gives the parent the opportunity to address the underlying causes of poor attendance. Occasionally the involvement of other services with the family may be sufficient to bring about a change. The first legal prosecutions for non attendance under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, were heard during 2006 in the District Courts. There were 34 summonses issued against parents in relation to 17 children in 2006 while a further 55 new summonses against parents in relation to 36 children were issued in 2007. In 2008 51 new summonses issued against parents in relation to 35 children. This brings the overall number of summonses issued against parents by the Board since its establishment to 140 in relation to 88 children. I am advised that 73 cases have been brought forward to 2009. This can occur for a variety of reasons including, case adjourned with leave to re-enter, probation act applied etc.

School Inspections.

529. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Science the steps he will

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take to address the issues highlighted in the whole school evaluation of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [6332/09]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Responsibility for school improvement rests primarily with the staff and board of management of each school and with the school’s trustees or patron. Evidence from the school responses submitted by school management in response to individual inspection reports and from other sources shows that in most cases, schools have the ability, either through their own resources or with the assistance of the relevant school support services, to address recommendations for change and improvement which are identified during inspections. The position in relation to the school referred to by the Deputy is that my Department is contacting the representatives of the Trustees in relation to the issues raised in the Whole School Evaluation. The purpose of these discussions will be to seek to identify how improvement may take place and the supports, such as those from the school support services, that may be made available to the school. Self-review by the school and further inspection visits may be used to monitor the progress of improvement.

School Attendance.

530. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of schools nationally which are failing to provide up to date attendance data; and the action open to the National Education Welfare Board to deal with same. [6333/09]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 established the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) as the national body with responsibility for school attendance. The general functions of the Board are to ensure that each child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives a certain minimum education. The Board’s network of Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) is the key means by which the Board delivers on its statutory remit to ensure that each child attends and benefits from education. EWOs deal with approximately 10,000 cases, involving children with reported school attendance difficulties, per annum. Officers work closely with the family, the school and other support services to address the particular issues for each child. In line with Government policy the Board prioritises its resources to support the most disadvantaged areas and schools participating in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) the Action Plan for educational inclusion. EWOs provide an intensive service in these areas. Outside of these areas, priority is given to children who are out of school or who have significant difficulties with school attendance.

The National Educational Welfare Board’s Analysis of School Attendance Data in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2003/04 to 2005/06, shows that the response rate from schools is improving. In primary schools, the response rate rose from 81% (in 2004/05) to 95% (in 2005/06) and in post primary schools from 76% (in 2004/05) to 88% (in 2005/06). I am advised by the Board that 270 schools failed to make Annual Attendance Returns for 2005/06 and this fell to just over 170 schools for the 2006/07 returns. Data in relation to the 2007/08 school year is being finalised. The Board have informed the Department that it continues to work with schools and provides guidelines for schools in meeting their obligations in relation to reporting.

The Board developed an online reporting system www.schoolreturn.ie in consultation with schools to simplify the process of reporting of non-attendance and submitting the annual attendance report as required under the Act. The continued increase in the number of schools making returns since the establishment of the Board is very encouraging and indicates the importance placed by schools on providing data to the Board.

Question No. 531 answered with Question No. 509.