



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DÁIL ÉIREANN

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

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DÁIL ÉIREANN

Déardaoin, 20 Feabhra 2020

Thursday, 20 February 2020

DÁIL ÉIREANN

Tháinig an Dáil le chéile ar uair an mheán lae - bhí an Cléireach, Peadar Ó Fionnagáin, i láthair.

The Dáil assembled at 12 noon - the Clerk of the Dáil, Mr. Peter Finnegan, attending.

Léigh an Cléireach Fógra Uachtarán na hÉireann lenar Lánscoireadh agus lenar Comhairmeadh Dáil Éireann.

The Clerk read the Proclamation of the President of Ireland Dissolving and Convening Dáil Éireann.

Is mar seo a leanas a bhí Forógra Uachtarán na hÉireann ag lánscoir agus ag comóradh Dháil Éireann:

The Proclamation of the President of Ireland dissolving and convening Dáil Éireann was as follows:

FORÓGRA

PROCLAMATION

De bhun comhairle a thairg an Taoiseach dom faoi alt a dó d’Airteagal a trí déag den Bhun-reacht, déanaimse, MICHEÁL D. Ó hUIGÍN, Uachtarán na hÉireann, Dáil Éireann a lánscoir leis seo ar an gceathrú lá déag d’Eanáir, dhá mhíle is fiche, agus Dáil Éireann (a mbeidh a comhaltáí arna dtoghadh san Olltoghchán seo chugainn) a ghairm agus a chomóradh chun teacht le chéile i gcathair Bhaile Átha Cliath an fichiú lá d’Fheabhra, dhá mhíle is fiche, um a dó dhéag nóin chun cibé gnó a dhéanamh a chuirfear faoina bráid.

ARNA THABHAIRT FAOI MO LÁIMH AGUS FAOI MO SHÉALA AN CEATHRÚ LÁ DÉAG SEO D’EANÁIR, DHÁ MHÍLE IS FICHE.

20 February 2020

Pursuant to an advice tendered to me by the Taoiseach under section 2 of Article 13 of the Constitution, I, MICHAEL D. HIGGINS, President of Ireland, hereby dissolve Dáil Éireann on the 14th day of January, 2020, and summon and call together Dáil Éireann (the members whereof shall have been elected at the forthcoming General Election) to meet in the city of Dublin on the 20th day of February, 2020, at the hour of 12 noon for the despatch of such business as shall be submitted to it.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL THIS 14th DAY OF JANUARY 2020.

Micheál D. Ó hUigínn

Uachtarán na hÉireann

(President of Ireland)

Leo Varadkar

Taoiseach

Tuarascáil i dtaobh Eascairí a chur amach agus Craoladh i dtaobh Freagraí

Report as to issue of Writs and Announcement as to Returns

In compliance with Standing Order No. 3 of the Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann relative to Public Business, I have to report that immediately upon the issue by the President of the Proclamation of the 14th day of January, 2020, dissolving Dáil Éireann on that day, I issued the writs, pursuant to section 39 of the Electoral Act 1992, for the following Constituencies to the Returning Officers named hereunder:-

Returning Officers	Dáilcheantair Constituencies
Marie Garahy	Ceatharlach-Cill Chainnigh Carlow-Kilkenny Loch Garman Wexford
Joseph Smith	An Cabhán-Muineachán Cavan-Monaghan Sligeach-Liatroim Sligo-Leitrim

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Returning Officers	Dáilcheantair Constituencies
Patrick Wallace	An Clár Clare Cathair Luimnigh Limerick City Contae Luimnigh Limerick County
Sinéad McNamara	Corcaigh Thoir Cork East Corcaigh Thiar Thuaidh Cork North-West Corcaigh Thiar Theas Cork South-West
Martin A. Harvey	Corcaigh Thuaidh-Lár Cork North-Central Corcaigh Theas-Lár Cork South-Central
Geraldine O'Connor	Dún na nGall Donegal
Joseph Burke	Cuan Bhaile Átha Cliath Thuaidh Dublin Bay North Cuan Bhaile Átha Cliath Theas Dublin Bay South Baile Átha Cliath Láir Dublin Central Baile Átha Cliath Thiar Thuaidh Dublin North-West Baile Átha Cliath Theas-Lár Dublin South-Central

Returning Officers	Dáilcheantair Constituencies
Fergus Gallagher	<p>Baile Átha Cliath – Fine Gall Dublin Fingal</p> <p>Baile Átha Cliath Thiar-Meán Dublin Mid-West</p> <p>Baile Átha Cliath – Ráth an Dúin Dublin Rathdown</p> <p>Baile Átha Cliath Thiar Theas Dublin South-West</p> <p>Baile Átha Cliath Thiar Dublin West</p> <p>Dún Laoghaire Dún Laoghaire</p>
Marian Chambers Higgins	<p>Gaillimh Thoir Galway East</p> <p>Gaillimh Thiar Galway West</p>
Padraig Burke	Ciarraí Kerry
Eithne Coughlan	<p>Cill Dara Thuaidh Kildare North</p> <p>Cill Dara Theas Kildare South</p>
Paul Fetherstonhaugh	Laois-Uíbh Fhailí Laois-Offaly
Brídín Concannon	An Longfort-An Iarmhí Longford-Westmeath
Mairéad Ahern	<p>Lú Louth</p> <p>An Mhí Thoir Meath East</p> <p>An Mhí Thiar Meath West</p>
Fintan J. Murphy	<p>Maigh Eo Mayo</p> <p>Ros Comáin-Gaillimh Roscommon-Galway</p>

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Returning Officers	Dáilcheantair Constituencies
James Seymour	Tiobraid Árann Tipperary
Niall Rooney	Port Láirge Waterford
Mary Delahanty	Cill Mhantáin Wicklow

Is iad seo a leanas ainmneacha na ndaoine a toghadh chun fónamh sa Dáil, mar aon le hainmneacha na nDáilcheantar dár toghadh iad:

I will now announce the names of the persons returned to serve in the Dáil for each constituency, in the order in which they were set out in the writ returned by the relevant Returning Officer:

<i>Dáilcheantair Constituencies</i>	<i>Comhaltai Members</i>
<i>Ceatharlach-Cill Chainnigh Carlow-Kilkenny</i>	<i>Kathleen Funchion John McGuinness John Paul Phelan Jennifer Murnane O'Connor Malcolm Noonan</i>
<i>An Cabhán-Muineachán Cavan-Monaghan</i>	<i>Matt Carthy Heather Humphreys Pauline Tully Brendan Smith Niamh Smyth</i>
<i>An Clár Clare</i>	<i>Joe Carey Cathal Crowe Michael McNamara Violet-Anne Wynne</i>
<i>Corcaigh Thoir Cork East</i>	<i>Pat Buckley Sean Sherlock David Stanton James O'Connor</i>
<i>Corcaigh Thuaidh-Lár Cork North-Central</i>	<i>Thomas Gould Pádraig O'Sullivan Colm Burke Mick Barry</i>
<i>Corcaigh Thiar Thuaidh Cork North-West</i>	<i>Michael Creed Michael Moynihan Aindrias Moynihan</i>
<i>Corcaigh Theas-Lár Cork South-Central</i>	<i>Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire Micheál Martin Simon Coveney Michael McGrath</i>

<i>Dáilcheantair Constituencies</i>	<i>Comhaltaí Members</i>
<i>Corcaigh Thiar Theas Cork South-West</i>	<i>Michael Collins Christopher O'Sullivan Holly Cairns</i>
<i>Dún na nGall Donegal</i>	<i>Pearse Doherty Pádraig Mac Lochlainn Thomas Pringle Joe McHugh Charlie McConalogue</i>
<i>Cuan Bhaile Átha Cliath Thuaidh Dublin Bay North</i>	<i>Denise Mitchell Richard Bruton Cian O'Callaghan Aodhán Ó Ríordáin Seán Haughey</i>
<i>Cuan Bhaile Átha Cliath Theas Dublin Bay South</i>	<i>Eamon Ryan Chris Andrews Eoghan Murphy Jim O'Callaghan</i>
<i>Baile Átha Cliath Láir Dublin Central</i>	<i>Mary Lou McDonald Neasa Hourigan Paschal Donohoe Gary Gannon</i>
<i>Baile Átha Cliath – Fine Gall Dublin Fingal</i>	<i>Louise O'Reilly Joe O'Brien Darragh O'Brien Alan Farrell Duncan Smith</i>
<i>Baile Átha Cliath Thiar-Meán Dublin Mid-West</i>	<i>Eoin Ó Broin Mark Ward Emer Higgins Gino Kenny</i>
<i>Baile Átha Cliath Thiar Thuaidh Dublin North-West</i>	<i>Dessie Ellis Róisín Shortall Paul McAuliffe</i>
<i>Baile Átha Cliath – Ráth an Dúin Dublin Rathdown</i>	<i>Catherine Martin Neale Richmond Josepha Madigan</i>
<i>Baile Átha Cliath Theas-Lár Dublin South-Central</i>	<i>Aengus Ó Snodaigh Brid Smith Patrick Costello Joan Collins</i>

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<i>Dáilcheantair Constituencies</i>	<i>Comhaltaí Members</i>
<i>Baile Átha Cliath Thiar Theas Dublin South-West</i>	<i>Seán Crowe Paul Murphy Colm Brophy Francis Noel Duffy John Lahart</i>
<i>Baile Átha Cliath Thiar Dublin West</i>	<i>Paul Donnelly Leo Varadkar Jack Chambers Roderic O’Gorman</i>
<i>Dún Laoghaire Dún Laoghaire</i>	<i>Ossian Smyth Richard Boyd Barrett Jennifer Carroll MacNeill Cormac Devlin</i>
<i>Gaillimh Thoir Galway East</i>	<i>Seán Canney Ciarán Cannon Anne Rabbitte</i>
<i>Gaillimh Thiar Galway West</i>	<i>Éamon Ó Cuív Noel Grealish Mairéad Farrell Catherine Connolly Hildegarde Naughton</i>
<i>Ciarraí Kerry</i>	<i>Michael Healy-Rae Pa Daly Brendan Griffin Danny Healy-Rae Norma Foley</i>
<i>Cill Dara Thuaidh Kildare North</i>	<i>Catherine Murphy Réada Cronin Bernard Durkan James Lawless</i>
<i>Cill Dara Theas Kildare South</i>	<i>Patricia Ryan Martin Heydon Cathal Berry</i>
<i>Laois-Uíbh Fhailí Laois-Offaly</i>	<i>Brian Stanley Barry Cowen Charlie Flanagan Carol Nolan Sean Fleming</i>
<i>Cathair Luimnigh Limerick City</i>	<i>Brian Leddin Willie O’Dea Kieran O’Donnell Maurice Quinlivan</i>

<i>Dáilcheantair Constituencies</i>	<i>Comhaltai Members</i>
<i>Contae Luimnigh Limerick County</i>	<i>Niall Collins Richard O'Donoghue Patrick O'Donovan</i>
<i>An Longfort-An Iarmhí Longford-Westmeath</i>	<i>Sorca Clarke Joe Flaherty Peter Burke Robert Troy</i>
<i>Lú Louth</i>	<i>Imelda Munster Ruairí Ó Murchú Ged Nash Fergus O'Dowd Peter Fitzpatrick</i>
<i>Maigh Eo Mayo</i>	<i>Michael Ring Rose Conway-Walsh Dara Calleary Alan Dillon</i>
<i>An Mhí Thoir Meath East</i>	<i>Darren O'Rourke Helen McEntee Thomas Byrne</i>
<i>An Mhí Thiar Meath West</i>	<i>Johnny Guirke Peadar Tóibín Damien English</i>
<i>Ros Comáin-Gaillimh Roscommon-Galway</i>	<i>Michael Fitzmaurice Denis Naughten Claire Kerrane</i>
<i>Sligeach-Liatroim Sligo-Leitrim</i>	<i>Martin Kenny Marian Harkin Marc MacSharry Frankie Feighan</i>
<i>Tiobraid Árann Tipperary</i>	<i>Michael Lowry Mattie McGrath Martin Browne Alan Kelly Jackie Cahill</i>
<i>Port Láirge Waterford</i>	<i>David Cullinane Mary Butler Matt Shanahan Marc Ó Cathasaigh</i>
<i>Loch Garman Wexford</i>	<i>Johnny Mythen Brendan Howlin Verona Murphy James Browne Paul Kehoe</i>

<i>Dáilcheantair Constituencies</i>	<i>Comhaltaí Members</i>
<i>Cill Mhantáin Wicklow</i>	<i>John Brady Stephen Donnelly Simon Harris Steven Matthews Jennifer Whitmore</i>

De bhua alt tríocha a sé den Acht Toghcháin, míle naoi gcéad nócha a dó, measadh Seán Ó Fearghaíl a bheith tofa mar dhuine de na comhaltaí do Dháilcheantar Chill Dara Theas.

I gcomhlíonadh Bhuan-Ordú Uimhir a ceathair de na Buan-Orduithe i dtaobh Gnó Phoiblí, táim tar éis cóipeanna de na hEascairí toghcháin agus de na freagraí a formhuiníodh orthu a leagan os comhair na Dála.

Tá an Rolla sínithe de réir na mBuan-Orduithe ag na Comhaltaí thuasainmnithe go léir.

By virtue of section 36 of the Electoral Act 1992, Seán Ó Fearghaíl has been deemed to have been elected as one of the Members for the constituency of Kildare South.

In compliance with Standing Order No. 4 of the Standing Orders relative to Public Business, I have laid before the Dáil copies of the writs of election and the returns endorsed thereon.

All the above-named Members signed the roll in accordance with Standing Orders.

Ainmniú Iarrthóirí agus Ceann Comhairle a Thoghadh

Selection of Candidate and Election of Ceann Comhairle

Cléireach na Dála: The next item of business is the selection of the Ceann Comhairle of Dáil Éireann – Ceann Comhairle Dháil Éireann a roghnú. I will now proceed to the secret ballot in accordance with Standing Order 6.

I must inform the House that, having received and examined nominations for the position of Ceann Comhairle, the following is the list of validly nominated candidates: Deputy Denis Naughten and Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl.

As there is more than one candidate, the candidate who will be proposed for election by the House will be selected by secret ballot. Before proceeding to the secret ballot, I will in alphabetical order call on each candidate to speak on his own behalf, or where the candidate has been nominated by another Member to speak on his behalf, I will call on that Member. Each Deputy will have five minutes. I now call on Deputy Denis Naughten.

Deputy Denis Naughten: Ar an gcéad dul síos, gabhaim comhghairdeas le gach duine eile atá tofa go dtí Dáil Éireann. Is mór an onóir dúinn uile ionadaíocht a dhéanamh ar son ár dtoghthóirí. Is cúis bhróid dom a bheith ainmnithe mar iarrthóir do phost an Chinn Comhairle.

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Today, 48 Deputies take their seats for the first time. Their arrival is the culmination of campaigns on issues they care for and a cause in which they believe. Those of us here longer share their enthusiasm, but we can also share with them our experience. In my own case, I have been in Cabinet and on the backbenches, in government and opposition, as a party Deputy and as an Independent Deputy. I understand every perspective in this House because I have lived it. As a committee Chairman and Acting Chairman of this House, I have worked to vindicate the rights of my fellow Members. I have directly engaged in Dáil reform and participated in an informal committee on supporting the rights of Members. I have been more than happy over the years to provide advice and assistance to new Members, regardless of political views, as I firmly believe there is a responsibility on every Member to support less experienced colleagues in doing the best job they can as Members of Dáil Éireann.

I am putting my name forward because one of the messages I consistently received on the doorsteps during the general election concerned public frustration with accountability of the public service and public authorities. In an open and questioning culture, we need an effective and questioning Parliament. Getting straight answers to straight questions is becoming more difficult in Dáil Éireann. This is reflected in that public frustration. Deputies are not just messengers for the people; they are also messengers to the people. This is neither fully understood nor effectively prioritised by our public service. The non-political nature of our public service and the job security of public servants are a strength of the State but in exchange for that security, public services must be accountable to Dáil Éireann through its Members. I firmly believe this accountability is being slowly lost through incremental disempowerment of Deputies.

We can consider the simple example of the Health Service Executive. After its establishment, Deputies had quarterly meetings with the local management of hospital groups and community health services. However, this practice has evaporated completely. The sole means of accountability for officials now is through the Oireachtas joint committee dealing with health matters or through parliamentary questions, the replies to which in many cases take ten weeks. This is a far cry from the accountability required to Dáil Éireann.

The Office of the Ceann Comhairle has a restricted role in the reform of Dáil Éireann but one of the primary functions of the office is to protect the existing rights of Members. This is not just about ruling parliamentary questions out of order or the disrespect demonstrated by a single sentence reply to such a question or referring a Member to a website. This is about the failure to brief Deputies on the actions being taken by agencies such as the HSE. Sometimes the very last person to know about a matter is the very Deputy whose constituents are directly affected. This is both a cultural and administrative issue. It is part of the cultural change on which I want to help deliver in order that Dáil Éireann can become an effective forum for the people who elect us.

We now face a greater threat. The general data protection regulation, GDPR, a tool to protect all citizens, is being used to avoid answering legitimate questions from Deputies. This has far-reaching implications for public policy and for the Dáil. Protections for citizens cannot be deployed as barricades against elected representatives doing essential parliamentary work on behalf of the same people. It is essential for the House to consider this matter.

It would be an honour to be Ceann Comhairle but it would be a greater honour still to use the office, within its confines, to hold, protect and reaffirm the legitimacy of Members of Dáil Éireann to seek answers and ensure accountability. With profound respect for this House, I humbly ask its Members for the opportunity to preside over the House as their advocate and

servant. Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.

Cléireach na Dála: I call Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil.

Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil: Ar an gcéad dul síos, is cúis ghliondair croí dom a bheith ar ais anseo arís sa Tríocha-tríú Dáil. Gabhaim comhghairdeas le gach duine - iad siúd atá atofa agus iad siúd atá nuathofa. Tá súil agam go mbeidh rath Dé ar a gcuid oibre. I thank the Clerk and congratulate Mr. Peter Finnegan and his excellent team on the preparations for today that allow this assembly to function as efficiently as always. I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words to Members this afternoon and to congratulate my colleague and friend, Deputy Naughten, on his entering this competition. Competition is an essential part of the democratic process and I know Denis to be a very fine parliamentarian and a man of considerable integrity.

Four years ago I stood here seeking support for election as Ceann Comhairle. I was then something of an unknown quantity to many Members. Today I seek a renewal of the mandate and I hope my work over the past four years has assisted the progression of the crucial Dáil reform agenda to make our Dáil more reflective of and responsive to the needs of a national Parliament in 2020. I work on the basic principle of respect for the mandate that each Member of the Dáil has received from the electorate. That mandate is in every respect equal and deserving of similar priority.

In the Thirty-second Dáil, we worked together in a more collegial fashion than ever to create a progressive Dáil reform committee at which each group in the House was represented. We achieved change by working in a collaborative way to alter how the business of this House is conducted. We established a fully representative Dáil Business Committee that succeeded, for the most part, in building consensus around the weekly and sessional Dáil agendas. We established an independent Parliamentary Budget Office, which is now fully operational, and which supports all Members in budgetary processes. We have also set in train that office's ability to cost legislative proposals and in time, it will be able to do the same for political manifestos. We have built that independent Parliamentary Budget Office to emulate the United States Congressional Budget Office on Capitol Hill, which is viewed internationally in a very positive light.

We have augmented our Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers to offer expert advice and support to Members both in writing and amending legislation in an efficient and effective manner. The Irish Women's Parliamentary Caucus in the Houses of the Oireachtas was also established and within months of its creation and under the leadership of Deputy Catherine Martin, it hosted the first major international conference of women's caucuses in Dublin Castle. This is a clear and practical example of parliamentarians working together towards a clear and important end result for the benefit of all of us.

There were critical all-party committees on health under the chairmanship of Deputy Shortall, on housing under the chairmanship of the former Deputy Curran and on the Traveller community under the chairmanship of Senator Kelleher. These are just a few examples of how we have worked well for a common cause and the good of groups and individuals whose interests we must pursue in this Thirty-third Dáil with even greater enthusiasm, energy, effectiveness and absolute urgency. We have engaged with the youth of this nation on the crucial matter of climate change. We worked with RTÉ in bringing the young people protesting outside the gates of Leinster House into the Chamber to sit in the seats we now occupy. At that youth assembly - a world first - our country's future debated meaningful, sensible and often inspired proposals and practical solutions to that existential matter.

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All this work must continue with efficiency and urgency so I seek Members' support this afternoon to continue that collegial approach to addressing our problems and to finding solutions with the necessary alacrity. In another example of a changed approach, we have provided a platform here for a variety of international voices to speak with us in this Chamber on matters crucial to our country's interests. We welcomed Nancy Pelosi, Jean-Claude Juncker, Guy Verhofstadt and Michel Barnier to engage with us on matters of the greatest importance. As we move forward, we can seek the views of other international voices in this Chamber to inform our work and challenge our views. Respectful debate is the lifeblood of this Chamber and I will strive to have all voices heard.

In the past two years we celebrated the centenary of both the first sitting of Dáil Éireann and women's suffrage. We did that with dignity, respect and public and international support. For our part, as an Oireachtas we must ensure the important commemorative events that lie ahead are conducted with sensitivity and absolute integrity. In short, as I stand before the House and mention just some of the many valuable initiatives we have taken together over the past four years, I humbly seek Members' support to continue to work in partnership with them to make the Thirty-third Dáil an assembly of which the Irish people can be proud, one which, working with Government and Opposition, helps us to deliver the meaningful change that our masters - the people - urgently demand and deserve. Our challenge is to decipher, interpret, respect and act upon the people's voices, as articulated in the general election earlier this month. If honoured to take the Chair of this assembly, I resolve to continue my work in promoting and respecting all voices of this House without fear or favour.

We have challenges as we move to express the will of the people who have put us here. I seek to build upon the relationships made, the friendships formed and the consensus achieved in the last Dáil by serving the Thirty-third Dáil to the best of my ability. As I said in 2016, my ambition is to serve the Members rather than become a slave to any system. We have much important work left to undertake to make this Thirty-third Dáil a fit, productive and fully relevant assembly. I hope Members will honour me by allowing me to continue for now to chair this assembly.

Cléireach na Dála: That concludes the contributions from the candidates. We will now ring the bells for six minutes. When they stop, we will wait a further four minutes and then proceed to the secret ballot. All the doors into the Chamber, except for the two on either side of the Ceann Comhairle's chair, will then be locked. I ask all Members to re-take their seats when the bells have stopped.

Members proceeded to vote in a secret ballot in the order directed by the Clerk of the Dáil.

1 o'clock

Sitting suspended at 1.10 p.m. and resumed at 3.10 p.m.

Cléireach na Dála: In accordance with Standing Order 7(3), I inform the House that Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil is the successful candidate selected by the secret ballot for the position of Ceann Comhairle. I now put the question that Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil, who is the successful candidate duly selected by secret ballot by the Members of Dáil Éireann, be elected and do now take the Chair of the Dáil as Ceann Comhairle.

Question put and agreed to.

Whereupon Members rose in their places and remained standing while the Ceann Comhairle proceeded to the Dais.

Standing beside the Chair, the Ceann Comhairle, addressing the Dáil, said:

A Theachtaí, dearbhaím go sollúnta go ndéanfaidh mé, go cuí agus go dílis agus a mhéid is eol agus is cumas dom, oifig Cheann Comhairle Dháil Éireann a fheidhmiú gan scáth gan fabhar, na rialacha mar atá siad leagtha síos ag an Teach seo a chur i bhfeidhm go cothrom neamhchlaonta, ord a choimeád agus cearta agus pribhléidí comhaltaí a chaomhnú de réir an Bhunreachta agus Bhuan-Orduithe Dháil Éireann.

I do solemnly declare that I will duly and faithfully and to the best of my knowledge and ability execute the office of Ceann Comhairle of Dáil Éireann without fear or favour, apply the rules as laid down by this House in an impartial and fair manner, and maintain order and uphold the rights and privileges of Members in accordance with the Constitution and the Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann.

The Ceann Comhairle took the Chair.

An Ceann Comhairle: I have always had problems with this gown. Those of you who were here in 2016 will remember that it had been worn by Seán Barrett so it was a little on the long side for me. In the aftermath of the counting of the votes, it miraculously got shortened. The Ceann Comhairle's gown, by the way, was the subject of a freedom of information request during the course of the year where somebody wanted to know what it had cost and how much its dry-cleaning cost, and we discovered it was here so long that nobody knew what it had cost and it had never been dry-cleaned. I assure the House it has been cleaned and it is now being reused.

First, I commiserate with my good friend, Deputy Denis Naughten. He is a parliamentarian of very considerable standing. He has done great work for the country and for his constituency, and it was an honour to compete with him.

I thank each and every one of you - those who voted for me and those who did not, and the two who decided that they would not vote for either of us. Let us hope I can win them over in the period that lies ahead.

We are in a challenging position but this Parliament has a responsibility. This Dáil must work together, but we must work carefully, intelligently and as urgently as possible, because the problems that remain to be confronted are substantial. We have the ability, working together, to solve those problems. Have we not shown today that we can be very decisive indeed when we put our minds to it? Let us be decisive in the period ahead and let us decide to work together in the interests of the people who sent us here.

This afternoon, realising the importance of inter-parliamentary relations, I will write to Mr. Alex Maskey, the Speaker in the Northern Assembly, and to the Speaker of the House of Commons asking for the earliest possible opportunity to meet so that we can consider how on this island we can strengthen inter-party relations and how the east-west relations between our parliaments can be strengthened as they most undoubtedly need to be in the aftermath of Brexit. I also ask for the approval of the House at this very early stage to re-establish the all-party Business Committee. It is written into Standing Orders. It simply needs to be populated. It is set up and structured in such a way as to give representation to all the distinct groups in this

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House. If we could get the Business Committee up and running it could start some meaningful work while the challenging job of Government formation continues. I first ask if Deputies will approve us moving to establish the Business Committee to undertake those works. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: Unanimously. Hear, hear.

An Ceann Comhairle: I thank the Deputies. I call on the parties present to make their nominations for Taoiseach. I first call on Deputy Durkan.

Deputy Micheál Martin: A Cheann Comhairle, if I may just say a word.

An Ceann Comhairle: Certainly.

Deputy Micheál Martin: Ar dtús báire, ar mo shon féin agus ar son Pháirtí Fhianna Fáil, déanaim comhghairdeas leat as ucht a bheith tofa mar Cheann Comhairle na Dála seo. Léiríonn an móránm mór a fuair tú an t-ardmheas atá ag Teachtaí ó gach aon ghrúpa sa Dáil ort. Sa Dáil seo caite, thug tú sárcheannaireacht den scoth dúinn. Stiúir tú an Dáil agus na díospóireachtaí éagsúla go macánta agus go féaráilte. Bíonn tú réasúnta i gcónaí agus déanann tú iarracht cothrom na Féinne a thabhairt do gach éinne.

On behalf of the Fianna Fáil Party and on my own behalf, I congratulate you, a Cheann Comhairle, on your re-election to an office which is one of the most important in our democracy. I also extend those congratulations to your wife, Mary Clare, to your children, Aoife, Caoimhe, Eoghan and Nessa, and your wonderful mother-in-law, Beth Meaney, for their support. We all know how families have to endure and share the burden of our political lives and they have stood loyally with you down through the years. This is the second time the position of Ceann Comhairle has been filled following a direct competition involving a secret ballot. I commiserate with Deputy Naughten, a person for whom we have all great respect in this House, a fine parliamentarian who makes a significant contribution on an ongoing basis to public life. When we supported this reform some years ago, we did it because we thought it was important that the Dáil should have a stronger role in regulating its own affairs, which should start with increasing the status of the Ceann Comhairle. We believe that this change has been successful and that the success has in large measure been due to how you have filled that role, a Cheann Comhairle. We have no doubt that in what is likely to be a challenging Dáil, you will fill the role with fairness, balance and integrity.

This is the most diverse Dáil in the 101 years of this institution. Each party and each Independent Deputy brings with them a distinct mandate. It is the very essence of democracy that this diversity be respected. I hope that we will not see in this House the populist intolerance and aggression which seeks to shout down dissenting opinions and instruct others on what they are and are not allowed to do with their mandates. There is a lot of work which this Dáil needs to do. We must complete the job of becoming more effective, not just in holding Government to account but in applying serious standards of review to all elements of our work. We must take action which is not just a long wish-list but a focused, urgent and credible agenda for delivering. We hope that under your direction in the coming term, we will go to the next stage in terms of the independent financial and legal review of all matters which come before us, building on the excellent work of the last Dáil during which the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers was strengthened and the Parliamentary Budget Office was established. Outside of Leinster House, the role of Ceann Comhairle is often seen as resembling a referee presiding over disputes on the

evening news. However, the office goes well beyond this and we look to you to be our leader in pushing us to do our work on behalf of all of the people in a professional, respectful and effective manner. We salute the leadership you have shown today in reaching out to the Northern Assembly and indeed the British Parliament in nurturing and strengthening the different sets of relationships that are so critical to the future of this island. You have our full support in that regard. We have no doubt that you will be just such a leader for this Dáil.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: Déanaim comhghairdeas leis an gCeann Comhairle ar a cheapachán mar chathaoirleach ar an Tríú Dáil is Tríocha. Is onóir mhór duit agus do theaghlach é. Táim cinnte go ndéanfaidh tú do dhícheall do chuid gnó iomlán a dhéanamh go cruinn. Ar mo shon féin agus ar son Sinn Féin déanaim comhghairdeas leat.

Many congratulations to the Ceann Comhairle and, of course, commiserations to Deputy Naughten. We all know that the job of Ceann Comhairle is not an easy one. We all at times have given and no doubt will again give cause to keep you on your toes, a Cheann Comhairle. It is a very important role, not least because you are tasked with defending the rights of Members of this Dáil. It is your job that the mandate of every Deputy is respected and, by extension, that the people who sent us here are represented well. I think you have done a very good job in the role of Ceann Comhairle over the past four years. You undoubtedly have the skill set and the ability to continue the much-needed process of Dáil reform, which you steered over the course of your tenure, to make this Dáil more responsive to the everyday needs and concerns of citizens.

The people have voted for change. They have expressed their democratic demand for a politics that is firmly focused on addressing the challenges that they face in their everyday lives. They want change and they want solutions. That desire, that instruction from the people, must be reflected here in the Dáil Chamber in how we engage, how we communicate, how we do our business and, I would argue strongly, in how we form the next Government to be a Government for change. However, I am also mindful of the need for this Dáil to be a Dáil for change, a House that genuinely strives to deliver for all our people. The people have called for a new departure in Irish politics, a future not dominated by a restrictive two-party system but one in which their interests are the priority of everybody elected to the Dáil. It is all of our responsibilities and not just yours alone, a Cheann Comhairle, to ensure that the people are delivered the change they have voted for. For our part in Sinn Féin, I want to assure you of our support in all of your work. I look forward to working with you. I look forward to putting you on your toes and perhaps you keeping me on mine. We wish you well from all of us. From this enlarged Sinn Féin team, we say go n-éirí an t-ádh leat agus le do chlann. Go raibh míle maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle, for all your service.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: Commiserations to Deputy Naughten and congratulations to the Ceann Comhairle. You were superb, a Cheann Comhairle, in the last Dáil. I saw you in all those committees where you were fair and forward-thinking. I do not know if there is a record but there was no one thrown out, as I recall, in the last Dáil. That should not be an encouragement in this Dáil for someone to try to test the limits of it. You were an ambassador for this House. I saw you in the trip to Egypt and the hugely beneficial work you did.

I have been asking myself if there is any chink in your armour or any room for improvement. An anecdote came to my mind. Back in the distant time of my youth, there was a local priest and we gave him the nickname Slap-Dash Harry. He had that nickname because we were guaranteed when he would do the half five mass on a Saturday evening, I think he got it

down to about 15 minutes. It was the fastest mass one would ever go to. We would be home in time for the news or the match or whatever. We chose in the last Dáil to hold this minute's silence. I am not criticising here because it is a small thing but I think yourself and the former Leas-Cheann Comhairle, Pat the Cope Gallagher, had a competition for who could shorten the minute's silence down. I had you timed at 11 seconds once, a Cheann Comhairle. I think we will need that minute's silence in the coming months and years. We will need moments to get peaceful reflection and draw our breath before we speak. That is the only small change I would make. You were a brilliant Ceann Comhairle and I wish you the best of luck in this new role.

Deputy Catherine Murphy: On behalf of the Social Democrats, and it is a very proud moment even to be able to say that, I would like to congratulate you warmly, a Cheann Comhairle. It was very important that there was a contest - I even toyed with the idea of entering it myself - and a secret ballot. The authority that comes from the Dáil electing the Ceann Comhairle is very important. We saw that over the past four years. Deputy Ó Feargháil has very definitely been a reforming Ceann Comhairle. Any of us who sat on the Sub-Committee on Dáil Reform, which he chaired, and considered the substantial changes made to Standing Orders, which may seem like a very dry subject, saw that this was done in a collaborative way and, as a result, that Dáil was much more inclusive than had previously been the case. For example, the previous Dáil was the first to have real control of its agenda, which is set out in the Constitution, but this was the first time it happened in practice. That was very important.

As a member of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, I witnessed the Ceann Comhairle's work as chairman on behalf the Oireachtas in its totality. The challenges that face the country face this Chamber, those in government and opposition. The tone of the debate is very often set by the Chair. That has been one of the Ceann Comhairle's best attributes. We have known each other a long time because we sat on a county council together for many years, as well as sharing this Chamber. I wish him well. We know that the Chair is in good hands.

Deputy Brendan Howlin: Comhghairdeas leatsa, a Cheann Comhairle, as a bheith atofa i do Cheann Comhairle. The office of Ceann Comhairle is one of the most important in this State. Deputy Ó Feargháil held it over the past four years, with great skill and forbearance, more often than not. He steered a difficult Dáil through those four years with enormous understanding of the role of Parliament.

I commiserate with Deputy Naughten who brought many ideas to the debate. I hope those ideas will be advanced by this Dáil. Other speakers talked about the reform agenda and I was privileged to work with the Ceann Comhairle on the Sub-Committee on Dáil Reform, which I hope will also be reconstituted quickly so that in the period between now and the formation of a government, we can consider how we can ensure that the fundamental role of this House in holding the Executive to account is achieved. Since I first came in here, I have grappled with the rebalancing of the Executive and the strength of the Government, which includes the permanent government in the Civil Service, being held to account by the House.

Deputy Naughten's points on parliamentary questions are valid. We all feel frustration and need concrete solutions to that. Those of us who have been asking Taoiseach's questions over the past few years realise that it is not a good use of our time to have set questions rolled over every day and answered *pro forma*. We need to fundamentally change that. There are things to be learned from how prime ministerial questions operate in other jurisdictions. We need to insist on the attendance of Ministers in the House. There were one or two who seldom came in to answer questions. The idea of putting questions to the full Government and of Ministers be-

ing able to answer off the cuff, not in detail but with an understanding of their own area, would make this a much more forceful and central Parliament. We also need to consider how we can reconnect Parliament with people. We have seen extraordinarily good initiatives, for example, the Citizens' Assembly, which has fundamentally altered the way citizens make an input in the formulation of policy, and have smoothed over fundamental policy shifts in a way that debate in this House has not done. We could have more outreach by way of parliamentary scrutiny with citizens' groups to make this place central and relevant to all the people. They are the tasks that lie ahead.

I congratulate the Ceann Comhairle and his wife and family, not only on his re-election but on the very strong and overwhelming vote for him. The first port of call is not to wait for the announcement of the result here; I looked online and found it on *The Irish Times* website. The vote underscores the high regard the Ceann Comhairle is held in by Members of this House of all shades of political opinion and points of view. I hope that will encourage him to continue with the reforming zeal he showed in the past four years. I look forward to working with him, in whatever role I happen to play in the coming months and years, to ensure that Dáil Éireann is among the most respected, forceful and authoritative parliamentary chambers in the world.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: I offer congratulations to the Ceann Comhairle on his re-election and I offer commiserations to Deputy Naughten. While he failed to be elected he made some very good suggestions, which we should consider seriously. Many of us share his frustration with parliamentary questions, for example, those on health, which are batted from the Department to the HSE and take a long time to come back. He made some very useful suggestions in that regard. His appeal for us to always consider the rights of all Members, particularly those who are not in groups, is an important point.

I commend Deputy Ó Feargháil on being a very fair, accessible and reforming Ceann Comhairle over the past four years. The Business Committee was a particular success in getting everybody involved in setting the agenda of the Dáil. He was always very fair and accommodating in trying to ensure that as much as was possible all items suggested for the agenda were put on it. That has made this Dáil a more relevant and accessible place where Deputies can not only make suggestions but be the vehicle through which groups in society that wanted to raise particular issues here were able to get them on the agenda. It is terribly important that we continue to do that. I commend the Ceann Comhairle on facilitating that on the Business Committee and the Sub-Committee on Dáil Reform.

I congratulate the Ceann Comhairle. For all of us elected for the first time and those re-elected, it is a privilege to be in here but it is also a heavy responsibility that we owe to the people who put us in here, to make sure we give real effect to their wishes and aspirations for a better, fairer society. I am confident that the Ceann Comhairle will facilitate us in trying to achieve that, and I hope we can take things further and better in the coming Dáil.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: On my own behalf and on behalf of the Rural Independent Group, I warmly congratulate the Ceann Comhairle today. I thank him and his team and staff for the courteous way they dealt with us all in the previous Dáil. I also wish Mary Clare and their family the very best too.

I extend commiserations to Deputy Naughten on entering the race and not being successful but he made it all the more interesting. The suggestions he made are very valid and relevant. I thank the ushers, the tellers and all the staff for counting the votes so quickly and diligently.

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I thank the Ceann Comhairle for his co-operation, dedication and calmness at all times on the committees on which I worked with him, especially the Business Committee. He helped to keep many of us calm as well during those debates and arduous times.

An Ceann Comhairle: It did not always work.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: It did not always work but it worked most times, thankfully. We hope and pray, and wish him well in this new Dáil. I quipped during the applause that if it was as easy to elect a Taoiseach, we would have no problem and the country would be in safe hands by tonight. It will not be as simple as that. It is testament to the respect that the Ceann Comhairle held in this House, at home in Kildare, among his supporters and everybody else. I wish him the very best and offer our co-operation to him in his role on different committees, to work alongside Peter and the whole team. Go n-éirí go geal leat.

Deputy Catherine Connolly: Ar mo shon féin agus ar son mo chomhghleacaithe in Independents 4 Change, déanaim comhghairdeas leis an gCeann Comhairle. Guím gach rath air ina ról nua. Bhí sé cothrom i gcónaí agus tá súil agam go leanfaidh sé ar aghaidh sa bhealach céanna. Ba é an teachtaireacht ba láidre a tháinig trasna sa toghchán seo ná go bhfuil athruithe ag teastáil. Tá súil agam go mbeidh ról lárnach ag an gCeann Comhairle ag soláthar na n-athruithe sin. Guím gach rath ar an Teachta Naughten agus déanaim comhbhrón leis. Táim cinnte go mbeidh lá eile ag an bPaorach. Idir an dá linn, beidh deis ag chuile dhuine a bhfuil suim aige nó aici i ról mar chathaoirleach feabhas a chur ar a chuid Gaeilge. Táim ag tnúth leis an lá go mbeidh bean láidir sa suíochán.

An Ceann Comhairle: A bit like the wedding feast at Cana, we now go to the Taoiseach.

The Taoiseach: I did not realise the Taoiseach was present at the wedding feast at Cana but you never know. Ar dtús, déanaim comhghairdeas leis an gCeann Comhairle. Is lá speisialta é dó féin agus dá chlann. Guím gach rath air. Is dea-chomhartha é den ardmheas agus gean láidir atá ag daoine ó gach taobh den Teach air gur toghadh é tríd na ballóidí rúnda. Táim cinnte go rachaidh sé i mbun a chuid oibre le hionracas agus comhionannas a léireoidh an onóir ar thug sé don Oireachtas mar Bhall den Teach. Tá a fhios agam nach mbeidh aon deacracht aige ord agus eagar a choimeád. Níl aon amhras orm ach go mbeidh aon easaontas a tharlódh gearrthréimseach agus réitithe gan dua.

I congratulate the Ceann Comhairle on his re-election. I know this is a very special day for him and his family, who are gathered here today. On behalf of the Fine Gael Party, I offer him every success over the next few years. He holds the distinction of being the first Ceann Comhairle to be elected by secret ballot, and now the first to be re-elected by secret ballot. It is a new system that I think started in the last Dáil and that will serve us well. It ensures that the Ceann Comhairle is truly elected and selected by all Members of this House and not by any one party or the lead party. His election by secret ballot is an indicator of the significant respect that we hold for him in this House and the very fair job that he has done over the past few years as well as, I believe, a strong personal affection for him. I know the Ceann Comhairle has approached the job with integrity and fairness, reflecting the honour that he has brought to the Oireachtas as a Member of the House and the way in which he has represented the country abroad as chairman of our Parliament. I am confident that he will have no difficulty keeping order and that any falling out will be short-lived and easily resolved. I promise that my party will do everything it can to help him in his work.

I offer my commiserations to Deputy Denis Naughten. I thank him for putting his name forward. There is no democracy without candidates and a contest. I congratulate him on being re-elected so decisively in the difficult and challenging constituency of Roscommon-Galway, which will thankfully not now be a two-seater at the next general election. I am sure he will have many other happier days.

This is an important time in our political history and the future is not clear. However, I am certain that the Ceann Comhairle will be successful in this role and will serve our Dáil and country with great distinction. My party will do everything that it can to ensure that the business of this House runs smoothly and that our work is meaningful and engaging. I believe that one lesson from the last Dáil is that Members must be held accountable for what they do and do not do here. Sometimes this did not happen and faith in our political life was eroded and damaged to the detriment of all of us. We need to find robust mechanisms in this new Dáil to ensure transparency and accountability when it comes to voting, attendance and other matters. No one should be in any doubt that we are here as servants of the people and must serve them with integrity to the best of our abilities, or there will be consequences, not just for them but for everyone else.

I congratulate the Ceann Comhairle again and wish him good luck in his term. I wish him and his family good fortune over the lifetime of this Thirty-third Dáil.

An Ceann Comhairle: I was very humbled by the result of the election earlier. I am even more humbled by the graciousness of the comments that have been made. I pinched myself at one stage to make sure I was not dead. I appreciate what Members have said and guarantee them that it will spur me on to work more diligently and effectively on behalf of all Members of this House.

Taoiseach a Ainmniú

Nomination of Taoiseach

An Ceann Comhairle: The next business is the nomination of Taoiseach. I understand that Deputy Bernard Durkan proposes to make a nomination.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Tairgim:

Go n-ainmneoidh Dáil Éireann an Teachta Leo Varadkar chun a cheaptha ag an Uachtarán mar Thaoiseach.

I move:

That Dáil Éireann nominate Deputy Leo Varadkar for appointment by the President to be Taoiseach.

I also congratulate the Ceann Comhairle on his return to office, which he has discharged with distinction and fairness in the past. I wish him well and commiserate with Deputy Naughten.

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I think that one could say many things in proposing outgoing Taoiseach, Deputy Leo Varadkar, for the office of incoming Taoiseach. One thing that has to be mentioned and recognised is that he was not afraid to take on challenges. There were many challenges. Being the Head of a Government, or a minority Government, is a challenge at any time. He accepted that challenge when many cynics around the country said that it would not last for six weeks or six months. He proved them wrong. He stood up to the challenge, with the support of the main Opposition party. Even then there were challenges. That is the first thing that I would like the House to remember in doing what we have to do today.

There was another very serious challenge at European level with another country leaving the European Union, all that went with it, and the challenges to this country. The first thing that he had to do was to marshal and bring together in unison the forces of the European Union on the side of this country and the island of Ireland, North and South. That was no mean feat and it would be a challenge to any leader, anywhere in Europe, to do something similar, especially in a Europe that had some discordant voices over the last number of years. In putting forward his name today, we should all reflect on those two issues.

One thing that had to happen with a minority Government was stability. Deputy Varadkar achieved that without any shadow of doubt. Again, it was with the support of Opposition parties with regard to Brexit. Choosing the battleground and the issue was crucial. He chose the issue and decided in the short time of two and a half years that he was Taoiseach to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, and brought matters to a satisfactory conclusion. Nobody can deny that and it is an example to all from hereon and a performance to emulate, because there will be many challenges in the future.

Is onóir mhór domsa a bheith anseo inniu chun Teachta Varadkar a ainmniú d'oifig an Taoisigh. I believe that he has discharged that office with distinction, courage and conviction. He has fazed those who stood against him achieving the common good for this country. He has done that very successfully and will do so again. I am not saying for one moment that any of the people about to be proposed for that office are in any way less honourable, but that tests remain and all will depend on how the various applicants stand up to those tests in facing the challenges that lie ahead.

I apologise for my hoarseness. I was not exactly cheering. I think it is an appropriate time to borrow a phrase from our national sporting organisation. A few years ago, its slogan stated "Nobody said it was going to be easy." It repeated that again and again during latter stages of the championship after especially gruesome outings. It was the same for the Government over the last three years. Nobody ever said it would be easy. When the job is completed satisfactorily and it appears to have been easy, that is as a result of the skills, determination and leadership of the person whose responsibility it was to make it look easy. Deputy Varadkar did that job successfully.

Deputy Emer Higgins: I offer comhghairdeas to the Ceann Comhairle on his re-election.

It is a privilege to be a Member of the Thirty-third Dáil and I wish to thank everybody who entrusted me with that responsibility. I am proud to second the nomination of Deputy Leo Varadkar as Taoiseach. He stands out for being honest, straight-talking and determined and having a track record of delivering results. Under his leadership, we have gone from deficit to surplus and from record unemployment to a situation whereby almost anyone who wishes to find work can do so. Thanks to his record of delivering results, the next generation will not

have to stand in airports waving to their parents.

Deputy Varadkar is straight-talking and honest, even when it is not easy to be so. As Taoiseach, he had the courage to reach out to Prime Minister Boris Johnson to find a pathway to a withdrawal agreement. His determination led to the protection of our economy and peace on this island and ensured there would be no hard border. He had the courage to be a leader for change in the run-up to the referendum on marriage equality and played a leading role in repealing the eighth amendment.

When his Government does not live up to its obligations, he is honest about that. He accepted that Ireland is a climate change laggard and committed to a radical plan to make Ireland carbon neutral. He continues to be straight-talking and honest in the face of the difficulties Ireland is currently facing. While others make impossible promises to secure votes, Deputy Varadkar has been honest that homelessness, high rents and hospital waiting lists cannot be resolved overnight. It takes time to fix those problems. Although waiting lists, homelessness numbers and rents are all falling, Deputy Varadkar was honest and right; he told the truth. He is not able to magic away these problems overnight; no one is. I am proud to second his nomination as Taoiseach because I believe in putting honesty and integrity at the centre of politics. We need to own up to our feelings in society and give an honest assessment of the problems that exist and, most important, the solutions. That is what the people who elect Members expect and deserve. I second the nomination of Deputy Varadkar as Taoiseach.

Deputy Norma Foley: Gabhaim buíochas agus comhghairdeas leis an gCeann Comhairle as a bheith tofa arís.

John B. Keane, the late, great Kerry playwright, once remarked that to be of Kerry is both a gift and an awesome responsibility. To be a first-time Deputy from the kingdom of Kerry addressing this august Chamber on the opening day of the Thirty-third Dáil is also a gift and a responsibility, one that is humbling and daunting in equal measure. Gabhaim buíochas arís leis an gCeann Comhairle as ucht an t-am agus an deis seo a thabhairt dom.

Anois rachaidh mé chuig obair thábhachtach an lae. Tairgim go n-ainmneoidh Dáil Éireann an Teachta Micheál Martin chun a cheaptha ag an Uachtarán mar Thaoiseach. I am new to this Chamber, but I recognise that the reality of the general election and the diverse nature of the House may mean that no Taoiseach will be elected today. No Deputy or leader can claim to speak on behalf of the will of the people. There are many mandates regarding the Government we should elect and the programme it should implement. However, this is an important moment for each Member to signal how we propose to use our mandate and how a new Government should be led. The objectives of Fianna Fáil are clear and its intentions are unambiguous. On its behalf, I am proud beyond measure to nominate Deputy Micheál Martin as Taoiseach. I do so mindful that he is determined to lead a Government which will not just talk about change but, rather, will deliver it. He will do so in a way which strengthens the social, economic, environmental and cultural pillars of our society.

The bard, William Shakespeare, sagely wrote:

... to thine own self be true,

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

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In a lifetime distinguished by public service, Deputy Micheál Martin has always remained true to himself, his people and his roots. Growing up in a working class family in Cork, he learned the core values of community, commitment, integrity and decency. His democratic republicanism and his belief in the duty of politics to serve all sections of our society have defined his time in office. If one looks fairly at his record, one will see that he has already achieved far more positive change than his loudest critics could ever hope to match. By any fair measure, he was a radically reforming and progressive Minister for Education and Science. In the area of special needs, he created the first programme of support for children with autism and, indeed, support for special needs in mainstream education. All Members are familiar with the need for additional child care assistants and educational psychologists. Before Deputy Martin was Minister for Education and Science, those services did not exist and, to our collective shame, children with special needs were often excluded in our schools. Never afraid to take a bold step, Deputy Martin began the expansion of the number of multi-denominational schools and gael-scoileanna by overturning 80 years of practice and entitling them to full funding for sites and building work. It is worth noting that he implemented the only reform to the primary school curriculum in the past 50 years. A series of initiatives he developed and implemented to tackle educational disadvantage led to the highest school completion rate in our history, a new era in expanding third level education and a dramatic increase in apprenticeships.

His radical changes to public health policy and the development of public cancer and cardiac services while Minister for Health and Children have saved tens of thousands of lives. As a result of his reforms, waiting lists for public patients in the health system were significantly lower than is currently the case, and falling further. This was all done within budget. As Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, he continued his radical work in developing the research capacity of our country and secured investment which has provided the foundation for industries which now employ tens of thousands of people. Of course, as Minister for Foreign Affairs he successfully led negotiations in Europe and with all parties in Northern Ireland. A hallmark of that work was his steady support, away from the cameras and set-piece meetings, for investing in concrete cross-Border projects and his reaching out to marginalised communities. Internationally, he pushed forwards Ireland's work on non-proliferation and in 2010 was the first foreign minister to bypass the blockade on Gaza and visit it to draw attention to the humanitarian crisis there.

The policies he has put forward as our priorities involve a mix of urgent action and longer-term reform to address the social, economic, environmental and cultural challenges facing our country. They represent a positive and progressive agenda, a people's agenda. All too often, Irish politics is highly personal and refuses to acknowledge the strengths of individuals. Time and again, Deputy Micheál Martin has shown a deep personal commitment to delivering important progress for this country. It is said that leadership is an action, not a position.

4 o'clock

In his deeds and actions throughout his political career, Deputy Micheál Martin has shown himself to be a constructive, inclusive and effective leader. I have no doubt that he will serve all the people of the country we love with integrity, insightfulness, nobility and decency in the office of Taoiseach. Arís, tairgím go n-aimneoidh Dáil Éireann an Teachta Martin chun a cheapadh ag an Uachtarán mar Thaoiseach.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy O'Connor will second the motion. He, too, will be making his maiden address.

Deputy James O'Connor: I am honoured to second the proposal that the Dáil nominate Deputy Micheál Martin to the President for appointment to the office of Taoiseach. It is rarely the loudest or angriest voice that addresses problems. As has been said, Deputy Martin throughout his career has built a record that is second to none in this House in delivering progressive change for people. His passion for education has always been a defining feature for me. Many of the reforms he implemented have been central to opening educational opportunities to people from all parts of society. Deputy Martin is known for his perseverance and for wanting to achieve change. When one looks at the substance of his political achievements, one sees a record of which many Members would be proud. In every role he has held, he has shown a willingness to work with others who share the same goals, to be inclusive in developing policy and to show real urgency in delivering it. These are the qualities he would demonstrate once again in leading the new Government our country needs.

Deputy Pearse Doherty: Gabhaim buíochas agus comhghairdeas leis an Cheann Comhairle agus leis a theaghlach a bheith atofa d'Oifig an Chinn Comhairle. Is onóir agus pribhléid mhór dó féin agus dá theaghlach.

Tá sé ina onóir mhór agus ina phribhléid domsa ainm Theachta Mary Lou McDonald, uachtarán Shinn Féin, a chur chun tosaigh mar Thaoiseach. Roimh an olltoghchán seo, dúirt Sinn Féin go mbeadh an chéad thoghchán eile ar cheann de na toghcháin is tábhachtaí le fada an lá. Bhí an deis ann, tríd an olltoghchán, saol mhuintir na h-oileán seo a chruthú ar feadh an chéad deich mbliana eile nó níos faide ar aghaidh agus go raibh seans ann go mbeadh torthaí an olltoghcháin seo ar scála nach bhfaca muid riamh roimhe seo. Sin é go díreach mar a tharla sé. Chonaiceamar scála athraithe san olltoghchán nach bhfacamar a leithéid riamh roimhe seo. Le chéile, thug páirtí Shinn Féin ár dteachtaireacht chuig na pobail agus leag muid amach, ar bhealach soiléir, caidé go díreach ar a sheasann Sinn Féin. Chur muid ár gelár chun tosaigh, sheas muid le teaghlaigh agus le hoibrithe, chuireamar an t-athrú ollmhór ar mhaith linn a chruthú, agus an bealach chun oibriú i dtreo Éire aontaithe.

It gives me great honour and pride to nominate my party president, Teachta McDonald, for the position of Taoiseach. Before the general election, Sinn Féin said that the election could be the most important in a generation. We said that it could shape life on the island of Ireland for the next decade and beyond, and that the result of the election could be seismic for the Irish political landscape. It turned out to be seismic. We in Sinn Féin took our message to the people and to communities across the State. We set out in clear terms what we stand for. That there are so many new Sinn Féin Deputies here today is a testament to the fact that the people responded to our message. I thank the 535,573 people who gave Sinn Féin their number one vote in the election. We will not let them down.

Sinn Féin put forward a programme whose aims were, and are, to give workers and families a break, to deliver fundamental change and to advance Irish unity. Other parties and independent candidates who offered practical and credible alternatives to the failed policies of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were also rewarded in this election. The pro-change parties won the election. Together, we have a mandate and responsibility to put together a Government for change. This is not about any single party or leader. It is about giving expression to the desire for change of hundreds of thousands of voters who voted for change. People want the biggest house building programme in the history of the State. They want rents reduced and frozen and the trolley crisis resolved. They want affordable childcare, good quality public services and radical action on the climate change agenda. They also want a meaningful conversation about Irish unity.

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Sinn Féin, along with others, has a mandate to put together a Government for change and we want to work with others to achieve such a Government. Nobody in this Dáil other than Teachta McDonald can lead that Government for change. She has all of the qualities a leader needs. She has shown that she is willing to reach out, listen to and work with everyone in this Dáil. She has the vision this country needs, and when I say “country” I mean every part of it, the Thirty-two Counties. She has a vision that encompasses the entire island that goes beyond the Border and embraces all our people. She has spearheaded Sinn Féin’s work to get the North’s power-sharing government back up and running on a sustainable basis that delivers for all sections of society. That has been done. Now Sinn Féin wants to be in government across the island of Ireland.

Deputy McDonald is a strong, proven leader with the courage and perseverance that people need and want in a Taoiseach. That is the reason Sinn Féin won the popular vote in this election. She would also be the first female Taoiseach. That, in itself, would deliver change. Above all else, however, she is an Irish republican. That is what we need at this time. We need ambition, big ideas and a Government of change. We need Deputy McDonald as Taoiseach leading that Government. We need someone who is not in politics for power or status or who just wants their turn in office, but someone different. We need change, and now is the moment for change. I appeal to all Teachtaí who want real change to support the nomination of Deputy McDonald for Taoiseach.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Kerrane is also making her maiden address and seconding Deputy Doherty’s proposal.

Deputy Claire Kerrane: It is a great honour to stand here today to represent the people of Roscommon and Galway. I do so with great pride. In electing me, the people of Roscommon and Galway sent a clear message to the establishment. For the first time in the history of the State they did not return a Deputy from Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael. This message must be heard loud and clear. It cannot be ignored. As a young woman in my 20s, I will bring a new voice and approach to representing the people of Roscommon and Galway. I intend to work night and day on behalf of my constituents, alongside a strong 36-Member team of Sinn Féin colleagues. We will ensure that the desire for change of the Irish people is respected and delivered.

It is a great privilege to second the nomination of Teachta McDonald for Taoiseach. As a republican woman, there is nobody I admire more than Deputy McDonald. She has the charisma and leadership ability this country, the Thirty-two Counties, needs in a leader. She is the only nominee who truly understands the needs and aspirations of ordinary people. She is the only one who will deliver a Government for change that will give workers and families across the State a break. She is also the only nominee who is a united Irishman and who will work in her capacity as Taoiseach to bring about Irish unity. Nobody here can truly lead a Government for change other than Deputy McDonald. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael offer no change, only the same old politics of the past. We need change. We need something new. We need Deputy Mary Lou McDonald. That is why I commend this motion to the House.

Deputy Joe O’Brien: I congratulate the Ceann Comhairle on his election. I nominate Deputy Eamon Ryan for appointment by the President to be Taoiseach.

On Monday, I stood in the back garden of the home of David and Sharon Shevlin of the Burrow, Portrane, in my constituency of Dublin Fingal. The Shevlins are just one of a number of families in Portrane who have seen their homes rapidly shrink and disappear in recent years

due to increased coastal erosion and extreme weather events. Mr. Shevlin reckons that 13 m of land has disappeared from behind his house in the last two years alone. If another half a metre goes, the house will be uninhabitable. As predicted some years ago, we are now getting wetter winters, more storms, and extreme weather events are increasing. This is impacting our infrastructure, our food systems, the way we live, and for the Shevlins, their very home. We continue to make a mess of the planet.

However, there is hope, and there is also more and better than hope; there is opportunity. This Dáil has an opportunity to develop and implement policies that will not only tackle climate change and its implications, but will provide quality homes for people which will stand the test of time, like so many of those built in the 1970s. There is an opportunity to develop a public transport system that will help clean up our air, give people time back in their lives and allow our children to walk or cycle safely to school. There is an opportunity for Ireland to be a net energy exporter and help insulate our economy from overexposure to global shocks. There is an opportunity to ensure that family farms such as the one on which I grew up can adapt and have a viable economic future.

Deputies may be thinking that this speech is not about Eamon Ryan. We are not big into personality politics in the Green Party, but I will say this much: sometimes real leadership emerges not when there is a big shiny prize to be won, but when the going is really tough and there are no thanks or plaudits to be had. Deputy Eamon Ryan has proven himself in that regard over the last nine years, not just when there were only two Green TDs, but also when he toiled away with positivity outside of this House when we had no TDs. We have 12 today. Deputy Eamon Ryan also encapsulates a spirit that must be central to the Thirty-third Dáil if it is to succeed, that is, the spirit of collaboration, reaching out to others and working with people with whom one might not have worked or dreamed of working before. My party colleagues and I look forward to sitting down with some of them over the next week or two, in order that we can get closer to doing the job for which we were all elected.

I will make a final point on leadership. As the Ceann Comhairle mentioned earlier today, about three months ago young people from every county in Ireland sat in these very seats, pleading with the political system to take action on climate change. I want to remind everyone of the Youth Assembly on Climate Change that took place in this House. I acknowledge the leadership of the young people all over the country and thank them for standing up and speaking up for their future. It is now up to us to look after their future.

Deputy Catherine Martin: Gabhaim comhghairdeas leis an gCeann Comhairle agus guím gach rath air sa chúram tábhachtach a bheidh air sa Dáil seo.

Tacaím le hainmniú an Teachta Eamon Ryan mar an chéad Taoiseach ón gComhaontú Glas. Is léir dúinn uile gur tharlaigh athrú mór stairiúil sa toghchán coicís ó shin. Tá an Teachta Eamon Ryan á ainmniú againn mar Thaoiseach toisc go n-aithníonn muid an sainordú atá faighte ag an gComhaontas Glas ón bpobal chun tacú le gníomhú ar son na haeráide i nDáil Éireann. Bhí dhá rabharta ghlas ann le déanaí, agus is léir gur mó a thuigeann an pobal anois gur baol dúinn an t-athrú aeráide. Éilíonn daoine óga orainn go háirithe saol slán amach anseo a chinntiú dóibh go náisiúnta agus go domhanda. Caithfear aithint go bhfuil éigeandáil aeráide ann, chomh maith le héigeandáil tithíochta agus éigeandáil sa chóras sláinte. Fógraíodh géarchéim aeráide sa Teach seo roinnt míonna ó shin, ach caithfear beart a dhéanamh de réir briathair anois.

Ar an gcaoi chéanna, caithfear aird a dhíriú ar an ngéarchéim teanga sa Ghaeltacht chomh

maith. Theastaigh uaim é sin a dhéanamh inniu tríd an óráid seo a thabhairt i nGaeilge, chun beart a dhéanamh de réir briathair. Tacóidh an Comhaontas Glas go mór le neartú Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla le linn an téarma Dála seo.

Déanfaimid an gníomhú ar son na haeráide a luaigh mé chun an t-athrú ó bhun a bhfuil géarghá leis a bhaint amach, ionas go mbeidh an tír seo chun tosaigh seachas í a bheith ag titim ar chúl sa chúram sin, agus mar fhreagra ar na mílte duine a thug na sráideanna orthu féin chun an gníomhú sin a éilimh. Chuala muid iad, agus táimid ag seasamh leo. De réir sin, is cúis áthais dom an Teachta Eamon Ryan a ainmniú mar Thaoiseach.

An Ceann Comhairle: Yesterday evening, there was a brief meeting with group and party Whips at which it was agreed, subject to the further agreement of the House, that we would hear some further remarks from Members on these proposals, which would be no longer than three minutes. Is that agreed? Agreed.

I first call Deputy Joan Collins.

Deputy Joan Collins: First, I express my thanks for the warm and friendly response I received on the doorsteps in Dublin South-Central during the general election campaign. Second, I thank the people of Dublin South-Central for using their canny voting skills to re-elect me to the Thirty-third Dáil. I am humbled and delighted.

The main issues I encountered on the doorsteps were the dire housing crisis; the health crisis; the for-profit childcare crisis; work-life balance; pension age; access to services such as physiotherapy, speech therapy, and assessments; access to school age teams; and access to education for children with autism. In south Dublin, over 80 children do not and cannot access education. Home help hours and the mental health services were also raised. There were many issues.

The main message I received was that people did not want Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael. In 2016, people voted against those parties, but they got the same and felt betrayed. The parties of austerity and hardship continued in government from 2016 to 2020. As an elected representative, I am expected to do my best politically to support and implement policies of progressive change. I will positively engage to deliver that change and the onus is on all progressive Deputies to pursue such policies. I stood on the Right 2 Change policy document, which was born out of extensive consultation between individuals, community groups, trade unionists, political parties and independent representatives, who were all involved in the anti-water charges campaign. This is the document that was pulled together, and it includes the right to housing, health, water, jobs and decent work, debt justice, education, democratic reform, equality, a sustainable environment and national resources. I am determined to pursue those policies with the progressives in this Dáil who also wish to do so. On that basis, I will be voting for Deputy Mary Lou McDonald to deliver those policies. Sinn Féin has committed to pursue them and we will try to implement them. I will support the policies on declaring a housing emergency and delivering a local authority led public housing programme on public lands, to be funded by the European Investment Bank. On healthcare, I support declaring a health crisis and the implementation of Sláintecare with the allocation of appropriate funding, along with many other issues, such as a public, not-for-profit banking system as put forward by the Public Banking Forum of Ireland. These are the issues I want to take forward. I will work with groups in the Dáil which also wish to pursue them, to the point where we can put the change being demanded to the people, rather than to us in the Dáil.

Deputy Mick Barry: People voted for change on 8 February - real change on health, real change on housing, real change on the pension age and real change for climate justice. Voters rejected a rigged economy run for the 1% and with a total bias against the needs of workers, young people and our planet.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have ruled this country for nearly 100 years. They are the opponents of real change. They are the representatives of the wealthy vested interests that have rigged the economy and cast a blight on so many lives. That is why I will vote against the nominees of both those parties this evening. The people who voted for real change cast their votes for a variety of parties but more than any other for Sinn Féin. I will cast my vote for Deputy McDonald this evening to respect that vote of the people and to increase the pressure on her party to deliver the change that people demand. The Deputy cannot deliver real change alongside either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael, and I call on her to rule out those coalition options. I want to see a Government that delivers real change. That cannot be done without taking on the billionaires, the corporations and the big landlords and breaking with their system. If such a Government is not yet possible, I will use my vote to allow a Government that excludes Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael coming to power, using my position to help build broad support in society for a majority left government with socialist policies as soon as possible.

One of the key disagreements Solidarity has with Sinn Féin relates to its role in the North. Before voting for the Sinn Féin nominee, I must register the following points. Unity can never be achieved by coercion or by forcing a settlement on a minority. We will never support any proposal which heightens sectarian division between Catholic and Protestant. We need a Government in Dublin with policies that are the complete opposite of the neo-liberal policies Sinn Féin has implemented in Belfast alongside the DUP. The only basis for unity is the rejection of sectarian politics, with working people uniting in pursuance of their common class interests.

I will vote this evening against the Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael nominees. They stand for no change. I will add my voice to the voice of the majority in our society now demanding the delivery of real change.

Deputy Paul Murphy: I too will vote for Deputy McDonald for Taoiseach and vote against Deputy Varadkar and Deputy Micheál Martin. In doing so I will seek to use my vote to give effect to the desire for radical change expressed at the election. Before the election we heard from Fine Gael Ministers and various commentators about how the political centre would hold. It did not hold because the extreme neo-liberal centre, represented by Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, and the interests of big business, landlords and developers who have benefited from the crises facing ordinary people had delivered those crises for those people; because they delivered housing crises of an unprecedented scale and a health crisis; and because they drive us towards climate disaster. They have been rejected at the ballot box and they should not try to hold on to power. Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil have said the left has won this election and that it should now implement its programme. Then I ask them to stand aside. They should abstain today and allow an alternative minority Government to be formed. People want an end to the cycle of their rule and want a Government that will improve people's lives, returning the pension age immediately to 65, cutting rents, implementing a rent freeze immediately, increasing the minimum wage and removing restrictions on the rights of workers to organise and to strike. If there is a real prospect of a return of either or both of these parties, that will generate real anger, and that anger will mobilise on the streets in protest.

Sinn Féin should be under no misunderstanding about the nature of my vote. I think Deputy

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McDonald will have the most votes for Taoiseach today because of my vote and the votes of other left-wing Deputies. These are not votes to be used to strengthen Sinn Féin's hand in negotiations with Fianna Fáil; they are votes for an alternative government excluding Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. While I will vote for Deputy McDonald, I say to her very clearly that if Sinn Féin forms a Government with Fianna Fáil, it will represent a betrayal of Sinn Féin's voters. Such a Government will not deliver on the change that Sinn Féin's voters and our voters want because Fianna Fáil, like Fine Gael, represents the big business and vested interests that will not allow change, and I will oppose such a Government. For real change in people's lives, what we need is not just an alternative Government, but a left Government with socialist policies and a programme that prioritises the needs of people and our environment, not the profits of big business. We need a Government that would break with the reliance on the market in housing; introduce real rent controls and rent cuts and a massive public housebuilding programme; introduce a national health service, taking the private hospitals into the public system; and take radical climate action by taking big polluters into democratic public ownership. An alternative Government combined with mobilisations on the streets can be an important step towards that change we need.

Deputy Thomas Pringle: I take this opportunity to wish the Ceann Comhairle well on his re-election.

The people in Donegal who elected me were very clearly concerned about the issues of housing, health and climate change and the impact they were having on their lives. Housing is an issue right across Ireland - not only in Dublin but in rural Ireland as well - and they very clearly stated that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael did not represent options to them in dealing with those issues. I clearly stated on the doorsteps and during the election campaign that I would not support Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael back into government because I do not believe they will deliver the change that is necessary to ensure we have a Government of the people and for the people, and that is what is vitally important. For that reason I will support Deputy McDonald in her bid to be Taoiseach on the nomination of the House. However, my support will be on the basis that Sinn Féin will work together with other parties and groups to develop and deliver that change right across the country, and that will be vitally important.

There will probably be no Taoiseach elected today, but I look forward to the period to come, when we will go ahead and work together to build that record for change and that agenda for change that will be put before the House. I expect that we will then be able to form a Government so I look forward to that process taking place.

Deputy Catherine Connolly: Táimid in ainm Taoiseach nua a roghnú inniu, agus tá an próiseas sin thar a bheith tábhachtach. Beidh ár dtriall mar thír agus todhchaí na tíre ag brath ar cibé cén duine a bheidh tofa. Ní dóigh liom go bhfuil na páirtithe móra i ndáiríre faoi na hathruithe atá ag teastáil sa tír, so ní bheidh toradh sásúil againn inniu. We are being asked to select one of four candidates as Taoiseach. Two of the candidates, the Taoiseach and the leader of Fianna Fáil, have put themselves forward without any evidence at all that they have listened to the people or learned any lessons. Neither has acknowledged that the crises we face in so many areas, including housing, health, public transport and climate change, are a direct consequence of the policies pursued by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. Both parties have failed to realise that we live in a Republic in which sovereignty rests with the people, and the people have now spoken. No mandate has been given to any party, including Sinn Féin, yet Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael appear to have washed their hands of the election results and so far have arrogantly refused to consider alternatives or to present any meaningful programme for Government reflecting the

wishes and the desires of the people for a genuine Republic. Indeed, they have shown utter contempt for the democratic process. Like Narcissus, who looked into the lake and became enraptured with the reflection of his own beauty, both Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have looked into the lake of the market and become enraptured with its ideology. The beauty of the market and their beauty have become one. We on the left have challenged that divisive market ideology, epitomised by the Taoiseach's repeated use of language such as "we are here for the people who get up early in the morning". We on the left have offered sustainable solutions to these crises, yet here we are in a competition in the Dáil based on personalities rather than policies and a realistic programme for Government. Those of us on the left have not engaged in that posturing. We have listened to the people and have worked together to provide an alternative that gives real meaning to the word "republic", a republic that belongs to all of us and not any one party. More specifically, our programme on the left sees the State as an integral part of the solution to the challenges we face, which are not inevitable, with a properly regulated private market playing a secondary role. We are committed to public housing on public land, the implementation of Sláintecare, the re-establishment of the independent monitoring body of A Vision for Change, and the underpinning of all our policies and legislation by realistic climate action measures.

Of today's candidates, the leader of Sinn Féin, subject to a closer analysis of a detailed programme for Government, represents the best option to achieve that vision on the left.

Deputy Matt Carthy: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCéann Comhairle agus guím comhghairdeas air agus ar a chlann arís tar éis dó a bheith tofa inniu. Táim an-bhródúil a bheith ag caint inniu mar ionadaí do mhuintir an Chabháin agus Muineacháin.

I am honoured and privileged to stand here as a representative of the Cavan-Monaghan constituency. As the House may know, it was the constituency that returned the hunger striker Kieran Doherty as a Deputy in 1981 during darker times for our country. It was also the constituency that elected Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin in 1997 as the first Sinn Féin representative to take a seat in the House. I stood on Kildare Street on the day he first walked through the gates of this building as Sinn Féin's sole Deputy. I cannot imagine how I would have answered anyone who suggested that, 23 years later, I would be one of two Cavan-Monaghan Sinn Féin Deputies alongside Pauline Tully and that we in turn would be part of a 37-Deputy Sinn Féin team following Caoimhghín's pathway. The notion that I would be making my maiden speech as part of a Sinn Féin team that had the same number of seats as Fianna Fáil and a greater number of seats than Fine Gael, and that our party would have won the popular vote at the general election, would have been considered fanciful throughout much of the time that Caoimhghín sat on these benches.

I commend Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin on his service to the people of Cavan-Monaghan, our country and our party. The growth of Sinn Féin over the past three decades is a testament to his work and dedication. I thank Caoimhghín and his wife, Briega, and their children, Aisling, Sinéad, Cliodhna, Deirbhile and Órán, for their contribution to Irish public life and republican politics.

I commend all those others, far too numerous to mention, who played a part in building our party over so many years. Some are no longer with us. For the others, today is a poignant occasion.

The general election of 8 February 2020 will be marked in history as the day that Irish politics changed forever. While there were many architects of that change, one person epitomises

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and personifies the mandate for change, namely, Deputy McDonald, who is standing before us as a nominee for Taoiseach. I am pleased to have this opportunity on behalf of the people of Cavan-Monaghan to support that nomination. Deputy McDonald has offered solutions to the failures of successive Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael Governments. She has built and led a team that has outlined how we can support workers and families and give them a much-needed break while also investing in public services, sorting out the crisis in health care and building homes for the generations that have been locked out. She has offered answers to the challenges faced by struggling renters, overburdened parents, hard-pressed family farmers and communities crying out for a new dispensation. Above all, Deputy McDonald has offered hope for a large cohort of the electorate that we can build a better, fairer and united Ireland. I am proud today to be in a position to stand alongside other Deputies in support of her nomination for Taoiseach.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: On behalf of People Before Profit, I wish to say that we will support Deputy McDonald's nomination for Taoiseach. During the campaign, People Before Profit had stamped on every one of our leaflets and posters the slogan "Break the cycle of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael" and 100 years of two-party rule. In record numbers, voters responded to and echoed that call. We have an historic shift in Irish politics where, for the first time, the two major parties have considerably less than 50% support. It was clear on the doorsteps that that was because of the anger people felt at the failure of those parties to deliver the affordable housing that people needed, a healthcare system that worked for all regardless of the size of someone's wallet, affordable childcare, something at the end of the month after someone had paid the bills, and the sort of radical climate action that the young people who came out onto the streets during the climate strikes were demanding.

It seems to me that the only way we can give effect to that unmistakable demand for change and the demand to break the cycle of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael is to establish a left minority Government. I wish it was a left majority Government, but we in People Before Profit have said from the beginning that we believe a left Government is now possible. The only way that can happen is with Deputy McDonald as Taoiseach, given that Sinn Féin is the largest component of the vote for change that expressed itself in support for a number of left-wing and left-leaning parties. We appeal to all those parties on the left that benefited from the vote for change to come together and form a left alternative Government, albeit a minority one. To those who say it is not practical, I say this: such a Government, even in its first 100 days, could restore the pension age to 65 years; stop the scandalous sale of public land and instead use it for public and affordable housing; introduce rent controls; stop evictions; tax the corporate polluters instead of ordinary people to fund radical climate measures such as free and frequent public transport, a major national retrofit programme and an afforestation programme; bring the minimum wage up to a living wage; and introduce pay equality for health workers so that we could recruit and retain nurses to resolve the crisis in our health service. We urge the parties of the left to create such a left minority Government.

We do not support Deputy McDonald with a blank cheque. We hope she will take that support-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Time is up, Deputy, please.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: -----to make an effort to establish a left minority Government to give effect to the demand for change and the demand to break the cycle of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael rule.

Deputy Louise O'Reilly: I offer my sincere and heartfelt congratulations to the Ceann Comhairle on his re-election. It is a great honour for me to be here today on behalf of the people of Dublin Fingal, whom I thank for sending me to the Dáil again to represent them. I will do just that to the very best of my ability.

A clear majority of people in the election voted not just for change, but for action. They want to see the housing and health crises sorted. They want the largest public housing programme in the history of the State. They want universal healthcare. They want affordable childcare and good quality public transport. They want action to tackle climate change. They want to take part in a reasoned and rational debate on Irish unity.

Those parties and Independents who offered practical and credible alternatives to the failed policies of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were rewarded at this election. It is not about any one party. It is not even about any one leader. It is about giving expression to the desire of the hundreds of thousands of people who voted not just for change but for action.

Deputy McDonald is the best person to lead that Government of change, not just because of the number of votes received by Sinn Féin but because she has the ability, skill and determination to lead. She is not just a colleague, she is also a friend. For me, she represents the best chance that working people have to achieve the policy changes that will make a real and meaningful difference in their lives. I thank those Deputies who have offered support. I urge all other Deputies to vote for Deputy Mary Lou McDonald this afternoon.

Deputy Thomas Byrne: Gabhaim buíochas agus comhghairdeas leis an Teachta O'Feargháil as a bheith tofa arís mar Cheann Comhairle ar an Dáil. Guím go mbeidh téarma maith agus tairbheach aige i rith na Dála seo. I extend my congratulations to the Ceann Comhairle on being elected to the position and wish you every success in your role so you can continue the good and reforming work of the previous Dáil. I also thank my constituents in Meath East for electing me to this Dáil and giving me a mandate to stand here to support the nomination of Deputy Micheál Martin as Taoiseach.

The reality is nobody will be elected today with a majority of votes in this House, as the Constitution requires. It is also the reality that much work will be done, I suspect, over the next few weeks to put a Government together that can command a majority of votes in the House. I want the Taoiseach of the Government to be Deputy Martin. It is not simply a numbers game; it must be about policy and how we achieve the goals that all of us in this House have set out. It is fair to say that all of us want to build more houses and it is fair to say that all of us want to move people off trolleys and into hospital wards. I believe the Fianna Fáil plan, which is realistic and costed as being within available resources, will do that.

This is not to say one party has a monopoly on all the ideas in this House. No party has such a monopoly. I look forward to teasing out issues with parties over the next few weeks to ensure the best and most practical ideas come together. It will take a couple of weeks but that is not to say there is no urgency in this. There is much urgency in dealing with the problems we face in society and they must be tackled. That will require a strong Government, which should be a majority Government, that can command authority and get things done.

Deputy Martin has demonstrated sincerity, self-sacrifice and honesty in his political life over the past number of years, and especially as Leader of the Opposition. His achievements in government have been outlined by my colleagues and they are well recognised. As Leader of

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the Opposition, he demonstrated humility and a sense of national interest that is often lacking in politics. I am certain that if he is elected Taoiseach, he will put that into practice. We do not need conditional support, as the left has given to Deputy McDonald. We really do not need this process today except that the Constitution requires it to take place, as nobody will have the majority of votes. We need a Taoiseach who will command a majority to get things done and that person to be Deputy Micheál Martin. I hope to be back in a couple of weeks to give the same speech when a Government has been put together that Fianna Fáil can lead.

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: I sincerely congratulate the Ceann Comhairle on his election, which is a great honour for him, his family and his supporters. You got a great endorsement from a majority in the House, which must be very much respected.

I humbly thank the people of County Kerry who voted for me and sent me here again. I thank all the people who worked on my campaign and I appreciate their efforts very much. Over the next number of days and weeks, a very serious job must be carried out by the political parties and Independents elected to this new Dáil. I want to see that sped up. On the previous occasion, more than 70 days passed before a Taoiseach was elected and a programme for Government was developed and brought forward. We should speed this up by ensuring the people who need to talk will do so. I compliment Sinn Féin as it has been proactive in saying it will speak with everybody and trying to make that happen. I know everybody else will put their shoulder to the wheel. The job of every one of us here, regardless of our politics, is to work for the people who elected us and to do the best for the people of this country. We must really tear at that and not be slow about it. It is important to have our chairman or boss in place and with that done, it is important that this job of work has to be tackled very quickly.

No longer will the people of Ireland stand for a position where a Minister for Health can say an issue relating to health is not his responsibility and a Deputy should talk to the HSE about it. That will not be tolerated in future. People will not accept that others must wait for years for respite services as they do in County Kerry now. People will not be willing to accept that if they have a child with special needs who requires speech and language therapy, he or she must wait for two or three years. That will not be acceptable in the future. It will also not be acceptable in the future that if older people, perhaps in their 80s or 90s, go into hospital, they will have to spend two or three days in emergency department before they can get into a ward.

We must learn from mistakes. I am not standing here today just to bash the previous Government or the one before it and say they did everything wrong. I am outlining what people want in future. They want proper services. They want a Taoiseach, Ministers, a Government and an Opposition that will work towards that. They want us to do our genuine best and leave nobody behind. How we achieve that is up to each one of us but we must put our hearts and souls into this to ensure the people of Ireland get the services they so genuinely deserve.

Finally, one issue that an incoming Government will have to tackle is cyberbullying that results in suicide. This affects younger people in an awful way. We must tackle the problem. We must be able to live in a society where that type of nonsense or rubbish will not be tolerated. The people up at night bullying people and writing dirty things about them must be stopped and not tolerated in an intelligent and modern society.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCeann Comhairle agus guím gach rath air freisin. I hope the goodwill demonstrated to you by Deputies in the Chamber today will last for more than just today.

We must ask ourselves exactly what we are doing today. Many people will watch this event and see well-paid Deputies involved in a fruitless, pointless episode. We will achieve absolutely nothing today with regard to the election of a Taoiseach, and this is an example of the dysfunction that exists in the political system. All the Members who stood for election displayed an urgency that reflected the crisis in housing, healthcare, education, crime prevention and transportation. That urgency has been left behind, however, and many are now saying we should wait to see what happens. It is absolutely bananas that some politicians and political commentators are saying that a Government may not be organised before the end of April or even by May. It is incredible that some Members have spoken about the need for multilateral or bilateral meetings so that people can come together to work out a position for a Government. One Member suggested that an international facilitator could be put in place, perhaps a Boutros Boutros-Ghali type of figure, to get two political parties to speak to each other when there is no discernible difference between them anyway.

We heard Fine Gael talk about the need to prepare for Opposition, as if it needs some kind of plan to walk across the Chamber. This is absolutely bonkers. People locked out in Ireland and in serious crisis on a daily basis are depending on this new Dáil to be practical and real in the development of a Government now. I urge politicians to leave their posturing and egos behind. We must ensure that happens as soon as possible.

Deputy Darren O'Rourke: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCeann Comhairle agus guím comhghairdeas air freisin as a bheith tofa. Táim an-sásta an deis seo a ghlacadh tacú le hainmniúchán an Teachta Mary Lou McDonald mar Thaoiseach. Is mór an onóir agus an phribhléid dom é sin a dhéanamh.

I am very happy to support the nomination of Deputy Mary Lou McDonald to the position of Taoiseach because I believe it reflects entirely the mandate given to this Dáil and my party, Sinn Féin. In particular, I believe it is the mandate given to the Deputy by the people of Ireland on 8 February who want her to be Taoiseach.

Many commentators said the general election result was seismic and I agree. There can be no doubt about it. The election was uplifting, positive and liberating. This was an election full of hope for a better and brighter future and it prescribed a clear mandate and message for us today. People are hungry for change and, throughout the election campaign, they said enough was enough. They said that as a country and people, we deserve better and we demand better. I think everyone in this Chamber can agree on that. They said we deserve better in health and housing - the national scandals. However, they also said they wanted a break from sitting in congested traffic; from public services that do not exist, work or make sense; and from working from morning to night not seeing their kids during the week but not having the few spare euro needed to treat them at the weekend. This is the life, or the existence, created for them by previous Governments and they want change. On 8 February, the people spoke. Hundreds of thousands of them came out and voted for change like never before. More than 530,000 people voted for Sinn Féin alone. As a result, as we enter the early months of a new decade, people are now more hopeful than ever that change is possible. They are more hopeful that politics and politicians will deliver that change. They do not expect miracles but they will not accept excuses. They know enough about the world and have seen it done well elsewhere so they know their demands are entirely reasonable and realisable.

This Dáil has an unprecedented mandate for change. More than any other party, Sinn Féin is the party that received that mandate for change. More than any other leader, Deputy McDonald

is the leader who received that mandate for change. Deputy McDonald would be in every way a fitting Taoiseach. She has shown that in spades. This is a unique opportunity in the history of our country. I urge Teachtaí to support Deputy McDonald for Taoiseach to lead a Government for change and to implement a programme for change that is fitting for the clear wishes of the Irish people.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: A Cheann Comhairle, I join with others in warmly congratulating you on your re-election to the Chair. It is certainly a recognition of the effective manner in which you fulfilled that role over the past four years. The Social Democrats look forward to continuing their constructive and respectful working relationship with you in the Thirty-third Dáil. I will take a moment to welcome and congratulate all 48 new Members of this House and their families. It is a very special and emotional day for them and their families and I hope they enjoy the occasion and will be here long enough to make their efforts worthwhile.

It goes without saying that Deputy Catherine Murphy and I are delighted to be re-elected to this House and very much thank our respective constituents for returning us. We are particularly pleased by and very proud of the fact that the ranks of the Social Democrats have swelled significantly with the addition of four new very competent and able Deputies, of whom we are very proud. We look forward to making a strong contribution to the development and evolution of Irish politics in coming years and will play an active and constructive role in this Dáil, regardless of whether we are in government or in opposition.

The business in hand is the election of a Taoiseach. The Social Democrats will not be supporting any candidate because we believe it is meaningless for us to do so in the absence of a negotiated and agreed programme for Government. We are very clear and have said over the past week that this is not a personality or popularity contest. It has to be about the policies that respond to what the public has said to us in the past week. It is about having an agreed policy platform that will lead to a programme for Government.

On 8 February, the Irish people sent a very clear message to this House. They told us very plainly that they do not like the direction the country has taken in recent years. They were not just saying that things were not happening quickly enough, as Members on these benches have been trying to make out. They said very clearly that they wanted a completely new approach and direction for this country because a country where people in decent jobs cannot afford a decent place to live or where almost 10,000 people are homeless is not a country that works. A country where people must wait for years for a simple hospital procedure or where a parent cannot access basic health services for his or her child and is advised to go private is not a country that works. A country where many people feel they are just living to work, have long commutes and constantly feel they have no time for the things that really matter is not a country that works. People know it does not have to be like this. Most of all, they want a country that is fair where everyone can have a decent quality of life. The old way of doing things has been rejected. The challenge now is to agree the way forward and the urgently needed solutions to the big problems the country faces and to do so in a new programme for Government. After the ceremony of today, I hope this work can get under way quickly.

Deputy Brendan Howlin: Each Member gathered in this House has spent the past number of weeks talking and, I hope, listening to thousands of our people. We are here because we have been selected by our people to be here - each one with his or her unique mandate - each one equally legitimate. Nobody's mandate is stronger or better than that of anybody else. Each one of us looks to his or her constituency for his or her strengths. I thank the people of Wexford for

electing me to be their representative here on the ninth successive occasion.

Having listened, we know what the people want. We know our voters want a functioning health system. We know people want houses for all our people and public services that are the equivalent of the best in Europe that can be provided. The Labour Party did not receive a mandate to go into government but we are determined to help shape our country's future, as we have done in the past, particularly with regard to the policies that will be pursued by this Dáil in the days, months and years to come. We will advance our own policies anchored in the values we put before the people and in the manifesto we sought to have endorsed and we will support policies from any quarter that are in harmony with that and any proposals that come before this Dáil that are in harmony with that objective. We will try to do so with honesty and clarity. We cannot have the quality public services about which the people have talked unless we have a robust, sustainable and progressive tax base. One cannot promise to give endless tax cuts and have world-class public services.

I am familiar with the process of Government formation. I have been privileged to be involved in many negotiations to form a Government. In my judgment, there are three essential ingredients. One needs sufficient numbers. People have been dismissive of the mathematics of it but if one does not have a sufficient number of Deputies to follow through on the election and policies, one is not off first base. One needs compatible policies. If people are coming together, they need a synergy of policies they can support. Third, one needs a willingness to serve. I have said before that it is an extraordinary thing. The last Dáil was the first Dáil of which I was a Member where the majority did not want to be in government, which, ultimately, is a dangerous thing for our democracy. I recognise that sometimes the willingness to serve bit is the hardest of those three ingredients and that sometimes, one needs time to condition one's own support base to move on to that willingness bit but my final sentence would be this: while there is, inevitably, a degree of shadow-boxing and pretend negotiation, this country and our people need a Government and I hope we get to the actual endgame of ensuring that those three ingredients are brought before this House in the not-too-distant future.

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire: Gabhaim comhghairdeas leis an gCeann Comhairle as a bheith atofa agus go n-éirí leis ina phost. Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil leo siúd a thug vóta do Shinn Féin sa toghchán deireanach agus dom féin i gCorcaigh Theas-Lár. Is mór an onóir dom é.

I have one vote in this Dáil and on each motion today. My vote is worth no more than that of any other Deputy. We have no golden chair or special status. We have no more an automatic right to be in government, as some claim we believe, than anyone else. However, it is worth no less either. I, and the people who voted for my party and me, have as much right to be heard as anyone else. We have the same right to play a role in how this Government is formed as anyone else.

5 o'clock

Tá mo vóta cothrom le vóta aon Teachta eile. Many people who voted for us, and, indeed, quite a few who did not, are intensely frustrated that some people in this House will not so much as speak to Sinn Féin about forming a government. The word around these halls, and among the public, is how to deliver a Government for change. This was a change election. While we, and others, may have evoked that change in our speeches and policies, the appetite for it was organic and grew and strengthened as time went on. It grew from frustration at how little had

changed in many areas of Irish life and politics in recent years.

In my office, directly in my line of sight as I use my computer, held up by a thumbtack, is the maiden speech which I made in this Chamber almost four years ago. It referred to the increasing numbers on our streets, sleeping rough, and described the utterly unacceptable number of people living in hostels, hotels and travel lodges by way of emergency accommodation as an ongoing scandal. Níl an Rialtas tar éis na ceachtanna staire a fhoghlaim. Is toradh í an ghéarchéim tithíochta ar an easpa tógála tithíocht sóisialta. I spoke of rising rents, the poor condition of housing and overcrowding.

People want change because if there has been change in terms of housing, it has only been for the worse. Rents and the numbers of homeless have continued to rise to record numbers. People want change because they want to live in a society where having a permanent, affordable home is not a pipe dream. People want change because they want to live in a society in which the ill can be cared for quickly and with dignity. People want change because they want to live in a society that gives people a decent quality of life and good public services.

Some Members believe that the best parties to deliver that change may well be Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, whose representatives have failed to deliver that change over the past nine years. They are entitled to that view but I cannot agree with them. I will vote for the candidate who I believe can truly lead a Government for change. Deputy Mary Lou McDonald has understood the mood of the public. She led a Sinn Féin team that delivered a manifesto that captured the imagination of the public. She is courageous, competent and ambitious. Sinn Féin does not only want a change in policy but to change the course of Irish politics. Is í an Teachta Mary Lou McDonald an t-aon rogha más mian le duine Rialtas le fíis úr agus nua a chur ar bun - Rialtas chun athrú a dhéanamh. If Deputies want a Government for change, one that will deliver, I call on them to support Deputy Mary Lou McDonald.

Deputy Dara Calleary: Gabhaim comhghairdeas leis an gCeann Comhairle, a chlann agus a fhoireann oifige as a thoghadh. Go n-éirí leis sa téarma nua. Gabhaim buíochas freisin le muintir Mhaigh Eo as mo thoghadh.

I welcome the 48 new Deputies, their families and supporters, and wish them every success. I think of my former colleagues from the Thirty-second Dáil, those who were defeated and those who have retired, from all parties and none, following long service. Today will be a difficult day for them and we think of them and their families.

Change is the theme of the day. It is easy to speak about, but difficult to deliver, change. We need a Taoiseach who has experience of tackling vested interests and a deep-seated reluctance to change. That is Deputy Micheál Martin. He has shown, throughout his ministerial career and career in politics, that he will take on vested interests and roll them aside, as he did in introducing the first smoking ban in the world and by introducing radical changes when he served as Minister for Education and Science, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and Minister for Health and Children. He has shown that in his leadership of Fianna Fáil since 2011. We can speak about, offer and promise change but we must have the skills to deliver it. We must have the interest in our community and nation to believe that it must be done despite whatever obstacles we face, and that has been Deputy Micheál Martin's hallmark through his political career.

Many people here will demand action and insist that people get to work, but will walk away

from the Chamber this evening without doing anything and will wait for things to happen. Fianna Fáil is not going to do that and will engage, in the coming days and weeks, in a process of delivering a programme for Government that is real and substantial.

I thank the 484,315 people who voted for Fianna Fáil. We will not ignore, walk away from, or lie down under that mandate as some people would wish us to do. We will seek to deliver on what those people demanded in voting for our candidates. We will seek to deliver better lives for all of their families and a republic of which we can be proud as we enter this significant phase in our nation's history.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: I am delighted to be able to say a few words in the Dáil this evening. I sympathise with the people who lost their seats and welcome the new Deputies and their families here today. I sympathise in particular with the former Leas-Cheann Comhairle, Pat The Cope Gallagher.

I thank the staff and ushers who have dealt with the large crowds here today. New Members, their families and supporters are enthusiastic and, obviously, not everybody could be accommodated.

The Rural Independent Group is willing, ready and able to talk to everyone, as we committed to in the course of the election. We have already spoken to Sinn Féin and have been asked to talk to Fianna Fáil and we look forward to that.

I will be voting against the nomination of the caretaker Taoiseach, Deputy Leo Varadkar, because the people voted Fine Gael out of government. They voted for change and do not want Fine Gael. We have pointed out misgivings about the Government for the past four years - not that we know everything and are infallible because we are not. We have listened to the people, to be ag éisteacht, which the previous Government did not do. I want a Government that will govern and serve the people. We are all Teachtaí Dála, messengers of the people. We are supposed to serve the public, not ourselves.

I want to get rid of quangos. Previous Governments have promised to do that but set up more of them. Ministers and the Government should be held accountable and not pass the buck to the HSE and everybody else. There has been quango after quango such as Uisce Éireann. We need accountability. We need to be able to help the people who voted for us. I thank the people of Tipperary who voted for me and the other four representatives of the constituency. I commiserate with the people who were not voted in. Those people need to be served. They have been let down, from the cradle to the grave, by successive Governments who have their hands so firmly attached to the handlebars of power that one would need a hammer and chisel to remove them. Those people must be removed. We serve the people and must deliver for them.

I look forward to meaningful engagement with parties to try and get a new Government that will deliver for people caught up in the health crisis. There are no mental health beds in Tipperary. That is a national scandal. Farming communities, fishermen and students need to be served. Successive Governments have been too close to big business and have forgotten about small business people. Members of Fine Gael have spoken about the man who gets up in the morning and goes to work, raises his family and pays his way. Those sorts of people have been crucified and squeezed and that is why they voted the way they did.

Crime, drugs and drug gangs are rampant all over the country, including in my own county. A motorway was held up last week with illegal racing. It is unbelievable. People are out of

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work. Others are trying to build homes when planning conditions are ridiculous. Many people are homeless. There are people aged 90 and 100 waiting for days on trolleys in our hospitals. That is a shocking indictment of Ireland, which is 100 years old, the commemoration of which we celebrated this time last year.

My colleagues and I want to be involved in trying to make things better, to serve the people and not ourselves. I look forward to engaging with everybody else who wants to do the same.

Deputy Anne Rabbitte: I congratulate the Ceann Comhairle on his re-election.

It is a privilege to stand here on the first day of the Thirty-third Dáil as a representative of the people of Galway East and to endorse the nomination of Deputy Micheál Martin for Taoiseach. A constituent said to me during the election that people do not only want things to change, they want them to improve. People want improvement in the number of new houses being built, the waiting lists in our health service and the number of staff working in that sector. They also want improvement in the prices paid to our farmers, the actions being taken to tackle climate change, the cost of childcare and to ease the pressure on parents and working families.

Deputy Micheál Martin, as Taoiseach, can secure a better quality of living for people across the country and a standard of public service that befits the Ireland of the 21st century. He has been to the forefront of change in this country and, as we heard from Deputy Norma Foley, Deputy Martin brought about great change when he was in various ministerial positions. He has ensured, while negotiating recent budgets, that people across the country get their fair shares. He is a man who has not been afraid to put the country first and work in the national interest. When everybody else stood back in 2016, Deputy Martin stood up to the plate and provided much needed stability at a time when chaos unfolded in Westminster. He is a man of great courage and will lead this country into what seems likely to be a decade of major change.

There is an old adage that life does not get better by chance but by change. I truly believe that Deputy Micheál Martin can be that change and that is why I nominate and endorse him for Taoiseach. He is the person best placed to lead the next Government as Taoiseach.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: A Cheann Comhairle, déanaim comhghairdeas leat as a bheith tofa mar Cheann Comhairle arís. Tá súil agam go mbeidh tréimhse fhada agus fhiúntach agat. Tacaím le hainmniúchán Teachta Varadkar mar Thaoiseach na Dála seo. Measaim gur thug sé ceannaireacht an-mhaith agus sofheicthe dúinn. Bhí sé macánta freisin. Rinne sé a lán rudaí an-mhaith don tír seo. Ó thaobh cúrsaí sláinte de, tá feabhas an-mhór tagtha i mo Dháilcheantar féin, i gContae Lú, go háirithe in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. Many things need to be done in the area of health but many things have also been done by the outgoing Government. Along with my colleagues in Fine Gael, I stand here today having been elected because of the work that has been done. More than 80 new beds have been opened in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. There are five new operating theatres and a brand new accident and emergency department. There has been a great improvement in services. There are 10,000 more people getting up for work in Louth than there were five years ago because of the significant improvement in our economy. If we elect Deputy Varadkar as Taoiseach and put Fine Gael in office, the excellent work that has been started and which remains to be finished will continue.

I will move to the main point I want to make. I speak as a Deputy elected for the fifth time. I am a father and a grandfather and I worked as a teacher for many years. I know many families

in my town, as does the Ceann Comhairle. I have never seen a crisis such as now exists among our young people. I have never heard a chief superintendent speak like Christy Mangan who has said that, in his view as a professional Garda chief superintendent, we will lose a whole generation to our drug problem unless we deal with it more effectively and more comprehensively. I know this from the violence and vile and evil actions in my own town, where people have been shot, people have been murdered and people's bodies have been dismembered. It would be absolutely unacceptable for this to continue in our society. The most important thing the Ceann Comhairle's Business Committee could do when it meets - regardless of who is in government - would be to collectively agree to deal with this problem comprehensively and inclusively and to invite experts in. We need to offer hope to young people in communities suffering from this drug problem. We need to offer them a real future. We need to fight crime and to defeat it. We will only do that by engaging fully with the needs of our young people. We need to do it now. That is the most important message. Regardless of who forms the Government, we should all work together. We did it with Sláintecare; let us do it with our drug problem. Let us make sure that the next generation of young people will be safe and secure and as happy and fulfilled in their lives as we have been lucky enough to be in ours.

An Ceann Comhairle: That is a clarion call we need to take seriously.

Deputy John McGuinness: A Cheann Comhairle, I congratulate you on your re-election to the position of Ceann Comhairle. You did an excellent job over the last number of years and I have no doubt but that you will continue with vigour to try to reform this House. There is no doubt that, in the election, people asked again for change. They did not just seek change with regard to the minor things in their lives; they want a major change in how politics is done. They want change in how the political system and political parties work, operate and control their members. It would do a great service to this House, were each of the individuals proposed for the position of Taoiseach to bring forward a programme for Government that comprehensively outlined his or her views on how the issues should be dealt with. We are talking about the numbers we may have to elect a Taoiseach. We talked about that earlier on. We also talked about radical change and all of that but real meat could be put on this matter if, under the Ceann Comhairle's instruction, this House were to afford time over the next few weeks to talk about the real agenda for change which the people demand and about what that means for us. I see no reason for us to finish our business today and then adjourn for two weeks. I see no reason why each individual Member of this House should not be included in the discussion around a programme for Government. I see every reason why we should be debating it. It is not good enough that the outcome is presented to us after some discussions, normally held closely between a few and behind closed doors. We should have input into that outcome and into how that outcome is to be fulfilled by the parties that make up the next Government.

The reform of the system for parliamentary questions was given as an example. This is a tiny reform that has been spoken about since I became a Member of this House in 1997. A book I published in 2010, *The House Always Wins*, sets out all of the wrongs within Departments which the Government will have experienced over the last nine and a half years and which nobody has addressed. If we really want change, it must be spelled out for the Members here. The Ceann Comhairle, who protects the rights of Members, should ensure that when this change is spelled out, it is delivered upon and that each Member has the right to have input into these absolutely necessary changes.

All political parties, their members, and those who are not members of parties have an obligation to talk to one another. No single party should be left out of a discussion on the future of

this country. It is the future for us, our children, our families, and our communities. Our communities are being devastated by drugs, by crime and by the lack of political leadership that has left this country down. No Member of this House can be proud of where we stand today. That position in itself should drive us towards changing the political system for the next generation.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae: A Cheann Comhairle, I congratulate you on attaining another term as Ceann Comhairle and I thank you for the excellent and fair way in which you carried out your duties during the last Dáil. I thank the people of Kerry who voted for one of two Healy-Raes, especially those who voted for me. I also thank the people who canvassed for me and who went out and worked for me. I do not call them a team but an army. On one specific evening, 162 people left a place in Killarney and headed off in every direction to help me get re-elected. Many of the local newspapers and other media had me written off. They had me dead and buried. The story in the local newspaper was that Fianna Fáil was smelling my blood but I have all my blood yet and it will have to wait a while before it gets any scent of it. It was on the wrong trail and scent. I am glad to be standing here in this Chamber today, having been elected again by the people of Kerry. I thank each and every person who did anything and everything for me and who ensured that I got re-elected.

I do not know who will be on the Taoiseach's side of the House and in government but they will have to listen to the needs of the people whom we represent. Our health service in Kerry is in a shambles. There are people on chairs instead of trolleys now. The cry is now from people who have been in chairs for 48 hours and who want to at least get onto a trolley. That is not good enough. It is not the way to be dealing with our sick people. People get sick and get old and they need to be treated fairly and squarely, as they have not been treated.

On mental health, suicide is ravaging our county and I know it is doing the same in others. We have hardly any mental health service at all in Kerry. There is not one mental health bed. With regard to people with disabilities, it is a shame and a disgrace that elderly parents' biggest worry is what will happen to their disabled son or daughter. They may be 78 or 80 years of age and wondering where their Johnny or Patrick will go when they pass on.

A new thing came out during the election campaign. Pensioners who worked for 40, 45 or 50 years of their lives and who served this country well cannot be asked to go on the dole for two or three years. That is absolutely ridiculous. It is unfair and it is not right or just. We will not stand for that, whoever is in the Government.

I want to thank especially the people who saw my back was to the wall. I saw it in many of the boxes in east Kerry. I want to thank them for giving me between 60% and 90% of the votes that came out of the boxes. I do not believe that happened in any other part of the country for any other candidate. I thank the people who did that for me to ensure I was returned to represent them in this Parliament, Dáil Éireann. I am most thankful and grateful to them.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Richard O'Donoghue, this is your maiden speech. Deputy Healy-Rae is a hard act to follow.

Deputy Richard O'Donoghue: Thank you, a Cheann Comhairle, and congratulations on your appointment.

I have been listening around the floor since I came in. I have listened to many educated people. Yet, how many Deputies present have education of life? How many Deputies here have common sense? From what I have seen of Governments in recent years, they lack all of it. I

believe an ounce of cop on is better than a stone of brains and they are going to have to listen.

I have been hearing how people voted for change. They voted for change in Limerick. They voted for an Independent. I believe I am the first Independent ever to be elected in County Limerick. That is a change.

I have been self-employed all my life. I am from a farming background. In recent years, the Governments have let us all down. The Government that will be put in place has to respect rural Ireland and rural Limerick, which I am here to represent.

Deputies have been talking about building houses. Do they know there is no infrastructure in place to build houses? It is only in the cities. There is no infrastructure in rural Ireland. Instead, there are hundreds of derelict houses. The laws the Deputies implemented stopped them from being refurbished and rebuilt for our young people. This stopped them from getting back into our communities. They have closed our post offices in rural Ireland. They have completely closed us down.

If Deputies are serious about rebuilding Ireland, they need to put people who have business backgrounds in the right positions. Deputies have talked about health. They have all tried to fix health but all they have done is to make it worse. It will not be fixed until we take control of our hospitals and put a business structure in place. That means we need to control the consultants and make them release patients by 11 a.m. and release the beds. If patients are not released by 11 a.m. they should be in for the night until the following day. This means that we have a window. It is like in a hotel, where the beds are released by 11 a.m. They are put back into production by 1 p.m. The nurses and the people on the ground know how many beds they have between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. They can work with that and if a patient is not fit to leave the hospital by 11 a.m., then he or she is kept overnight. Consultants are releasing patients at 6 p.m., 7 p.m., 8 p.m. or 9 p.m. Those beds do not come back into production until the following morning.

I will back a leader who will work with rural Independents and work to rebuild Ireland as a whole, rather than simply push all the facilities into the cities. I am here to represent rural Ireland. I will work with anyone. I will listen and talk to everyone who wants to rebuild Ireland with me and the rural Independents.

Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice: First of all, well done, a Cheann Comhairle, on being re-elected. In the last Dáil you were fair, especially to the smaller groupings.

I smiled today when I came to the Chamber. Over recent weeks we have heard that such a one would not talk to such a one. Yet, when I looked around today in different parts of the Dáil I saw people from all political divides shaking hands, talking and hugging one another. It is damnable how we can do that today but we are unable to sit down to address the economics of our country for the betterment of the people who have entrusted us with seats in this Chamber and to discuss the betterment of housing, health, rural Ireland and, above all, agriculture.

There is an onus on each Deputy, whether we like someone or not, to talk together and to try to work together. Horse dealing and horse trading will go on. Let us not play the theatre over the coming weeks. Let us not pretend that we are going to see the great white horse in three or four weeks. There is Brexit and there are different problems facing people and youngsters who are unable to afford a house or accommodation. There is an onus on all of us. If the telephone rings, we should talk to others. Let us get on and talk to them. We should put old politics be-

hind us. Let us look to the future and build an Ireland of the future for the betterment of people in cities and in rural Ireland. We must not leave one part of the country behind. That is all I ask of Deputies. It is short.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae talked about his 160 people. A total of 540 brave soldiers in the Roscommon-Galway constituency are part of what I call “team Fitz”. They went out and spread the message. I thank them and the people who gave me the opportunity to come back here to represent them and do the best I can. The onus is on me, as much as it is on anyone else here, to do that in the Thirty-third Dáil.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Fitzmaurice, you might get together with Deputy Healy-Rae and use your entrepreneurial skills to set up a school of politics. It could work very well. Deputy Michael McGrath is next.

Deputy Michael McGrath: I join with others in congratulating you, a Cheann Comhairle, on your re-election as Ceann Comhairle. I thank the people of Cork South-Central for returning me to Dáil Éireann on this fourth occasion. I congratulate all the new Deputies elected and those re-elected. Like Deputy Calleary, I wish to acknowledge those who have not been re-elected, including those who have retired.

Much has been said, a Cheann Comhairle. I will keep my remarks brief. From listening to some of the earlier contributions in particular, one would think we have been living in a dictatorship for the past century. People talk about Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael having been in power for the past 100 years. There were elections. Every time we served in government as a political party, we were elected. In fact, there were several occasions when we secured over 40% of the popular vote and did not get into government. No one has an automatic right to serve in government.

The simple truth is that a Government will be formed when a majority of Members can come together and agree on a programme for Government. That is the reality we will all see in the coming weeks.

Having listened to some Deputies, one would think they had a monopoly on representing ordinary people. We have all been elected by ordinary people. Anything that our party has ever done has been with the common good in mind. That is what motivates us to be in politics and to work as hard as we can for people.

I am proud to support the motion proposing Deputy Micheál Martin to be the country’s next Taoiseach. He is deeply committed to public service. His achievements in politics have been immense. Not many people in politics can say that a decision they implemented, such as the smoking ban, has directly saved thousands of lives. I do not know of many in politics who can make that claim justifiably. Deputy Foley spoke well about the work that Deputy Micheál Martin did in the Department of Education and Science in bringing special needs assistants and recognising the need for supports for children with special needs education. Do we not need someone - now more than ever - with that understanding to help young people who have disabilities and special needs? They have been waiting far too long for assessments and then they suffer from a lack of intervention services.

We were not in government for the past four years, a Cheann Comhairle, but we were punished as if we were. We were clearly seen as not being the party of dramatic change in the last election. The reality is that we will not be found wanting. We have heard the message from

voters. They want a change of policies. If we are to serve in the next Government, it will not be more of the same; it will have to be radical and reforming. The truth is it is a lot easier to organise a protest than it is to organise a Government. We will not shirk our responsibility but this needs to be done as quickly as possible. We have to get it right. In the next number of weeks, we need to work together to bring about a credible and stable Government because there is a vacuum. While the outgoing Government remains in office, its power has drained away and there are very significant issues that need to be dealt with urgently.

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): A Cheann Comhairle, I also want to begin by wishing you continued success in your role as re-elected Ceann Comhairle for this Dáil. You were a model of fairness in overseeing the previous Dáil and I am sure you will continue to be the same in this one.

I also thank my constituents. I thank the people of Dublin Central for re-electing me on the second occasion. As I do so, I speak in support of the proposal for the election of Deputy Varadkar as Taoiseach. The job of being Taoiseach of our country is such a unique and demanding one that one can only perhaps appreciate what is involved in the job if one either does the job or has the great privilege of working for the person who does it. I have had the privilege of working for two successive taoisigh. I have seen the demands involved in the job and the genuinely awesome responsibility involved in being Head of Government and leader of our country. I have seen Deputy Varadkar rise to those challenges, representing our country abroad and in looking to make progress on what we need to make progress on in our country.

On that point, while I have heard Deputy after Deputy speak about the need for change, and I agree with them as I represent the constituents of Dublin Central and continue to be aware of progress that we need to make in our health service and in providing more and better homes for citizens. As we do so, let us not do so at the expense of failing to acknowledge there are many aspects of this country that are good and many public services that work. Deputy O'Dowd, in passionately making the case for better health services for his constituents, acknowledged that we have a hospital in his constituency in which improvements are under way. When we speak about what our educational services need to do better, let us also acknowledge that we have, for example, primary schools where the care and support for young boys and girls provided is something all of our county should be proud of, and is such an important achievement that all in this House should be proud of.

Something I have only heard mentioned once, by Deputy Fitzmaurice, is that in acknowledging the need for change, while also making the case for what is good about this great country of ours, we need economics. We need an economy that can sustain this. This Dáil is responsible for a small, open economy at a moment of great change in that what we may take for granted at present we might not be able to take for granted in a number of years' time. As this Dáil rises to that challenge, let us remember that the sole criterion for a Government in this Dáil is a Government that can command a majority of votes in this Dáil. As Deputy Michael McGrath stated, a Government that can bring forward a programme for Government solely must be a Government that has a majority of votes in this Parliament.

I heard Deputy Michael Healy-Rae conclude passionately on the effects of social media, particularly on our young people, and the effect of words on those who could be vulnerable. It is my hope that as this Dáil begins, we can occasionally remember the effect our words can have in public life. We might sometimes remember that this is a Dáil in which we are not enemies of one another even though we may be opponents of one another. This is a Dáil that, by the

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discourse we use and by the tone we adopt, subtly but crucially sets the guard rails within which our democracy flows. That is such an important responsibility that it is too great to sit with any one Government; it sits with all of us who have the privilege of representing our constituents.

An Ceann Comhairle: Before I call the next speaker, I point out that there are ten further speakers offering. That is very considerably in excess of what we had anticipated. There are four votes that will take quite some time as well, if Members could bear that in mind. I call the Minister, Deputy Harris. We would like to hear what the Minister has to say.

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Thanks, a Ceann Comhairle and congratulations on your re-election. I suppose this effort shows how you are very much protecting the individual rights of every parliamentarian to have his or her say today. I congratulate you on your re-election.

I stand in support of the motion to elect Deputy Varadkar as Taoiseach. He is a man and a parliamentarian who has served our country with distinction and has discharged the duties of his office at a very difficult time in a minority Government with great diligence, passion, commitment and at all times in the national interest.

I thank the people of Wicklow for re-electing me to Dáil Éireann and for the faith they have put in me in that regard. I look forward to working as hard as I possibly can for them.

I particularly congratulate and welcome new Members to this House across the political divide. This is an important and significant day for them, for their family and their supporters. We all know how difficult it is to get elected to Dáil Éireann and regardless of political persuasion, I offer huge congratulations to each of them. I remember delivering my maiden speech in this House in 2011, nominating Enda Kenny to be Taoiseach on that occasion. It was much more straightforward nominating someone to be Taoiseach back then; it only took one go. I particularly congratulate those who have given their maiden speeches today. It is always daunting on one's first day to stand up in what is a packed Chamber with the country watching and give one's first words. I wish them all well.

It is right that we hear of the many challenges that face our country. There are many challenges. If there were not, none of us would want to be in this place trying to fix them. However, this is a country of which I am very proud. It is a country in which many things continue to go well. Some of the labels we have heard in recent days, and perhaps even in recent hours, are a little too simplistic. We talk a lot about winners and losers. That is too simplistic. My party lost seats and lost votes. However, everybody in here won a mandate and everybody's mandate is equal. Other parties did very well and they won more seats. I congratulate them in that regard but they did not win enough to put together a Government on their own. If they did, it would perhaps be straightforward. The people have given us a complex and fragmented result and we need to grapple with that in the coming days and weeks.

A second label we have heard a lot about is the change mantle. Change is important but it cannot merely become a mantra. We have seen it overly simplified in recent days as well. Each individual in this House has contributed to change, be it change in his or her community, change in legislation or constitutional change. We all want to be agents of change. Few of us here can achieve that change on our own. This idea that someone owns change and the rest of us are delighted with the *status quo* is simply not true. It is a bit Trump-like to suggest that one group of people wants change and the other group of people is delighted with everything the

way it is. That is not true either.

We need to be careful with our language. I am sure we all do it; I am sure I have done it. Divisive language does not serve us well. We all need to try and be a little less partisan. Everybody in here wants to do his or her best. In fact, we are at our best when we collaborate, as we saw in many areas.

Today is important because it gives visual effect to the result that the Irish people have cast. It will also show that the decision of my party to allow the party which won the most votes try to form a Government has not succeeded on this occasion. There will be a great deal for us all to reflect on, not only in our party or our tribal interest but in the national interest, in the coming days and weeks.

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): A Cheann Comhairle, I take this opportunity to congratulate you also. I am delighted that you will be with us for the next number of years.

I had the privilege of seconding the nomination of the Taoiseach, Deputy Varadkar, on 14 June 2017. At the time, I stated that he would do everything to make sure that he left this country in a better place for our children and for the many, not for the few. My children were here today. They were here today because I was re-elected to my seat in Dublin Rathdown and we brought in another Fine Gael seat but also because they believe in Leo Varadkar.

Leo Varadkar has represented modern Ireland. Deputy Michael McGrath mentioned that the new Government will have to be radical and reforming. Bringing the referendum on the eighth amendment when many previous taoisigh did not have the courage to do that is radical reform, and the Taoiseach did it. That. He also trusted me in respect of the divorce referendum and brought it to the people. That is also radical reform. We do not shy away from that in this Government and we have not done so in terms of social reform. That is something that needs to be acknowledged.

One of the things I also said in my nomination of the Taoiseach at the time is that courage is rightly esteemed to be the first of all qualities because it is the quality that guarantees all others. The Taoiseach has shown and demonstrated courage particularly in tackling Brexit, alongside the Tánaiste, Deputy Coveney, and Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Deputy McEntee. Phenomenal work is done on a daily basis. Deputy O'Donoghue, who is a new Member from Limerick whom I welcome him to the House, mentioned the education of life and asked if any of us have an education of life. I was a solicitor for 20 years. I dealt with clients who were divorcing and separating, with custody, access, guardianship issues, and people going through the worst of times. I know exactly what a life is about. The Deputy talked about the self-employed. Fine Gael is the only party that has helped the self-employed. We increased the income tax credit to €1,500, I think, and we also helped with other issues in terms of dental reform. This is a party that looks after people's interests. There is a temptation, particularly for the new people, all of whom I welcome today. I recall before I came in here only four years ago thinking we could have this Pollyanna, utopian world; that simply does not exist. We have acknowledged that we have not go everything right. We have acknowledged that we still have a lot more work that we want to do, but we have succeeded in doing a good majority of the programme for Government and we want to be able to be in a position to do more. They say that God writes straight with crooked lines. I think He is going to have His job to do with this Dáil in terms of the arithmetic. Whatever transpires, I echo the comments

of Deputies Donohoe and Harris in terms of a spirit of collaboration and mediation. That will be so important for the Thirty-third Dáil. I would like people to support the Taoiseach, Deputy Varadkar, in whom I really believe.

Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor: I was going to wish the Ceann Comhairle well.

Acting Chairman (Deputy John Lahart): The Deputy can wish the Acting Chairman well.

Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor: Yes. I know he will do exceptionally well. I stand here as a very proud Carlow woman, delighted to be a Member for Carlow-Kilkenny. I thank all of my team. I will work extremely hard for the people I represent. Today is historic for me. As C.S. Lewis once wrote, "There are better things ahead than any we leave behind." It is in this spirit that we must operate. We must look to our past as we look to our future. We have exciting times ahead. We must put the election and all its difficulties behind us and look to the people who put us here. To use our ancestors' words, we must seek now to build "a national polity based upon the people's will with equal rights and equal opportunity for every citizen". We must work together across all parties and none to bring about real, tangible change for the good people of this land. We, the elected Members of this noble House, must put as our priority the good people of this country and act in their interest in the formation of this Government. We must get to work doing all we need to do. Because our future here must be informed by our past, I must advocate for Deputy Micheál Martin to be our Taoiseach. With a political career that has crossed history and historic moments in Irish political life, brought change in policy, in approach and attitude, the Deputy would bring experience and stability to the role, something I feel we need now more than ever. To know where we are going, we must look to know where we have come from and nobody is better placed to do that than Deputy Micheál Martin.

Deputy Martin Kenny: I also was going to thank the Ceann Comhairle and congratulate him on his election. I am sure the Acting Chairman will pass on my congratulations. I also thank and congratulate the people of Sligo-Leitrim for the huge vote they had for Sinn Féin. The people of north Roscommon and south Donegal came out in their thousands and voted for change. Change has become the byword of this election. We talk here about what that change means. Clearly the big change is in the numbers. There has been a great reduction in the number of Members representing Fine Gael and in the number of those representing Fianna Fáil. There has been an increase in the number of Members representing Sinn Féin and other parties. That is the reflection of that change. The numbers game is where we see that in its starkest form. If we are to have a Government that ignores this, the parties that put that Government together will pay dearly for it in the future. We have to think of the future. Clearly the future is what everything is about.

I noticed during the week that the Taoiseach mentioned that Sinn Féin policies were extraordinary. "Extraordinary" is a word we often use to compliment things or sometimes to say the thing is not as good as it should be. We embrace the word "extraordinary". We had an extraordinary election and we have extraordinary policies and an extraordinary ambition to solve our housing crisis. We have an extraordinary ambition to solve the health crisis. We have an extraordinary ambition to solve the issues of childcare in this country, and to bring jobs back to the north west, where I live, and where we send our children to college. Many of them do not see a future because there is no future for graduates in that area. We do not think it is extraordinary to believe that those things can happen for the future and for our children's future. We believe they should be normal. If it requires extraordinary measures now, we are prepared to

take them. We are prepared to stand up and count for a better future for all of our people. The ambition that we have and the ambition that the people have was reflected in the vote. They voted for change but it was not just to change the composition of the same conservative-type Government as we have had in the past. They voted for a different type of Government. There should be an acknowledgement of that from all of the people who are in this Chamber.

I also want to commiserate with all of those who lost their seats, from all parties. Over the past four years I have had a good relationship with everyone of every political persuasion in this Chamber. It is always on a personal level regrettable to see people not returning. However, we won the election. That is a lesson for the establishment. The establishment is reeling from that and it finds a problem with it. The reality is that there has been a vote for change. The Green Party quadrupled its seats and the Social Democrats trebled their seats. Sinn Féin has massively grown its seats. That is the reflection of the change that people demand. If we are going to have a Government, it has to reflect that. We want to make it happen. The big change that needs to happen over the next period is a change in attitude. The attitude of not speaking to people, deciding they are going to use the past to damage the future of our country, our children and our children's children, is a very bad way to go forward. That change of attitude needs to happen particularly, and I say this with the utmost respect, on the part of the Deputies of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. The people have spoken. They have said they want change. That is reflected in the numbers of Deputies from other parties whom they have elected here. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael need to sit down and talk to everyone to see if they can be part of that change or if they want to form a conservative future. People do not want that; that is what they voted against. I say with full respect to everyone here that over the next couple of weeks we have a job of work to do and we have to get down and do it. Looking to the past is not going to get us a better future. We have to be determined to work together; every one of the 160 human beings in here has a responsibility. If we are going to be responsible, we have to leave the past behind us, come together and work out a better future. We are prepared to do that. I hope others will step up to the mark and do it also.

Deputy Sean Sherlock: I thank sincerely the people of Cork East for giving me a mandate again to serve them in this, the Thirty-third Dáil. I wish to express my gratitude and sense of pride in being here today. I make a very simple request of this Dáil, while we are in a collegiate frame of mind. Two specific issues came up on the doorsteps aside from housing and so on, namely the future of the early years sector and people with intellectual disabilities not having the requisite access to services that they desire. I request that we in this House would agree to convene two all-party committees to deal with those two issues. If we could, by agreement, come to a consensus on what the future of the early years sector should look like, by way of an all-party, non-partisan approach, we would do a great service to the people who work and operate in those sectors. A similar approach should be adopted on behalf of those families touched by intellectual disability. There is a great need for this society and for us not to view these issues as partisan but as issues on which we must deliver for the people. I will write to the party leaders to make that request but I am hopeful that we could arrive at a consensus on those specific issues.

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): I acknowledge the reinstatement of the Ceann Comhairle and in his absence acknowledge the great work he has done over the past four years. I wish him well. He will be the first person to get into the Thirty-fourth Dáil, which, hopefully, will not happen any time too soon. At the moment there is great uncertainty and I hope that can be addressed as well.

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I welcome all the new Deputies. It is a special day for all of them and their families. Many eminent writers were quoted earlier. I will quote Axl Rose, “Welcome to the jungle”.

Deputy Dara Calleary: The Deputy could sing it.

Deputy Brendan Griffin: We do not know what exactly will happen here over the next couple of weeks and months, and we do not know yet whether to put the posters in front of or behind the turf in the turf shed but, hopefully, their time in the Thirty-third Dáil will not be too short.

I thank in particular the more than 10,000 people in Kerry who gave me their first preference on 8 February and the more than 14,000 who voted to get me elected. I acknowledge their great support. I am hugely grateful and humbled to be returned to Dáil Éireann for my third term. I say to those people that their voices will not go unheard in this Chamber. It is important that we all bear in mind that no one seat is more important than any other. We were all elected to represent our constituents. The people who voted for us did not vote for us to sit on the sidelines or for us not to be heard. Listening to some Members, we might be led to believe that their seats are more important than others; they are not. We have an equal responsibility and mandate here.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae spoke about the 162 people who canvassed for him one evening. I think on that evening I had 163 out in the west and mid-Kerry area. I acknowledge the whole team, canvassers, people who put up posters, dropped leaflets or did anything in the campaign. Those people believed firmly that Deputy Varadkar should be returned as Taoiseach. I do too and that is why I support the motion for Deputy Varadkar to be Taoiseach. I want to see the fantastic progress that we have made in this country over the past two and a half years under his leadership, and over the past nine years under Fine Gael, continue. It is important to build on that progress. We have a lot more to do and there are many challenging issues to be addressed but we have come a long way from where we were when I took my seat for the first time, on 9 March 2011, particularly when we see this week that we are nearly at full employment. Let us bear that in mind going into the future. Let us not take it for granted. Our country is far from perfect but we have come a long way in a relatively short time. It is incumbent on all of us to protect that progress in the future.

Deputy Patrick O’Donovan: I congratulate my two colleagues from the constituency of Limerick: Deputies Niall Collins and Richard O’Donoghue. I commiserate with my former colleague, Deputy Neville, on losing his seat in the election. I thank the almost 9,500 people in County Limerick who voted for me and the nearly 15,000 I finished up with.

I want to reflect on some points made by a couple of Members as I support Deputy Varadkar’s nomination for Taoiseach. No one won this election. This was a three-way tie for third place essentially. There was a lot of reference to “we won” and “you lost”. If they had won, they would have formed a government. The reality is that no one won. Deputy Michael McGrath is correct that since 1922 Governments have been formed in the House not on the basis of who can come in and make the best speeches on the first day of the Dáil but rather on the mandate from the people.

Deputy Howlin is also correct that it comes down to numbers. In the previous Dáil, the vast majority of Members absented themselves from the formation of a government and from the responsibility that the people gave them under the Constitution. Two parties decided to come

together in a confidence and supply arrangement to provide a government. If those two parties are excluded and we look at the arithmetic, we are left with 87 who could form a government here today. The President could receive a nominee for Taoiseach and Ministers could be appointed later this evening. We all know that is not going to happen. We know that some people will abstain. They have been sent from their constituencies but they will abstain. What does that say to their constituents? We do not have an opinion on the people who have been nominated here this evening to take up the important role of Taoiseach. Then there will be people who will disagree with everybody. There are others who will wait for the phone to ring, for somebody else to contact them because they believe it is somebody else's responsibility to try to form a government. It is our collective responsibility to try to form a government. I have heard people say over the past couple of days, "We haven't heard from Sinn Féin" or Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil. It is up to them to take the initiative to say, with their mandate, these are the issues we want to prioritise. Nobody should have a hiding place or run away from their position in this Dáil. Deputy Howlin is absolutely right that it is from the Dáil that the Government derives its mandate and responsibility. Over the time it takes to form a government, no matter how long, we must all be prepared to act responsibly and to say that this country deserves not to go through what happened the last time when, as Deputy Howlin rightly said, the majority of people decided to absent themselves and sit on the ditch. We cannot afford for that to happen again. That is why tonight after the four votes are lost and there is an interregnum, Members should act responsibly and say we need a government to tackle the issues that we all want addressed.

Acting Chairman (Deputy John Lahart): For the record, I should have said before Deputy Murnane O'Connor spoke that it was her maiden speech in the Dáil.

Now for another maiden speech, I call Deputy Devlin.

Deputy Cormac Devlin: I also congratulate the Ceann Comhairle on his re-election. In this, my maiden speech, I congratulate all my 159 colleagues on their election. I wish the other 47 who have been given the privilege and honour to represent their constituents in this House for the first time well in the Thirty-third Dáil.

I also thank my family and the people of Dún Laoghaire for the support they gave me to be elected to this House on 8 February. It is an enormous privilege for anybody to serve in this House, and particularly as a new Deputy, on their first day to be casting a vote for somebody who wishes to lead this country, to be Taoiseach. To have a say in that brings home the enormous responsibility that each one of us has ahead of us. For that reason I support the candidacy of Úachtarán Fhianna Fáil, Deputy Micheál Martin. Today almost all Deputies have mentioned the word "change. It is the buzzword. In 2016, "new politics" were the buzzwords. Change has been mentioned *ad nauseam* today. More than 418,000 people gave Fianna Fáil their first preference vote. They voted for change and they want Fianna Fáil to lead a government of change. I believe Fianna Fáil will participate in forming a government that will deliver the change required by the public. As a public representative for Dún Laoghaire since 2004, I have witnessed our leader, Deputy Martin, as a Minister deliver change in the North, build bridges across communities. Deputy Michael McGrath mentioned that, as Minister for Health, he delivered on the smoking ban in public places. I also recall his reforming ways as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

In 2016, Deputy Martin delivered change in this House because a minority Government of that nature was unheard of at that time. I trust that in 2020 Deputy Martin will deliver the

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change the people have asked for. I wish him and my colleagues well in their deliberations over the weeks ahead. It will be challenging but it is incumbent on all of us to rise to that challenge and deliver the change the people have asked for.

6 o'clock

Deputy Carol Nolan: I congratulate Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil on his election as Ceannt Comhairle. I wish him well in his endeavours and role. I sincerely thank the constituents of Laois-Offaly who put their faith and trust in me as an Independent candidate in the election. I understand that it is 40 years or more since we had an Independent Deputy from Laois-Offaly, so I am delighted to relive history.

Whoever the new Taoiseach is, which is very uncertain at the minute, he or she has significant responsibility to tackle and challenge the failures in our health system. We have a health system that is failing elderly and disabled people, children with special needs and those of all ages who badly need to access mental health services. In many cases, the services are not in place unless they are voluntarily run. In Laois-Offaly, we have many great voluntary services but if not for those services, people would be left in desperate need. I hope that will improve during this Dáil.

I believe that the new Taoiseach has significant responsibility to rural Ireland. Not enough is being done for rural Ireland or for agriculture. Many farmers, especially beef and suckler farmers, are having a desperate time. I hope that there will be genuine supports and resistance to any attempts to cut the Common Agricultural Policy, CAP, budget. I hope that regions such as the midlands will get fairer play. We need urgent attention, particularly in light of the Bord na Móna job losses. In Offaly alone, we stand to lose up to 1,000 jobs. It was brought to my attention last week that jobs have also been lost in Mountmellick, County Laois. I hope that there will be genuine efforts to urgently address job losses in that region and to support workers of Bord na Móna and the company in Mountmellick who were served with notice only a few weeks ago.

I wish whoever the new Taoiseach is the very best but I believe that the new Taoiseach has to step up to the plate and has more to do to prove himself or herself.

Acting Chairman (Deputy John Lahart): I thank the Deputy. I cannot help but notice the picture of absolute happiness, the married couple sitting in front of us on the Green Party benches. It makes for a lovely picture.

Deputy Francis Noel Duffy: I thank the Acting Chairman.

Acting Chairman (Deputy John Lahart): You are welcome.

Deputy Robert Troy: I congratulate the Deputies who have been elected for the first time. I think also of the Deputies who stood for election but, for whatever reason, the electorate decided that they were not best placed to send them back here. Today is a difficult day for them. Today is a new departure, when all Members have an opportunity to speak on the first day of the Dáil. Normally it is only the people nominating and seconding nominations for the position of Taoiseach. It is good in a sense because it gives an opportunity for each Member to acknowledge and thank their respective electorates for giving them the honour and privilege to represent them here. I acknowledge the people of Longford-Westmeath.

It has been said by many Members that we all have an equal mandate, which is correct, but we all have an equal responsibility. With this honour and privilege of serving in the Dáil comes immense responsibility. While it is welcome and positive that we get an opportunity today to thank our electorate for sending us here, people looking in will see just what a charade today really is. We are going through a process that will not deliver any result. The principal party of the outgoing Government is nominating a candidate even though it says it wants to serve in Opposition. Another party is looking to serve and lead a Government but for the past two weeks has not been able to bring together in excess of 80 people to lead an alternative Government. When people are looking in, there is a reason there is frustration with politics. It should not be politics as normal.

One thing that has not been mentioned is the element of Government that will not change. That is the permanent government. For all the good that the public service and the Civil Service do, many arms of that permanent government need to change, reform and be far more responsive to the list of problems that have been articulated by so many Members here today.

We all have a responsibility to sit down, and to bring forward a radical, responsible programme for Government that will bring about the change that people want and deserve. Deputy Fitzmaurice alluded to the fact that many of us have congratulated each other. It is right and proper that we get on socially. It is also right and proper that the next Government must be stable and can pursue sustainable policies that are compatible and that will not erode our economic base.

Acting Chairman (Deputy John Lahart): I thank the Deputy.

Deputy Robert Troy: Without a sound economic base, we will not have the necessary resources to deliver the critical services that have been left behind for so many years.

Acting Chairman (Deputy John Lahart): I thank Deputy Troy and call Deputy Heydon. I am going to start bringing down the gavel at three minutes.

Deputy Martin Heydon: The Acting Chairman should not break the habit of a lifetime just because I am starting. I congratulate my constituency colleague, Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, the Ceann Comhairle, his wife Mary Clare, and their extended family. It is an honour for him to be re-elected by the Members as Speaker of the House. It is a privilege for us in Kildare South, even if it means that we are going back to being a three-seater again for the next general election. I thank the people of the constituency for returning me to Dáil Éireann. It is an honour. It is my third time to be elected here. I thank my staff, my supporters, my family and everybody who helped to make that happen in the campaign.

The general election raised many topics, including those that would have been expected such as health and housing. Others were expected but not raised as much, including climate change and the economy. “Change” was a buzzword. There was a tangible feeling of change in topics since I first ran for the Dáil in 2011. The issues of unemployment, massive mortgage arrears, personal debt and crippling emigration were gone. I am proud to have served in the previous two Dáileanna as part of the Fine Gael Party that led Government. It fixed many of those issues and more, improved our citizens’ quality of life, raised living standards and the minimum wage, and reduced deprivation levels. Such change brings its own challenges, with a rapidly growing economy and society. I heard that from many constituents in Kildare South who referred to rail capacity, school capacity, the need for more gardaí, and the extension of ser-

vices in Naas General Hospital and beyond. When I reflect on these issues and the progress to be made, it all comes back to the fact that all of those challenges have been directly impacted by the severe economic recession less than ten years ago. The issues at that time, such as national debt, borrowings and the risk to national solvency, led to the very serious levels of catch-up that we now have. Let us not fool ourselves in this House.

Whatever Government is formed, the most important thing that we ensure the next Government does is to avoid the boom and bust cycle and another recession, so that we can have slow and steady growth over the next 20 to 30 years. Many countries are able to do that. That is why I will support Deputy Leo Varadkar to be Taoiseach today. He is a proven leader with a strong track record of delivery. If there is a stalemate after today's votes, as looks quite likely from what other contributors have said, then let all present here use our mandate to good effect in the coming days. Irrespective of what side of the House my party and I end up sitting on, we will continue to serve the people to the very best of our ability, and I expect all others to do the same. I thank everybody else who has been elected. I also think of those who were with us previously but who were not returned. I look forward to the Dáil term ahead.

Deputy Seán Haughey: I thank the people of Dublin Bay North for re-electing me to Dáil Éireann. It is a great honour to be elected to this House and I never take it for granted. I undertake to represent them to the best of my ability during the Thirty-third Dáil. It is important that we have a Government put in place as soon as possible. Significant issues and challenges face this country. As we speak, a European Council meeting is taking place and issues relating to the multi-annual financial framework, MFF, are being discussed. These are crucial issues for Ireland and it is important that a report be provided to the House on the proceedings of the meeting of the European Council and, in particular, the very real threats to CAP.

I support the nomination of Deputy Micheál Martin for Taoiseach. He is a committed European who subscribes to the liberal democratic values of the European Union. As Members are aware, those values are under threat. He has significant skills and experience relating to the European Union and will be able to lead this country in the ongoing Brexit negotiations generally, as well as on other issues of concern in respect of the future of Europe. Brexit is not done. As the Taoiseach stated, we are only halfway through it. It is important that we have a Government in place with a mandate to deal with Brexit and other issues in respect of the European Union. Deputy Micheál Martin has extensive experience of the European Union having served on several Councils of Ministers in his various ministries through the years. Fianna Fáil is a member of Renew Europe, the successor to the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. We have extensive networks within that group with Heads of Government throughout Europe. I stress the qualifications of Deputy Micheál Martin to deal with these issues.

Many issues were raised on the doorsteps in my constituency. Of course, housing was the most significant issue raised. As set out in the Fianna Fáil manifesto, we wish to build 50,000 social houses and 50,000 affordable houses. Local authorities must be given the power and capacity to deliver social housing in particular, as well as affordable housing. That will be a major issue in the formation of a programme for Government in the coming weeks.

Many Deputies referred to children with special needs. There are lengthy waiting lists for early intervention teams, school-age disability teams, therapies and services for children with special educational needs. There are no guarantees of school places for next September. The House must address those issues soon.

Deputy Frankie Feighan: It is great to be back in the Dáil. I wish to thank the people of Sligo, Leitrim, south Donegal and north Roscommon for their great welcome and for electing me to Dáil Éireann. I come from Boyle, north County Roscommon, the location of a by-election in which George Noble Plunkett was elected. It was arguably the most important by-election in the country. He was an Independent who subsequently joined Sinn Féin. My grandfather supported him. Some people have stated that there is no Fine Gael Deputy for County Roscommon. I am the Fine Gael Deputy for counties Roscommon, Leitrim and Sligo and, along with Deputy McHugh, am a Fine Gael Deputy for County Donegal. I am delighted to represent the people of those counties.

I have heard many people on changing and that rural Ireland is dead. Rural Ireland and its people are as vibrant and dependable as ever. However, rural Ireland is changing due to technological and societal advances. Its success should be measured by the number of people living there, families choosing to move from cities to rural areas, the number of jobs and new businesses, and the success of local services and activities. Fine Gael is the only party to have the plan and commitment to deliver high-speed broadband to every home in rural Ireland such that people and businesses can stay and grow there. We must ensure that farm incomes are addressed such that beef farmers get a fair price for their product and continue to be operationally viable. Without local farmers, rural Ireland will not be a bright place.

My party delivered the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which led to the Good Friday Agreement. Peace and parity of esteem are precious, as are the right safeguards and equality of opportunity. This House needs to discuss reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust but a united Ireland is not a one-way street; it is a two-way street. We need to respect our shared history. I wish to have an agreed united Ireland but we must first unite the people of our island. Each Member, cross-party, must work to unite the people of our country; North, South, east and west. I look forward to working with Members of all parties to secure a peaceful Dáil that lasts for perhaps the next five years. I wish you, a Cheann Comhairle, well in your endeavours. I wish to nominate Deputy Varadkar as Taoiseach.

Deputy Noel Grealish: A Cheann Comhairle, I too wish to congratulate you on your re-election. It is a great honour for you and your family. I have always found you to be very fair. I also wish to congratulate Deputy Naughten on putting his name forward for the role. It is great to have an election for a position; it is what democracy is all about.

I join other Deputies in welcoming new Members. I remember walking into the House as a new Member in 2002. It was a great honour to walk through the gates of Leinster House and into this Chamber. The people have put their faith in Members to represent them and their constituency. It is a sad day for the former Deputies who have lost their seats. They are sitting at home watching these proceedings. I wish to acknowledge Seán Kyne, who is a very good friend of mine and I am sorry that he lost his seat. I congratulate Deputy Farrell. It is a great honour for her to be represented to represent Galway West.

I wish to thank all those who voted for me. More than 8,000 people gave me their number one and, including transfers, I had received more than 10,000 votes when I was deemed elected. I thank those who canvassed for me. It is not a one-person event but, rather, a team event. Like many other Members, I had a great team working for me. I also wish to thank the three dogs that viciously attacked me. It gave me great sympathy and publicity in the national media while I was lying in bed for three or four days. It is great to be here to represent the people of west Galway and south Mayo.

Many people are watching these proceedings. A young man of 33 years of age recently came to my office. He is married and has three children. His wife had to give up her job because they were unable to afford childcare. They are living in rented accommodation. He earns approximately €60,000 per year. Every evening when he goes home he is afraid there will be a letter telling him his landlord wants the house back or that there will be a knock on the door to deliver that message. He cannot get a mortgage to buy a house. He is looking to the Members of the House to come up with solutions that will help him, as are those looking for a hospital bed or awaiting a procedure.

I have decided how I will vote on the nominations for Taoiseach. I will not sit on the fence. During the formation of the last Government, I spent many days in Government Buildings. There were many people there who had no intention of being part of a Government. When I had to put my shoulder to the wheel to support the Government to get Brexit through, I did so. The onus is on Members to form a Government as soon as possible. I will vote for Deputy Micheál Martin as Taoiseach because his party has the most Deputies following the election. It is important that when Members return to the House, which I think will be on 5 March, that a Government is in place. There are many issues that need to be addressed and the people who elected us wish for us to get on with it and form a Government.

Deputy Joe Flaherty: I thank the Ceann Comhairle for the opportunity to speak. I acknowledge that I have been preceded by a plethora of very well-informed, well-intentioned and passionate speakers from across the political landscape. However, on the basis that the good people of County Longford have waited four years to hear one of their own speak in this august Chamber, it would be remiss of me not to take the opportunity to address this historic House. Many Members referenced change and laid claim to the process of change. The people of County Longford also voted for change. They voted to end a four year absence in the House and to end ten years of governmental neglect. With that vote comes a great weight of responsibility and a challenge for me. There is an onus to put those proud people front and centre and to ensure their concerns, aspirations and hopes will find articulation and sound footing in the next Government. I have been honoured with a mandate to serve the people of Longford. I appreciate that the mandate is no better or stronger than the mandate each colleague in this House has been given, but I assure the people of Longford it is a mandate I will pursue with zeal and passion for as long as I am in this House.

If the House will indulge me, I wish to acknowledge the late Peter Kelly, my political father. He mentored me and helped me on my route to the House. No doubt he would be very proud this evening. Indeed, the last occasion I was here as a member of the public was before Christmas when the Taoiseach kindly led tributes to him. The Kelly family would like it to be known that they greatly appreciated that day in the House.

In conclusion, I reiterate my support for Deputy Micheál Martin as Taoiseach. A changed Ireland and an invigorated Longford will be best served by Deputy Micheál Martin as Taoiseach.

Deputy Niall Collins: I congratulate you, a Cheann Comhairle, on your re-election to the office of Ceann Comhairle and wish you well in your tenure over the next four years.

As other speakers have done, I thank the people in Limerick for returning me to the House and for their trust in giving me, along with others, the responsibility to represent them during the term of the Thirty-third Dáil. I thank my family and the team of supporters and workers

who assisted in my campaign. I congratulate my constituency colleagues, the newly elected Deputy O'Donoghue and the re-elected Deputy O'Donovan. I acknowledge everybody who took part in the election, which is a great act of democracy throughout the country, and particularly in my constituency, as well as their teams. I acknowledge the unsuccessful candidates who took part in the election. Competition is a vital part of democracy in terms of giving people a choice regarding who will represent and work for them to make their lives and the lives of their families and communities better.

I look forward to exercising the mandate for change that has been given to me, my party and every other Member in this Chamber. No single Member or party has a monopoly on change or on how it will be implemented. There are no clear winners. There are people claiming to be the outright winners and others are running from responsibility. At the end of the day everybody will have to step up to the plate and form a programme for Government that is realistic, deliverable, achievable and will improve the lives of the many people in this country which drastically need improvement. Nobody can monopolise any particular agenda or mandate in a constituency. We all must work together for the betterment of the people in the public and national interest. I look forward to a Government being formed, which will enjoy a mandate from this House and from the people who put us here, in whatever combination that occurs. The programme for Government has to be realistic, deliverable and achievable. From our point of view, Deputy Micheál Martin is the person best placed to lead that change.

Deputy Dessie Ellis: I dtús báire, gabhaim buíochas le gach duine a thug tacaíocht dom agus do mo pháirtí. Freisin, gabhaim buíochas le m'fhoireann a d'obair go crua mar gheall orm féin agus Sinn Féin.

Congratulations, a Cheann Comhairle, on your election. It is wonderful for you and your family.

I am honoured to be returned to the Dáil for the third time with such a mandate from the people. I received just over 14,000 first preference votes, 44.4% of the vote. It is a massive pressure on me to deliver for the people of the area and I will do my utmost, as I always have done. We are all aware of the big issues - housing, health, home care, childcare and early intervention. I am a united Irishman and everybody knows I believe in a united Ireland. We will do it the right way, and we will bring the people with us in doing it. That is extremely important.

Unless we solve the housing crisis we will not be able to entice back the nurses, doctors and consultants, regardless of what we do. Those people will not return and pay the prices and rents here. The key to getting people back into our health services lies in solving the housing crisis. It is very important. We must declare a housing emergency. That must be top of the list for anybody who goes into Government. It is one of our top priorities. I believe we are the best placed to do that. We have the best team when it comes to housing and we have the best spokesperson who is more than capable of doing that.

I believe that in Deputy McDonald we have a great leader. It is clear that many of the people who went out and voted did so for anybody but Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. They also voted to get Deputy McDonald as the next Taoiseach. That is my opinion of what the people have said. It is up to us to work through this and to see if Sinn Féin can form an alternative Government.

Deputy Matt Shanahan: I congratulate you, a Cheann Comhairle, on your re-election.

I was elected to represent the constituency of Waterford. I also represent the people of the

south-east region. I will not be supporting the nomination of a Taoiseach tonight as a protest against the fact that the south east and Waterford suffers significant discrimination in the provision of cardiac services at University Hospital Waterford. There are five national cardiac centres in the country and the one in Waterford, which treats 500,000 people, is the only one that is restricted to 39 hours access. It is the only one that must ferry people by ambulance or helicopter, when available, to centres in Cork or Dublin, delaying their transfer times and therefore causing them additional cardiac damage. Between 2015 and 2018, HSE data showed that only 1.5% of patient transfers carried out in that period, which totalled more than 300 patients, were received at an alternative cardiac centre within the appropriate timeframe. This is unacceptable to me and should be unacceptable to every other Member.

I will not vote in favour of a Taoiseach this evening but I hope to give support in the future to a progressive programme for Government. However, it must have equity and fairness at its heart. When people look at that programme I want them to see themselves reflected in it in terms of the challenges we face in education, housing, healthcare and homelessness. I will do all I can to work with every Member of the House to achieve that.

Deputy Michael McNamara: I thank the people of Clare who voted for me. I also thank the people of Clare who did not vote for me, but did vote. I especially thank the people of Clare who opened their doors and listened. It is the third general election I have fought and it is the one in which more people did not open their doors, not to me but to canvassers. They knew there was a canvasser outside the door and did not want to hear about it. That is a worrying development for every Member of this House and for democracy. It is one we all must contemplate. We have a duty to collaborate and hold a Government to account. Deputy Naughten mentioned it in his speech today when seeking election as Ceann Comhairle. I will not let this opportunity pass without congratulating you, a Cheann Comhairle. However, we must devise mechanisms by which, whoever is the Government and we know it will take a long time to form a Government, it is not a winner-takes-all scenario and the Government can be held to account not only by the Opposition but also by its backbenchers. I have plenty of experience of being a backbencher in a large Government and of some of the frustrations that come with that.

There has been much discussion about winners, with people saying they won the election. I am in the fortunate position on this occasion of winning an election, though I have also experienced the other side of it. Each and every one of the 160 people in this Chamber won an election. It is not down to one party winning an election; it never is. It is about a national legislature whose duty is to legislate, elect a stable Government and devise a mechanism to hold that Government to account.

Republicanism has also been discussed. As a republican, I respect the mandate of each and every Member of this House and I like to think that I always respected the mandate Sinn Féin had when I was in this House previously. I am not a republican because I come from a constituency that elected Eamon de Valera, any more than Deputy Carthy is a republican because he comes from a constituency that once elected a hunger striker. I am a republican because of my ideology and how I view the world. A republic is not about the past. It is about tomorrow, and never about yesterday. We all have a duty to protect the ethos of equality and equality of access.

I appreciate that time is short. We have mentioned winners, but I also pay tribute to three former Clare TDs who have not been returned to this Dáil: Michael Harty, Timmy Dooley and Pat Breen. Regardless of the many differences I have had with them as individuals, I acknowledge the sacrifice they made. It is not about the power and the glory - in reality, it is very far

from it. I acknowledge the sacrifices they and their families made to be here.

Deputy Mairéad Farrell: Gabhaim comhghairdeas leis an gCeann Comhairle as a bheith atofa inniu. Is mór an onóir dó é agus is mór an onóir dom féin a bheith tofa mar Theachta Dála do Ghairle agus do Mhaigh Eo. Gabhaim buíochas leo siúd a chaith vóta dom agus dóibh siúd a thug cabhair dom le linn an fheachtais. Seo an chéad uair dom a bheith ag labhairt sa Seomra seo. Is pribhléid é an óráid seo a úsáid chun mo thacaíocht a thabhairt d’ainmniú mo chomhghleacaí, an Teachta Mary Lou McDonald mar Thaoiseach.

It is a huge honour for me to use my maiden speech to support the nomination of Deputy Mary Lou McDonald for Taoiseach. It is not only an honour; it is also a necessity for all those who have had enough and who have suffered for far too long under the politics of the haves and the have-nots. We need a different type of politics and a different kind of Taoiseach. We need a Taoiseach who will put the ordinary person front and centre, who understands that a society that cannot house its people or take care of its ill is not functioning correctly, and who understands that that is a result of political choices. That Taoiseach is very clearly Deputy Mary Lou McDonald agus tá súil agam go n-éireoidh léi anocht.

Deputy Cathal Crowe: Ar dtús báire, gabhaim comhghairdeas leis an gCeann Comhairle as a bheith tofa inniu. I congratulate the Ceann Comhairle on his election. As a new Deputy from County Clare, it is my honour to also throw my support behind Deputy Micheál Martin for Taoiseach in my maiden speech.

I am now a Deputy, though I was a mayor and schoolteacher last week, and I am the man who got the ball rolling with regard to the RIC controversy. That is how some people came to know of me, but the people of Clare know me longer from working on the ground. I sincerely thank each and every one of them for their support in the election. Like Deputy McNamara, I also refer to those who did not support me because we are here to represent a county, one which has felt very much forgotten for the last four years. People have been fascinated recently with hard borders. In my constituency, we feel that a hard border has been in place for a number of years. Once one goes beyond the Red Cow roundabout, the same opportunities and chances do not exist for young people, young couples, people coming out of college and school leavers. That is something I want to see when a new Government is formed, which needs to happen sooner rather than later. Other Deputies have spoken of CAP reforms and there is talk of a loss of between 14% and 19% in that payment. That needs to be hammered out and led by the incoming Government.

A week and a half ago, I was mayor of my county and I tried to lead a council chamber of 28 councillors. We sought to meet with Ministers at every opportunity. The Minister for Rural and Community Development, Deputy Michael Ring, was the only Minister who properly engaged with our council when he came down. That needs to change, regardless of who is next in government. We need fewer photo opportunities and less parading of Irish wolfhounds around Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. Ministers need to come out, meet people, engage with the people of the county, and talk to constructive people who want to see the Banner County move forward in a progressive way.

I wish to reflect on two words, namely, “change” and “mandate”. Every single person here has a mandate, and change has come in many forms. The part of Clare that I come from has not had a TD in 98 years, so the people in south Clare would say they have had a change as well. Deputy McNamara aptly prefaced some of what I want to say. We mentioned some who are not

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here with us today. We have friends from across the political divide. I had a very good friend a few miles out the road, Mike McKee, who was a Sinn Féin councillor. I have no doubt, given some of the trends of the last two weeks, that he probably would have been a TD here had he run, and I say that with the greatest respect to Deputy Wynne. He was a good friend of ours from across the political divide, with whom we worked well, and the people of Shannon and south Clare miss him. I had many robust challenges with him in council elections but we were always good friends afterwards. He is someone I think of today.

As a teacher, the maths do not add up today, but when we come back on 5 March I hope there will be a solid Government that delivers nationally and does not forget people down in Clare. The hard border of which I have spoken should become an invisible one, in order that we can have an Ireland in which everyone feels they have opportunities going forward. I lend my full support as a Fianna Fáil member to the nomination of Deputy Micheál Martin. He is the only leader who fully understands the issues facing rural Ireland. He brought forward a manifesto for our party that is fully costed and solid. He is the man to lead this country and I hope that on 5 March we will have the numbers to make that happen.

Deputy Mary Butler: I congratulate the Ceann Comhairle on his election for a second term. I thank the people of Waterford city and county who voted for me and I also congratulate all my colleagues elected in Waterford, especially our two new TDs, Deputies Shanahan and Ó Cathasaigh. They are very welcome to the Thirty-third Dáil. I am also conscious of all the colleagues we have lost. There are many new faces here today but we have also lost many colleagues. I am also conscious of the staff members who no longer have jobs as a result of that loss. It is only fair to pay tribute to all the hard-working staff who previously worked for us.

Today I stand proudly re-elected to the Thirty-third Dáil with a mandate I received in Waterford. My mandate is as important as anyone else's and must be respected the same as everybody else's. Some 160 people were elected to this Dáil a few weeks ago, and we all deserve the same respect. The main job at hand is to put in place a secure, responsible Government that can deal with all the issues, but which can also deliver on those issues within the fiscal space available to us. We all know there are many issues relating to housing and homelessness, but once again I would like to focus on the lack of home care supports and the fact that 7,800 people cannot currently avail of home care support packages in this country. That adds to the trolley numbers and the number of late discharges. We also need equality of healthcare, regardless of where one lives. We should not have any more postcode lotteries, which depend on where one lives, for healthcare or cardiac care.

I support the nomination of Deputy Micheál Martin for Taoiseach. He is a man of integrity, commitment, experience, grit and determination, with a proven track record who can and will deliver if given the opportunity. We want to deliver an Ireland for all where no one gets left behind.

An Ceann Comhairle: Sin deireadh leis an díospóireacht thábhachtach sin mar gheall ar cheapacháin an Taoisigh. Tá sé suntasach tabhairt faoi deara gur labhair 47 Ball sa díospóireacht fhada sin.

We must now move to consider the four proposals put before the House. The first of those proposals is that Dáil Éireann nominates Deputy Leo Varadkar for appointment by the President to be Taoiseach.

Dáil Éireann

Cuireadh an cheist: “Go n-ainmneoidh Dáil Éireann an Teachta Leo Varadkar chun a cheaptha ag an Uachtarán mar Thaoiseach.”

Question put: “That Dáil Éireann nominate Deputy Leo Varadkar for appointment by the President to be Taoiseach.”

<i>The Dáil divided: Tá, 36; Níl, 107; Staon, 16.</i>		
<i>Tá</i>	<i>Níl</i>	<i>Stاون</i>
<i>Brophy, Colm.</i>	<i>Andrews, Chris.</i>	<i>Berry, Cathal.</i>
<i>Bruton, Richard.</i>	<i>Barry, Mick.</i>	<i>Cairns, Holly.</i>
<i>Burke, Colm.</i>	<i>Boyd Barrett, Richard.</i>	<i>Fitzmaurice, Michael.</i>
<i>Burke, Peter.</i>	<i>Brady, John.</i>	<i>Fitzpatrick, Peter.</i>
<i>Canney, Seán.</i>	<i>Browne, James.</i>	<i>Gannon, Gary.</i>
<i>Cannon, Ciarán.</i>	<i>Browne, Martin.</i>	<i>Grealish, Noel.</i>
<i>Carey, Joe.</i>	<i>Buckley, Pat.</i>	<i>Harkin, Marian.</i>
<i>Carroll MacNeill, Jennifer.</i>	<i>Butler, Mary.</i>	<i>Lowry, Michael.</i>
<i>Coveney, Simon.</i>	<i>Byrne, Thomas.</i>	<i>McNamara, Michael.</i>
<i>Creed, Michael.</i>	<i>Cahill, Jackie.</i>	<i>Murphy, Catherine.</i>
<i>Dillon, Alan.</i>	<i>Calleary, Dara.</i>	<i>Murphy, Verona.</i>
<i>Donohoe, Paschal.</i>	<i>Carthy, Matt.</i>	<i>Naughten, Denis.</i>
<i>Durkan, Bernard J.</i>	<i>Chambers, Jack.</i>	<i>O’Callaghan, Cian.</i>
<i>English, Damien.</i>	<i>Clarke, Sorca.</i>	<i>Shanahan, Matt.</i>
<i>Farrell, Alan.</i>	<i>Collins, Joan.</i>	<i>Shortall, Róisín.</i>
<i>Feighan, Frankie.</i>	<i>Collins, Michael.</i>	<i>Whitmore, Jennifer.</i>
<i>Flanagan, Charles.</i>	<i>Collins, Niall.</i>	
<i>Griffin, Brendan.</i>	<i>Connolly, Catherine.</i>	
<i>Harris, Simon.</i>	<i>Conway-Walsh, Rose.</i>	
<i>Heydon, Martin.</i>	<i>Costello, Patrick.</i>	
<i>Higgins, Emer.</i>	<i>Cowen, Barry.</i>	
<i>Humphreys, Heather.</i>	<i>Cronin, Réada.</i>	
<i>Kehoe, Paul.</i>	<i>Crowe, Cathal.</i>	
<i>Madigan, Josepha.</i>	<i>Crowe, Seán.</i>	
<i>McEntee, Helen.</i>	<i>Cullinane, David.</i>	
<i>McHugh, Joe.</i>	<i>Daly, Pa.</i>	
<i>Murphy, Eoghan.</i>	<i>Devlin, Cormac.</i>	
<i>Naughton, Hildegard.</i>	<i>Doherty, Pearse.</i>	
<i>O’Donnell, Kieran.</i>	<i>Donnelly, Paul.</i>	
<i>O’Donovan, Patrick.</i>	<i>Donnelly, Stephen.</i>	
<i>O’Dowd, Fergus.</i>	<i>Duffy, Francis Noel.</i>	
<i>Phelan, John Paul.</i>	<i>Ellis, Dessie.</i>	
<i>Richmond, Neale.</i>	<i>Farrell, Mairéad.</i>	
<i>Ring, Michael.</i>	<i>Flaherty, Joe.</i>	
<i>Stanton, David.</i>	<i>Fleming, Sean.</i>	
<i>Varadkar, Leo.</i>	<i>Foley, Norma.</i>	

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	<i>Funchion, Kathleen.</i>	
	<i>Gould, Thomas.</i>	
	<i>Guirke, Johnny.</i>	
	<i>Haughey, Seán.</i>	
	<i>Healy-Rae, Danny.</i>	
	<i>Healy-Rae, Michael.</i>	
	<i>Hourigan, Neasa.</i>	
	<i>Howlin, Brendan.</i>	
	<i>Kelly, Alan.</i>	
	<i>Kenny, Gino.</i>	
	<i>Kenny, Martin.</i>	
	<i>Kerrane, Claire.</i>	
	<i>Lahart, John.</i>	
	<i>Lawless, James.</i>	
	<i>Leddin, Brian.</i>	
	<i>Mac Lochlainn, Pádraig.</i>	
	<i>MacSharry, Marc.</i>	
	<i>Martin, Catherine.</i>	
	<i>Martin, Micheál.</i>	
	<i>Matthews, Steven.</i>	
	<i>McAuliffe, Paul.</i>	
	<i>McConalogue, Charlie.</i>	
	<i>McDonald, Mary Lou.</i>	
	<i>McGrath, Mattie.</i>	
	<i>McGrath, Michael.</i>	
	<i>McGuinness, John.</i>	
	<i>Mitchell, Denise.</i>	
	<i>Moynihan, Aindrias.</i>	
	<i>Moynihan, Michael.</i>	
	<i>Munster, Imelda.</i>	
	<i>Murnane O'Connor, Jennifer.</i>	
	<i>Murphy, Paul.</i>	
	<i>Mythen, Johnny.</i>	
	<i>Nash, Ged.</i>	
	<i>Nolan, Carol.</i>	
	<i>Noonan, Malcolm.</i>	
	<i>O'Brien, Darragh.</i>	
	<i>O'Brien, Joe.</i>	
	<i>O'Callaghan, Jim.</i>	
	<i>O'Connor, James.</i>	
	<i>O'Dea, Willie.</i>	
	<i>O'Donoghue, Richard.</i>	

Dáil Éireann

	<i>O’Gorman, Roderic.</i>	
	<i>O’Reilly, Louise.</i>	
	<i>O’Rourke, Darren.</i>	
	<i>O’Sullivan, Christopher.</i>	
	<i>O’Sullivan, Pádraig.</i>	
	<i>Ó Broin, Eoin.</i>	
	<i>Ó Cathasaigh, Marc.</i>	
	<i>Ó Cuív, Éamon.</i>	
	<i>Ó Laoghaire, Donnchadh.</i>	
	<i>Ó Murchú, Ruairí.</i>	
	<i>Ó Ríordáin, Aodhán.</i>	
	<i>Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.</i>	
	<i>Pringle, Thomas.</i>	
	<i>Quinlivan, Maurice.</i>	
	<i>Rabbitte, Anne.</i>	
	<i>Ryan, Eamon.</i>	
	<i>Ryan, Patricia.</i>	
	<i>Sherlock, Sean.</i>	
	<i>Smith, Brendan.</i>	
	<i>Smith, Bríd.</i>	
	<i>Smith, Duncan.</i>	
	<i>Smyth, Niamh.</i>	
	<i>Smyth, Ossian.</i>	
	<i>Stanley, Brian.</i>	
	<i>Tóibín, Peadar.</i>	
	<i>Troy, Robert.</i>	
	<i>Tully, Pauline.</i>	
	<i>Ward, Mark.</i>	
	<i>Wynne, Violet-Anne.</i>	

Tellers: Tá, Deputies Joe McHugh and Peter Burke; Níl, Deputies Aengus Ó Snodaigh and Michael Moynihan.

Question declared lost.

7 o’clock

Faisnéiseadh go rabhthas tar éis diúltú don cheist. Cuireadh an cheist: “Go n-ainmneoidh Dáil Éireann an Teachta Micheál Martin chun a cheaptha ag an Uachtarán mar Thaoiseach.”

Question put: “That Dáil Éireann nominate Deputy Micheál Martin for appointment by the President to be Taoiseach.”

<i>The Dáil divided: Tá, 41; Níl, 97; Staon, 19.</i>		
<i>Tá</i>	<i>Níl</i>	<i>Staon</i>
<i>Berry, Cathal.</i>	<i>Andrews, Chris.</i>	<i>Cairns, Holly.</i>

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<i>Browne, James.</i>	<i>Barry, Mick.</i>	<i>Collins, Michael.</i>
<i>Butler, Mary.</i>	<i>Boyd Barrett, Richard.</i>	<i>Fitzmaurice, Michael.</i>
<i>Byrne, Thomas.</i>	<i>Brady, John.</i>	<i>Fitzpatrick, Peter.</i>
<i>Cahill, Jackie.</i>	<i>Brophy, Colm.</i>	<i>Gannon, Gary.</i>
<i>Calleary, Dara.</i>	<i>Browne, Martin.</i>	<i>Harkin, Marian.</i>
<i>Canney, Seán.</i>	<i>Bruton, Richard.</i>	<i>Healy-Rae, Danny.</i>
<i>Chambers, Jack.</i>	<i>Buckley, Pat.</i>	<i>Healy-Rae, Michael.</i>
<i>Collins, Niall.</i>	<i>Burke, Colm.</i>	<i>Lowry, Michael.</i>
<i>Cowen, Barry.</i>	<i>Burke, Peter.</i>	<i>McGrath, Mattie.</i>
<i>Crowe, Cathal.</i>	<i>Cannon, Ciarán.</i>	<i>Murphy, Catherine.</i>
<i>Devlin, Cormac.</i>	<i>Carey, Joe.</i>	<i>Murphy, Verona.</i>
<i>Donnelly, Stephen.</i>	<i>Carroll MacNeill, Jennifer.</i>	<i>Naughten, Denis.</i>
<i>Flaherty, Joe.</i>	<i>Carthy, Matt.</i>	<i>Nolan, Carol.</i>
<i>Fleming, Sean.</i>	<i>Clarke, Sorca.</i>	<i>O'Callaghan, Cian.</i>
<i>Foley, Norma.</i>	<i>Collins, Joan.</i>	<i>O'Donoghue, Richard.</i>
<i>Grealish, Noel.</i>	<i>Conway-Walsh, Rose.</i>	<i>Shanahan, Matt.</i>
<i>Haughey, Seán.</i>	<i>Costello, Patrick.</i>	<i>Shortall, Róisín.</i>
<i>Lahart, John.</i>	<i>Coveney, Simon.</i>	<i>Whitmore, Jennifer.</i>
<i>Lawless, James.</i>	<i>Creed, Michael.</i>	
<i>MacSharry, Marc.</i>	<i>Cronin, Réada.</i>	
<i>Martin, Micheál.</i>	<i>Crowe, Seán.</i>	
<i>McAuliffe, Paul.</i>	<i>Cullinane, David.</i>	
<i>McConalogue, Charlie.</i>	<i>Daly, Pa.</i>	
<i>McGrath, Michael.</i>	<i>Dillon, Alan.</i>	
<i>McGuinness, John.</i>	<i>Doherty, Pearse.</i>	
<i>McNamara, Michael.</i>	<i>Donnelly, Paul.</i>	
<i>Moynihan, Aindrias.</i>	<i>Donohoe, Paschal.</i>	
<i>Moynihan, Michael.</i>	<i>Duffy, Francis Noel.</i>	
<i>Murnane O'Connor, Jennifer.</i>	<i>Durkan, Bernard J.</i>	
<i>O'Brien, Darragh.</i>	<i>Ellis, Dessie.</i>	
<i>O'Callaghan, Jim.</i>	<i>English, Damien.</i>	
<i>O'Connor, James.</i>	<i>Farrell, Alan.</i>	
<i>O'Dea, Willie.</i>	<i>Farrell, Mairéad.</i>	
<i>O'Sullivan, Christopher.</i>	<i>Feighan, Frankie.</i>	
<i>O'Sullivan, Pádraig.</i>	<i>Flanagan, Charles.</i>	
<i>Ó Cuív, Éamon.</i>	<i>Funchion, Kathleen.</i>	
<i>Rabbitte, Anne.</i>	<i>Gould, Thomas.</i>	
<i>Smith, Brendan.</i>	<i>Griffin, Brendan.</i>	
<i>Smyth, Niamh.</i>	<i>Guirke, Johnny.</i>	
<i>Troy, Robert.</i>	<i>Harris, Simon.</i>	
	<i>Heydon, Martin.</i>	
	<i>Higgins, Emer.</i>	

Dáil Éireann

	<i>Hourigan, Neasa.</i>	
	<i>Howlin, Brendan.</i>	
	<i>Humphreys, Heather.</i>	
	<i>Kehoe, Paul.</i>	
	<i>Kelly, Alan.</i>	
	<i>Kenny, Gino.</i>	
	<i>Kenny, Martin.</i>	
	<i>Kerrane, Claire.</i>	
	<i>Leddin, Brian.</i>	
	<i>Mac Lochlainn, Pádraig.</i>	
	<i>Madigan, Josepha.</i>	
	<i>Martin, Catherine.</i>	
	<i>Matthews, Steven.</i>	
	<i>McDonald, Mary Lou.</i>	
	<i>McEntee, Helen.</i>	
	<i>McHugh, Joe.</i>	
	<i>Mitchell, Denise.</i>	
	<i>Munster, Imelda.</i>	
	<i>Murphy, Eoghan.</i>	
	<i>Murphy, Paul.</i>	
	<i>Mythen, Johnny.</i>	
	<i>Nash, Ged.</i>	
	<i>Naughton, Hildegarde.</i>	
	<i>Noonan, Malcolm.</i>	
	<i>O'Brien, Joe.</i>	
	<i>O'Donnell, Kieran.</i>	
	<i>O'Donovan, Patrick.</i>	
	<i>O'Dowd, Fergus.</i>	
	<i>O'Gorman, Roderic.</i>	
	<i>O'Reilly, Louise.</i>	
	<i>O'Rourke, Darren.</i>	
	<i>Ó Broin, Eoin.</i>	
	<i>Ó Cathasaigh, Marc.</i>	
	<i>Ó Laoghaire, Donnchadh.</i>	
	<i>Ó Murchú, Ruairí.</i>	
	<i>Ó Ríordáin, Aodhán.</i>	
	<i>Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.</i>	
	<i>Phelan, John Paul.</i>	
	<i>Pringle, Thomas.</i>	
	<i>Quinlivan, Maurice.</i>	
	<i>Richmond, Neale.</i>	
	<i>Ring, Michael.</i>	
	<i>Ryan, Eamon.</i>	

20 February 2020

	<i>Ryan, Patricia.</i>	
	<i>Sherlock, Sean.</i>	
	<i>Smith, Bríd.</i>	
	<i>Smith, Duncan.</i>	
	<i>Smyth, Ossian.</i>	
	<i>Stanley, Brian.</i>	
	<i>Stanton, David.</i>	
	<i>Tully, Pauline.</i>	
	<i>Varadkar, Leo.</i>	
	<i>Ward, Mark.</i>	
	<i>Wynne, Violet-Anne.</i>	

Tellers: Tá, Deputies John Lahart and Michael Moynihan; Níl, Deputies Aengus Ó Snodaigh and Peter Burke.

Question declared lost.

Faisnéiseadh go rabhthas tar éis diúltú don cheist.

Cuireadh an cheist: “Go n-ainmneoidh Dáil Éireann an Teachta Mary Lou McDonald chun a cheaptha ag an Uachtarán mar Thaoiseach.”

Question put: “That Dáil Éireann nominate Deputy Mary Lou McDonald for appointment by the President to be Taoiseach.”

<i>The Dáil divided: Tá, 45; Níl, 84; Staon, 29.</i>		
<i>Tá</i>	<i>Níl</i>	<i>Stاون</i>
<i>Andrews, Chris.</i>	<i>Brophy, Colm.</i>	<i>Berry, Cathal.</i>
<i>Barry, Mick.</i>	<i>Browne, James.</i>	<i>Cairns, Holly.</i>
<i>Boyd Barrett, Richard.</i>	<i>Bruton, Richard.</i>	<i>Canney, Seán.</i>
<i>Brady, John.</i>	<i>Burke, Colm.</i>	<i>Collins, Michael.</i>
<i>Browne, Martin.</i>	<i>Burke, Peter.</i>	<i>Fitzmaurice, Michael.</i>
<i>Buckley, Pat.</i>	<i>Butler, Mary.</i>	<i>Fitzpatrick, Peter.</i>
<i>Carthy, Matt.</i>	<i>Byrne, Thomas.</i>	<i>Gannon, Gary.</i>
<i>Clarke, Sorca.</i>	<i>Cahill, Jackie.</i>	<i>Grealish, Noel.</i>
<i>Collins, Joan.</i>	<i>Calleary, Dara.</i>	<i>Harkin, Marian.</i>
<i>Connolly, Catherine.</i>	<i>Cannon, Ciarán.</i>	<i>Healy-Rae, Danny.</i>
<i>Conway-Walsh, Rose.</i>	<i>Carey, Joe.</i>	<i>Healy-Rae, Michael.</i>
<i>Cronin, Réada.</i>	<i>Carroll MacNeill, Jennifer.</i>	<i>Howlin, Brendan.</i>
<i>Crowe, Seán.</i>	<i>Chambers, Jack.</i>	<i>Kelly, Alan.</i>
<i>Cullinane, David.</i>	<i>Collins, Niall.</i>	<i>Lowry, Michael.</i>
<i>Daly, Pa.</i>	<i>Costello, Patrick.</i>	<i>McGrath, Mattie.</i>
<i>Doherty, Pearse.</i>	<i>Coveney, Simon.</i>	<i>McNamara, Michael.</i>
<i>Donnelly, Paul.</i>	<i>Cowen, Barry.</i>	<i>Murphy, Catherine.</i>
<i>Ellis, Dessie.</i>	<i>Creed, Michael.</i>	<i>Murphy, Verona.</i>
<i>Farrell, Mairéad.</i>	<i>Crowe, Cathal.</i>	<i>Nash, Ged.</i>

Dáil Éireann

<i>Funchion, Kathleen.</i>	<i>Devlin, Cormac.</i>	<i>Naughten, Denis.</i>
<i>Gould, Thomas.</i>	<i>Dillon, Alan.</i>	<i>Nolan, Carol.</i>
<i>Guirke, Johnny.</i>	<i>Donnelly, Stephen.</i>	<i>O'Callaghan, Cian.</i>
<i>Kenny, Gino.</i>	<i>Donohoe, Paschal.</i>	<i>O'Donoghue, Richard.</i>
<i>Kenny, Martin.</i>	<i>Duffy, Francis Noel.</i>	<i>Ó Ríordáin, Aodhán.</i>
<i>Kerrane, Claire.</i>	<i>Durkan, Bernard J.</i>	<i>Shanahan, Matt.</i>
<i>Mac Lochlainn, Pádraig.</i>	<i>English, Damien.</i>	<i>Sherlock, Sean.</i>
<i>McDonald, Mary Lou.</i>	<i>Farrell, Alan.</i>	<i>Shortall, Róisín.</i>
<i>Mitchell, Denise.</i>	<i>Feighan, Frankie.</i>	<i>Smith, Duncan.</i>
<i>Munster, Imelda.</i>	<i>Flaherty, Joe.</i>	<i>Whitmore, Jennifer.</i>
<i>Murphy, Paul.</i>	<i>Flanagan, Charles.</i>	
<i>Mythen, Johnny.</i>	<i>Fleming, Sean.</i>	
<i>O'Reilly, Louise.</i>	<i>Foley, Norma.</i>	
<i>O'Rourke, Darren.</i>	<i>Griffin, Brendan.</i>	
<i>Ó Broin, Eoin.</i>	<i>Harris, Simon.</i>	
<i>Ó Laoghaire, Donnchadh.</i>	<i>Haughey, Seán.</i>	
<i>Ó Murchú, Ruairí.</i>	<i>Heydon, Martin.</i>	
<i>Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.</i>	<i>Higgins, Emer.</i>	
<i>Pringle, Thomas.</i>	<i>Hourigan, Neasa.</i>	
<i>Quinlivan, Maurice.</i>	<i>Humphreys, Heather.</i>	
<i>Ryan, Patricia.</i>	<i>Kehoe, Paul.</i>	
<i>Smith, Bríd.</i>	<i>Lahart, John.</i>	
<i>Stanley, Brian.</i>	<i>Lawless, James.</i>	
<i>Tully, Pauline.</i>	<i>Leddin, Brian.</i>	
<i>Ward, Mark.</i>	<i>MacSharry, Marc.</i>	
<i>Wynne, Violet-Anne.</i>	<i>Madigan, Josepha.</i>	
	<i>Martin, Catherine.</i>	
	<i>Martin, Micheál.</i>	
	<i>Matthews, Steven.</i>	
	<i>McAuliffe, Paul.</i>	
	<i>McConalogue, Charlie.</i>	
	<i>McEntee, Helen.</i>	
	<i>McGrath, Michael.</i>	
	<i>McGuinness, John.</i>	
	<i>McHugh, Joe.</i>	
	<i>Moynihan, Aindrias.</i>	
	<i>Moynihan, Michael.</i>	
	<i>Murnane O'Connor, Jennifer.</i>	
	<i>Murphy, Eoghan.</i>	
	<i>Naughton, Hildegard.</i>	
	<i>Noonan, Malcolm.</i>	
	<i>O'Brien, Darragh.</i>	

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	<i>O'Brien, Joe.</i>	
	<i>O'Callaghan, Jim.</i>	
	<i>O'Connor, James.</i>	
	<i>O'Dea, Willie.</i>	
	<i>O'Donnell, Kieran.</i>	
	<i>O'Donovan, Patrick.</i>	
	<i>O'Dowd, Fergus.</i>	
	<i>O'Gorman, Roderic.</i>	
	<i>O'Sullivan, Christopher.</i>	
	<i>O'Sullivan, Pádraig.</i>	
	<i>Ó Cathasaigh, Marc.</i>	
	<i>Ó Cuív, Éamon.</i>	
	<i>Phelan, John Paul.</i>	
	<i>Rabbitte, Anne.</i>	
	<i>Richmond, Neale.</i>	
	<i>Ring, Michael.</i>	
	<i>Ryan, Eamon.</i>	
	<i>Smith, Brendan.</i>	
	<i>Smyth, Niamh.</i>	
	<i>Smyth, Ossian.</i>	
	<i>Stanton, David.</i>	
	<i>Troy, Robert.</i>	
	<i>Varadkar, Leo.</i>	

Tellers: Tá, Deputies Aengus Ó Snodaigh and Denise Mitchell; Níl, Deputies Michael Moynihan and Peter Burke.

Question declared lost.

Faisnéiseadh go rabhthas tar éis diúltú don cheist.

Cuireadh an cheist: “Go n-ainmneoidh Dáil Éireann an Teachta Eamon Ryan chun a cheaptha ag an Uachtarán mar Taoiseach.”

Question put: “That Dáil Éireann nominate Deputy Eamon Ryan for appointment by the President to be Taoiseach.”

<i>The Dáil divided: Tá, 12; Níl, 115; Staon, 28.</i>		
<i>Tá</i>	<i>Níl</i>	<i>Stاون</i>
<i>Costello, Patrick.</i>	<i>Andrews, Chris.</i>	<i>Barry, Mick.</i>
<i>Duffy, Francis Noel.</i>	<i>Brady, John.</i>	<i>Berry, Cathal.</i>
<i>Hourigan, Neasa.</i>	<i>Brophy, Colm.</i>	<i>Boyd Barrett, Richard.</i>
<i>Leddin, Brian.</i>	<i>Browne, James.</i>	<i>Cairns, Holly.</i>
<i>Martin, Catherine.</i>	<i>Browne, Martin.</i>	<i>Canney, Seán.</i>
<i>Matthews, Steven.</i>	<i>Bruton, Richard.</i>	<i>Collins, Michael.</i>
<i>Noonan, Malcolm.</i>	<i>Buckley, Pat.</i>	<i>Fitzpatrick, Peter.</i>

Dáil Éireann

<i>O'Brien, Joe.</i>	<i>Burke, Colm.</i>	<i>Gannon, Gary.</i>
<i>O'Gorman, Roderic.</i>	<i>Burke, Peter.</i>	<i>Harkin, Marian.</i>
<i>Ó Cathasaigh, Marc.</i>	<i>Butler, Mary.</i>	<i>Howlin, Brendan.</i>
<i>Ryan, Eamon.</i>	<i>Byrne, Thomas.</i>	<i>Kelly, Alan.</i>
<i>Smyth, Ossian.</i>	<i>Cahill, Jackie.</i>	<i>Kenny, Gino.</i>
	<i>Calleary, Dara.</i>	<i>Lowry, Michael.</i>
	<i>Cannon, Ciarán.</i>	<i>McGrath, Mattie.</i>
	<i>Carey, Joe.</i>	<i>McNamara, Michael.</i>
	<i>Carroll MacNeill, Jennifer.</i>	<i>Murphy, Catherine.</i>
	<i>Carthy, Matt.</i>	<i>Murphy, Verona.</i>
	<i>Chambers, Jack.</i>	<i>Nash, Ged.</i>
	<i>Clarke, Sorca.</i>	<i>Naughten, Denis.</i>
	<i>Collins, Joan.</i>	<i>O'Callaghan, Cian.</i>
	<i>Collins, Niall.</i>	<i>O'Donoghue, Richard.</i>
	<i>Conway-Walsh, Rose.</i>	<i>Ó Riordáin, Aodhán.</i>
	<i>Coveney, Simon.</i>	<i>Shanahan, Matt.</i>
	<i>Cowen, Barry.</i>	<i>Sherlock, Sean.</i>
	<i>Creed, Michael.</i>	<i>Shortall, Róisín.</i>
	<i>Cronin, Réada.</i>	<i>Smith, Bríd.</i>
	<i>Crowe, Cathal.</i>	<i>Smith, Duncan.</i>
	<i>Crowe, Seán.</i>	<i>Whitmore, Jennifer.</i>
	<i>Cullinane, David.</i>	
	<i>Daly, Pa.</i>	
	<i>Devlin, Cormac.</i>	
	<i>Dillon, Alan.</i>	
	<i>Doherty, Pearse.</i>	
	<i>Donnelly, Paul.</i>	
	<i>Donnelly, Stephen.</i>	
	<i>Donohoe, Paschal.</i>	
	<i>Durkan, Bernard J.</i>	
	<i>Ellis, Dessie.</i>	
	<i>English, Damien.</i>	
	<i>Farrell, Alan.</i>	
	<i>Farrell, Mairéad.</i>	
	<i>Feighan, Frankie.</i>	
	<i>Fitzmaurice, Michael.</i>	
	<i>Flaherty, Joe.</i>	
	<i>Flanagan, Charles.</i>	
	<i>Fleming, Sean.</i>	
	<i>Foley, Norma.</i>	
	<i>Funchion, Kathleen.</i>	
	<i>Gould, Thomas.</i>	
	<i>Griffin, Brendan.</i>	

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	<i>Guirke, Johnny.</i>	
	<i>Harris, Simon.</i>	
	<i>Haughey, Seán.</i>	
	<i>Healy-Rae, Danny.</i>	
	<i>Healy-Rae, Michael.</i>	
	<i>Heydon, Martin.</i>	
	<i>Higgins, Emer.</i>	
	<i>Humphreys, Heather.</i>	
	<i>Kehoe, Paul.</i>	
	<i>Kenny, Martin.</i>	
	<i>Kerrane, Claire.</i>	
	<i>Lahart, John.</i>	
	<i>Lawless, James.</i>	
	<i>Mac Lochlainn, Pádraig.</i>	
	<i>MacSharry, Marc.</i>	
	<i>Madigan, Josepha.</i>	
	<i>Martin, Micheál.</i>	
	<i>McAuliffe, Paul.</i>	
	<i>McConalogue, Charlie.</i>	
	<i>McDonald, Mary Lou.</i>	
	<i>McEntee, Helen.</i>	
	<i>McGrath, Michael.</i>	
	<i>McGuinness, John.</i>	
	<i>McHugh, Joe.</i>	
	<i>Mitchell, Denise.</i>	
	<i>Moynihan, Aindrias.</i>	
	<i>Moynihan, Michael.</i>	
	<i>Munster, Imelda.</i>	
	<i>Murnane O'Connor, Jennifer.</i>	
	<i>Murphy, Eoghan.</i>	
	<i>Mythen, Johnny.</i>	
	<i>Naughton, Hildegarde.</i>	
	<i>Nolan, Carol.</i>	
	<i>O'Brien, Darragh.</i>	
	<i>O'Callaghan, Jim.</i>	
	<i>O'Connor, James.</i>	
	<i>O'Dea, Willie.</i>	
	<i>O'Donnell, Kieran.</i>	
	<i>O'Donovan, Patrick.</i>	
	<i>O'Dowd, Fergus.</i>	
	<i>O'Reilly, Louise.</i>	
	<i>O'Rourke, Darren.</i>	

Dáil Éireann

	<i>O'Sullivan, Christopher.</i>	
	<i>O'Sullivan, Pádraig.</i>	
	<i>Ó Broin, Eoin.</i>	
	<i>Ó Cuív, Éamon.</i>	
	<i>Ó Laoghaire, Donnchadh.</i>	
	<i>Ó Murchú, Ruairí.</i>	
	<i>Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.</i>	
	<i>Phelan, John Paul.</i>	
	<i>Pringle, Thomas.</i>	
	<i>Quinlivan, Maurice.</i>	
	<i>Rabbitte, Anne.</i>	
	<i>Richmond, Neale.</i>	
	<i>Ring, Michael.</i>	
	<i>Ryan, Patricia.</i>	
	<i>Smith, Brendan.</i>	
	<i>Smyth, Niamh.</i>	
	<i>Stanley, Brian.</i>	
	<i>Stanton, David.</i>	
	<i>Troy, Robert.</i>	
	<i>Tully, Pauline.</i>	
	<i>Varadkar, Leo.</i>	
	<i>Ward, Mark.</i>	
	<i>Wynne, Violet-Anne.</i>	

Tellers: Tá, Deputies Catherine Martin and Joe O'Brien; Níl, Deputies Aengus Ó Snodaigh and Peter Burke.

Question declared lost.

Faisnéiseadh go rabhthas tar éis diúltú don cheist.

An Ceann Comhairle: I am conscious that it is getting late, that we are way over schedule and that the Taoiseach must travel to Áras an Uachtaráin. I ask the Taoiseach and the other three nominees if they will make brief contributions.

The Taoiseach: First, I offer my congratulations to every Deputy who has been elected to the House for the first time. This is a really special day for them and their families, and one they will never forget. In June 2007, I was one of 49 first-time Deputies taking their seats. On that day, there were more first-time Deputies than today - change always happens in politics. That, too, was a change election. For the first time, the Greens entered Government. Fianna Fáil entered Government again and there was a third party that no longer exists. I remember what an honour it was to be chosen to serve my constituents and my country. As I enter my fourth term as a Deputy for Dublin West, it is still a great honour.

I offer my commiseration to all those who lost their seats. I can recall the words of the late Tony Gregory on my first day in this House when he paid tribute to those who were not re-elected and gave his view that it would leave the Dáil a much duller place. I suspect that

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will not be the case on this occasion. The responsibility is now on all of us to ensure that we provide good government and, indeed, good opposition, because that is what the people have every right to expect.

Today, the Dáil has failed to agree on the nomination of a Taoiseach. Therefore, in accordance with the precedent set in 1989, and followed in 1992 and 2016, immediately after today's sitting has concluded I will travel to Áras an Uachtaráin to inform the President of my resignation from this office and that of the Government. In accordance with Article 28.11 of the Constitution, Bunreacht na hÉireann, the Government will continue to carry out its duties until a new Government has been appointed. I will likewise continue as Taoiseach until the election of that new Government. We do so as a continuing Government with full executive authority. We have many precedents for what happens next and I want to reassure the people that we have a Government and that it will continue to work for the citizens and in their interests. After my meeting with the President, I will fly straight to Brussels for a special European Council meeting. There we will discuss the multi-annual financial framework, in other words the EU budget, for the next seven years. We are currently at a critical stage in these negotiations. A priority for us is to protect the CAP budget. I believe it is possible to reach an agreement that will ensure the best possible outcome from Irish farmers and our rural economy.

If a new Government is not elected on 5 March, we will undertake official events associated with St. Patrick's Day and I will travel to the White House and Capitol Hill. It will be a shortened trip this year in any case because, if still in office, I will need to return for the March meeting of the European Council, which will be one of the most important in recent memory. There we will decide on the negotiating framework for the next phase of Brexit and it is imperative that we get it right for our jobs, our incomes and our economy. We need to negotiate a free trade agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom - an agreement that protects our jobs, our business, our rural and coastal communities, our farms and our economy. Everything else we want to do in the areas of health, housing, childcare, climate action and tax reform hinges on achieving a good outcome and it has to be done by the end of this year. I reassure the House and the public that, until a new Government is elected, the team that has served us well until now, including the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Deputy Coveney, and the Minister of State, Deputy McEntee, will continue its work. Indeed, the Minister of State will travel with me to Brussels this evening.

The Government will also continue its work in critical areas such as health reform and housing. These are issues that cannot come to a halt until a new Government is appointed and I promise the House that we will not halt our work. Progress is being made and we are seeing some results, particularly, at long last, in the area of housing, and we will not allow our country to go backwards during the interregnum. However, as is appropriate, no major new policy decisions, financial allocations or public appointments will be made unless absolutely necessary, and then only in consultation with the major Opposition parties. This reinforces the challenge facing all of us elected to the Thirty-third Dáil to find a durable Government that will last for at least four to five years. The same is true for what needs to be done to implement the climate action plan and to provide warmer homes, cleaner air, shorter commutes and a more sustainable economy for the future, while cutting our reliance on imported fossil fuels. Perhaps the new Government may wish to implement a more ambitious climate action plan than the current one.

We have also done much when it comes to gender equality in our country but we need to do much more and it has to start here. Only 36 women were elected on 8 February, an increase of only one on the 2016 election. We saw many talented women lose their seats. That is some-

thing I deeply regret. The next Government should build on what we have done in office to improve parental leave, maternity benefit and paternity benefit and provide greater financial support for early childhood education and childcare. We need to do much more to empower women, remove structural boundaries and create opportunities across all areas of life - in the workplace, in education, in the family, on public and corporate boards, on sport, in the arts and in politics. As the House will be aware, the outgoing Oireachtas established a Citizens' Assembly on gender equality. It met recently for the first time. I would encourage whatever new Government is formed to drive forward with the recommendations they make.

Fine Gael is the party that founded the State and its institutions and that made Ireland a republic - the only one recognised internationally. In the weeks and months ahead, we will stand by the State and the Republic. If we are needed to give the country political stability and good governance, we are willing to talk to other parties about that but in the first instance the onus is on those who have made enormous promises of change to the people during this election who were entrusted with that mandate to bring a programme for Government to the Dáil for approval. If they cannot, they should say so and be upfront and honest about their failure and the empty promises they made. We are conscious that there are some in this Chamber and beyond who demanded our exit from Government for most of the past nine years and some of them are already exhorting us to go back in. The irony of that is not lost on us.

There has been a lot of talk today about mandates. I respect everyone's mandate in this House - the individual mandates we all achieved as Deputies in our constituencies and also the mandates we sought as members of a party or part of a group. I ask that people respect my party's mandate too. We did not win this election. We lost votes and we lost seats. Many of those who voted for us in the past did not vote for us on this occasion because they were disappointed in the progress or lack of progress in so many other areas, and we understand that. However, 450,000 people voted for Fine Gael in the election just gone by - not many fewer than voted for Fianna Fáil, not all that many fewer than voted for Sinn Féin and much more than voted for any other party or group of independents in this House. Those 450,000 people did not vote against change. They voted to say that they were satisfied with some of the change that had taken place in the past few years but they wanted more change in other areas, not least in health and housing. Some of them thought that we did a good job in the round and they are people who shared our vision and values and agreed with our policies and ideas. We will honour that mandate. I hope others will recognise that while we may be diminished, a mandate of 450,000 is not a small one. As for the suggestion some made today that we step aside, lie down, abstain and somehow allow others to form a Government, we will not do that and nor did those who oppose us suggest that they would do the same when they were in smaller numbers.

Finally, I thank my ministerial colleagues who are not here, who have lost their seats but who will continue to lead their Departments until successors are appointed. I know they will perform their work with good grace and competence.

As leader of Fine Gael, I deeply regret that we were not returned as the largest party on this occasion, albeit by a margin of two seats, but I respect the verdict of the people in the general election and that of the House today. After tendering my resignation to the President in accordance with the relevant article of the Constitution, I will ensure that the Government continues its work in the interests of the people and the country until we have a new Government endorsed by this House.

Deputy Micheál Martin: I too congratulate every single Deputy in the House who has

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been elected, and their families as well. This is always a very special day for newly-elected Deputies. It is a day of relief for Deputies who have been re-elected. It is also a very colourful day. We had some stars of the show today, in terms of the vintage cars that were on display outside on the plinth. I never cease to admire the marvel of the Healy-Rae marketing techniques.

8 o'clock

The Healy-Raes constantly come up with surprises. It is, as I said, a colourful day and an important one for the families of those who have been elected for the first time.

In line with practice on each occasion when the Dáil has failed to nominate a person to serve as Taoiseach at its first meeting, I would like to outline our party's approach to trying to form a Government in the coming weeks. Based on the promises which we made to the nearly 500,000 people who supported us in the general election, we have agreed our priorities for urgent and sustained action that we believe should be delivered by the next Government. We have also agreed our approach as to who we might serve in government with. I want to briefly detail these. First of all, however, it is important to make a point concerning the mandates which we all carry as Members of Dáil Éireann. There have been often loud and angry claims made in the past two weeks that there is one position which has emerged victorious from the election and that we should simply stay quiet and get in line. Anyone refusing to do so has been condemned as part of an elite establishment, trying to somehow block the will of the people. These are classic populist tropes, common on the left and the right, where some parties claim that they uniquely represent the people and deny the legitimacy of the mandates held by others. Every party and Deputy elected to this House has both a right and a duty to represent the mandate they received. In order to deliver functioning government, compromise is required. This is a belief for which we have been attacked repeatedly in this place. However, we reject the idea that there is no limit to be set to the compromises one should take. Demanding that others just stay quiet and abandon their core beliefs in order to grab power because "Sure isn't that what big people do" is not something with which we agree. Equally, the attempt to use profound social problems as a justification for pushing aside legitimate concerns about democratic practices is deeply cynical.

Regardless of whether people agree with us, Fianna Fáil fought the recent election based on a clear set of principles and policy objectives. We are committed to trying to form a coalition Government which will agree to take urgent and sustained action on these objectives and which respects core principles about what is legitimate behaviour in a democratic republic. As we have said repeatedly over recent years, we believe that the next Government must be based on a belief that State action is required to improve key services and to address emergencies in housing, health, climate change and the cost of living. We are very clear in that we reject the idea that major increases in taxes, especially on enterprise, can be introduced without causing dramatic damage, especially to workers and to public finances. However, while protecting the core economic strength of our country, dramatically more can and must be done.

We have identified a series of priority areas which we are seeking to discuss with parties and Deputies. On the overall economic and financial framework for a new Government, we believe that Ireland must remain an open, trading economy with a pro-enterprise tax policy. There is an opportunity to increase public spending but there are significant limits to this. We believe that action on every element of the housing emergency is required. This must include a major increase in the building of social and affordable housing, support to increase the skilled workforce and capacity required to achieved new home-building targets, and regulation of the

rental sector to prevent market distortion and push rent downwards. On health, we support the implementation of long-term reforms but we believe that more immediate action is also required. Therefore, we want the new Government to agree to both short and long-term actions to start repairing broken relations with health professionals, and also to agree to develop mental health services without any further delay. The next Government must respond to nine years of delay and inaction on climate change and biodiversity. There is no easy way of meeting this challenge. Action on all fronts is required, including carbon taxation, a radical approach to renewable energy and dramatically increasing action to not only protect but to restore our natural environment. Education should be a priority for the next Government and, in particular, supporting schools which serve children in disadvantaged communities. We simply must transform the experiences of many families with children with special needs in terms of their interaction with the State and our education system. We must also urgently address the worst funding crisis in the history of our higher education system.

We believe a new beginning is required to support both urban and rural communities. We need to restore and develop local community development initiatives and to develop a core State community services guarantee. Protecting rural communities must also involve insisting that the Common Agricultural Policy be properly funded and to do more to help farmers in their roles as stewards of both our most important indigenous industry and our natural environment. Already this afternoon there are crucial meetings being held at EU level, as the Taoiseach has mentioned, in respect of the multi-annual framework, which will have profound consequences for the Common Agricultural Policy. I wish the Taoiseach well for the conduct of those negotiations over the coming weeks.

We also need a Government that will step up the fight against crime. This requires more gardaí, a new approach to community and rural policing, tougher legislation to target drug gangs and strengthening the essential role of the Special Criminal Court in bringing to justice people who think they are untouchable. We must also put an end to the crisis in our Defence Forces and restore morale of our military personnel and pride in our services. We believe that a new Government must also show urgency in relation to Europe and Northern Ireland. As we can all see, an enormous amount of work is required on securing Northern Ireland's special economic status and Dublin must return to being a leader in the work of challenging sectarianism and building reconciliation. A new Government must also be resolutely in favour of Ireland being a positive member of the European Union.

For a new Government to succeed, it must involve a shared belief in core principles about democratic politics. Its members must be able to trust the good faith of those they serve with. They must be transparent and open with each other and they must reform how Government works in key areas. These are our priorities for the new Government we want to help form. As we have said both publicly and in private conversations, we are seeking to work with Deputies who agree with this core approach. We understand that no two parties share the exact same priorities and compromises are required. However, every party is also entitled to set a limit to the compromises they are willing to adopt. Today and throughout the last two weeks, we have been roundly attacked by Sinn Féin and others for insisting that we will abide by our statement to our voters that we will not share Government with them. Our focus remains our positive agenda for a new Government but given the fact that this issue is dominating much of what others are saying and general commentary, it is necessary to outline why we hold to our position concerning Sinn Féin and to put it on the record without any rancour. I have explained this directly to the Sinn Féin leader, Deputy McDonald, and I will do so briefly here.

First, the fact is that the core policies of our parties are irreconcilable on fundamental issues. Sinn Féin's position is that there needs to be a radical change in public policy towards what they describe as democratic socialism. The party's position is that there needs to be a radical expansion in the role and size of the State which goes well beyond the scope of tackling emergencies in health and housing. This is to be funded by major increases in the taxation of enterprise. Sinn Féin has confirmed repeatedly, including today, that this approach is fundamental to any programme for Government which that party might agree. We have taken them at their word when they say that the core approach of the next Government must be a radical left approach. We simply do not and will not agree with this.

There is also the fundamental issue that we do not believe that Sinn Féin operates to the same democratic standards held by every other party in this House. Deputy McDonald has confirmed that she does not accept any of our criticism, as is her entitlement, of her party's practices and standards. We simply do not agree. This is not simply about the past. The past is important and Sinn Féin's efforts to legitimise a murderous sectarian campaign keeps alive a narrative which is used by dissidents to legitimise their campaigns today. However, this is more fundamentally about today. It is about practices which any party that shares Government with Sinn Féin must accept as normal. Every single time an issue arises about the behaviour of people associated with the provisional movement and today's Sinn Féin, the response is to attack and dismiss. Only when the evidence keeps piling up and the political pressure grows is there any movement. Offers to meet are expressed and calls for co-operation with law enforcement are issued but nothing ever happens. No one ever comes forward. Victims never get justice. When I raised the issue of the systematic cover-up of child abuse by the Provisional IRA, I was called a low-life by Deputies present here today, yet when everything turned out to be true those Deputies, be they old hands or new faces, carried on regardless.

People who accused us of talking about the distant past should please remember the case of Robert McCartney, a 33 year old father of three who, ten years after the ceasefires, was stabbed and beaten to death in a public house full of 70 Sinn Féin activists, none of whom admitted to seeing anything. Under pressure, many of them were briefly suspended by Sinn Féin but now they continue to prosper in the organisation. In fact, one of those activists was hand-selected to be an MLA in December and was appointed as a Minister last month. When challenged about what she had to say regarding the savage murder in question, the new Minister claimed not to have noticed. She asked to meet the family and called for anyone who had information to come forward. This is not the past, it is today.

To be fair, I do not think Bríd and Stephen Quinn should have had to wait for 13 years for an apology from Sinn Féin for the way their beloved son was murdered or about the comments that followed his murder. Repeated anti-Semitism is brushed aside as a small slip. Let us not forget that, allegedly, there have been 27 representatives who have resigned from Sinn Féin citing systemic bullying.

Aggressive online abuse towards political opponents is not an oversight, it is a strategy. Of course there is an approach to government which has received almost no attention in the Dublin-based media but which has raised enormous concerns in Northern Ireland. The use of front groups to receive public funding, the forcing of employees and representatives to sign over wages to the party and the operation of a shadow system of control over ministerial decisions are not inventions of political opponents, they have been documented in great detail. The glorifying of the Provisional IRA is not an accident of one Deputy's exuberance, as Deputy McDonald claims. She has herself praised Provisional IRA units and when she ends speeches with

“Tiocfaidh ar lá” I think she knows full and well what the use of that phrase means. Popularised first by the former Deputy, Gerry Adams, for decades it was shouted in our courts to signal a refusal to recognise this democratic Republic. When Deputy McDonald says that her party sees no reason to change its behaviour and that it insists that it be brought into government as it is we fully take her at her word. It is up to others to justify themselves if they accept that Sinn Féin’s practices are of no concern to them. However, they have no right to demand of us that we join them in accepting these practices. Our primary focus remains on seeking agreement on a positive agenda of urgent action and long-term reform which we believe the next government should carry out. Within our mandate, we are open to fair compromise and to building a government which will not just talk about change but will actually deliver it. In the time between now and when the Dáil reconvenes, this is what we will seek to do.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: I too commend every Teachta Dála elected here, particularly the new Deputies and their families. I thank Deputies Doherty and Kerrane for proposing and seconding me for the position of Taoiseach. In line with the theme of change it is only appropriate to note that today for the first time a nominee from a party other than Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael has managed to garner the greatest number of votes.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: Perhaps that makes us winners again.

I see that we still live rent free in Deputy Micheál Martin’s very narrow and bitter mind. I see that he proposes to continue the diatribe and vitriol that sustained him and served him very badly in the course of the election campaign.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: We are all agreed that the motif and theme emerging from this election is change, but I hear a note from some Members who might seek to suggest that this is some kind of capricious nonsense on the part of the electorate, that perhaps people were not really sure what they meant by change, that it was some kind of fuzzy ill-defined feeling. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I was delighted to go the length and breadth of this State and to talk to hundreds, maybe thousands, of people and they told me what change means. Change means a secure roof over their heads, it means not having their adult children and perhaps their children living in the box room. Change means being able to pay your rent and not worrying from week to week or month to month that the landlord might knock on the door and tell you that it is game over. Change means not having your elderly relative on a trolley, not having that surgery or procedure cancelled again and not getting a letter from the authorities in the hospital saying the good news is that you have an appointment but the bad news is that it is 18 months away. Change means knowing that you have enough to get by reasonably well. Change means that you are not constantly bothered by the €2,000 in rent, €1,000 for childcare, and a real struggle to insure your car. That is what Imelda told me after the election. She is from Cork but now lives in Coolock and she voted for another winner, Deputy Mitchell. Change also means dealing with the climate emergency, not rhetorically or in the box-ticking way that the establishment do but really getting to grips with the green agenda.

Change also means that the old order must pass. That is really what the problem is here because of course government formation is about numbers. We can add. Of course it is about

policy coherence, no one is arguing to the contrary but government formation is also about power and who wields it. The reality is that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have run the show for almost a century and, by Christ, they are not minded to let go. That is really what all of this is about. People told me very clearly that they were voting for us to be in government. The 500,000 or more people who voted for us were clear that a vote for Sinn Féin was not a protest, it was a vote for a different Government - a Government that would have the courage, the imagination and the energy actually to do things differently, a Government that would put the citizen and families and communities front and centre, not big corporates, not the elites, not the well-networked, not the people that Deputy Micheál Martin used to knock around with in the Galway tent.

Deputy Micheál Martin: I am not in the tent.

Deputy Chris Andrews: The Deputy is not at the races.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: Everybody who has been elected here is a winner, but the fact is, to do the maths, the winners were Sinn Féin, our colleagues in the Green Party, the Social Democrats and every party who said to the people there is a different and a better way to do government. I know in voting for us people said we want to give you the chance, we have seen the shambles, the same old same old same, the same problems persisting generation to generation on the watch of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael and they said, “Sinn Féin, show us what you’re made of. Get in there, perform and deliver”.

The real winners in the midst of all this need to be the people. That is what this is all about. I have not heard anybody ask Deputy Micheál Martin to stay quiet. Although I suggest that some in his party might proffer that advice to him. The reason the issue of mandate is such a big deal is because two parties – but let it be said, Fianna Fáil in particular – have decided, in an arrogant, dismissive, self-righteous way, to disregard entirely the representatives of more than 500,000 people.

I will be honest: I do not really care what Deputy Micheál Martin thinks about me. I care less what he thinks about Sinn Féin. I will not take personal offence at that. What I will not tolerate and what is grossly offensive is to suggest to the citizens who vote for us that somehow uniquely their representatives are to be left in perpetuity on the sidelines because Deputy Micheál Martin does not like us.

We could extol the past. We could all write books on that. We could all trade hurts and insults. That gets us nowhere. As a matter of fact mechanisms to deal with legacy and the past have been agreed. Deputy Micheál Martin should know this, I know that Deputy Varadkar knows this. They need to be legislated for. Rather than all of the bile that Deputy Micheál Martin exudes, the constructive thing to do is to commit his party to moving those structures forward and to get the British Government on board for that. The most important thing that needs to happen now is a serious attempt to form a new Government. Many people will speculate about what change means with regard to forming a Government. We have spoken about this before and share this view with colleagues. My first preference is for a left-leaning, progressive Government without Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael. We will continue to work for that. I also recognise that the very worst possible outcome from this election is Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael being back in government together. Not only do I think that would be a disastrous outcome, I will wager that the vast majority of people would regard that as a step backwards. I am very clear that is not what people voted for.

I propose that we actually listen to what people have said in a generalised way about change, a new beginning and moving forward, then in a very specific way about specific policy items. We need to talk to each other about those things. If Deputy Micheál Martin is concerned about the democratic practices within my party, I am deeply concerned by a party and a leader who sat around a Cabinet table with people who were subsequently jailed for corruption. I have a problem with that and I think that most reasonable people have a problem with that. I trust that that is no longer the case within Fianna Fáil and I am sure that we will be assured that it is not the case. I also know that if one keeps reaching desperately for the past, it really says that one is not up for the future. It says that there is something profoundly wrong, arrogant and dysfunctional in one's political positioning. I hope that Deputy Martin will change that position but perhaps he will not. Whether he does or not, the people who vote for us are not going anywhere. They live here. They deserve good government and the respect of being heard. Nobody, including Deputies Micheál Martin and Leo Varadkar, will disrespect the people whom we represent. We have made a commitment to them to represent them well and to make our very best effort to deliver that Government of change. That is precisely what we intend to do.

Deputy Eamon Ryan: I was thinking about what I said earlier about how sometimes we have to have moments of silence to collect our thoughts and not get engaged in conversation that is hostile, because I do not know if it serves our people. I listened to representatives of the Irish people today. Many people spoke, which I thought was good in the end. It is great to hear new people and it was good to hear a diverse range. We are representatives of the people. I heard Deputy Michael McNamara say earlier that he is a republican. I believe in that because I am a republican too. I believe in our democratic, constitutional republic. This House is important in that regard because this house was set up by a couple, with a woman running the place as much as anyone else, at a time of enlightenment when republican ideals came to fruition. The first tune that I learned when learning to play the fiddle, or in scratching at a fiddle, was "Rights of Man", which is a hornpipe. After that sold in New York, a month later it was for sale on Grafton Street and the queue went up the street. "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" was written partly in Merrion Square. It must have been written in this house, where Lord Edward FitzGerald was raised with the republican ideals that the people are sovereign. We have no king or queen and no kingmakers in this process. We are all republicans. I believe in our courts as the protection of the rights written into the Constitution. It is not just us. We have a protection against what we may do in our court system. I believe that the role of the media is important. Our media is under real stress at present. I was talking to somebody earlier on about the pay of people in the media at present, which is very low. It is important, because how can we have a discussion if it is just in the enclosed, self-contained, self-reinforcing views of social media, and we do not have independent assessment of the options?

I believe in our public service. I have worked at local government level, as an NGO campaigner, as a Minister and as a Deputy. For all our failings, of which there are many, I believe in the public service as an extension of this democratic constitutional republic that we have. I believe that we are at an interesting stage in the world, not just here. I am old enough to remember the late 1970s to the 2008 crash. The suggestion that the market will deliver for our people is no longer a story that is credible, not only because of the inequities that it brings with regard to gross income inequality or wealth inequality, or the gross ecological destruction that it brings in its wake, but also because it is a "me" story. It is a story that looking after "me" will rise all other boats and I do not think that people believe that so much any more, if they are homeless and cannot pay their way. We need a new story. We need a "we" story which captures people's confidence and imagination, the way it did in that moment of enlightenment at the end of the

18th century.

When we look across the Irish Sea, while I do not want to dismiss the Houses of Parliament, we see the British Government seeming to dismantle the BBC and engaging in all sorts of changes such as getting rid of a Chancellor, while a poor civil servant collapsed yesterday. Following a discussion with a secretary, he was up all night working. I worry about what is going on in the world. I worry that in the search for a new “we” story, people are looking for false “we” stories. In America, it is “we” against the elite, which has seen the Administration through, and in Britain, it was “we” against Europe, as if Europe was the source of all that was wrong. We have to avoid divisive “we” stories which are not true to what we need to do next.

We need to move from the market doing everything to us as a Parliament really raising our game and the State doing much more. That is why I stand with confidence for the public service. When we of the left, and we are of the left, believe that this is the way to go, we will not get there by dissing everyone and saying that we are the worst. We are not the worst. We are a remarkably good country, even with all the things that are going wrong and need to change.

Coming with that republican perspective is the fact that the people are sovereign. I listened with respect to different people in this House. I respect the mandate of Sinn Féin and, as Deputy McDonald says, I respect the people who voted for Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin will have to be part of and listened to in whatever we do, in whatever form it is, whether in opposition or in government. We respect Sinn Féin and always have, for all the history that we could go back over. We also respect Fianna Fáil. Deputy Micheál Martin knows that. We worked together in a way that was collaborative and tough but we worked in the national interest in a way that was true, in my mind. I say the same to Fine Gael and to every other grouping. Deputy Róisín Shortall and the Social Democrats have worked well together with us over the last four or five years. We have similar views. We have also worked well with other groups and Independents. That is what we will try to bring to this new Dáil. For our mandate, this idea of us working collectively is needed. If we are talking about change, the changes to address climate targets which we, the scientists and the young people who could not have been clearer in this house all say we need to reach, are beyond compare. There has never been as big a leap or such a fundamental change in how we manage our land, run our transport system, economy and how we get our energy. It is everything. I believe that one of the smartest lines in the election was that the Greens are worried about the end of the world and other people are worried about the end of the month. We must make this leap in a way that ensures that people can reach the end of the month without being broke, worried, homeless or fearful regarding where the rent will come from. Such work was done in the Thirty-second Dáil. We worked collectively on climate issues to agree that there must be a just transition and social progress as we make the change. We should not underestimate the scale of that change and we should not do it in a divisive way. It is wrong to blame it all on suckler farmers who, God help us, are the least rewarded, least intensive and least everything else in terms of what we need to change. They are the people who are closest to our land and best at looking after it. We will not blame it all on them. The media did not serve the Green Party well in terms of how they portrayed this story. The only things they said were that we were going to kill every cow and that we are about a carbon tax and nothing else, as if that is the only change we need to make.

In the coming weeks, the Green Party hopes to work with various groupings in the House to tease out what that change is. It is connected to change on housing and our health system. Going green will be good for our mental and physical health. I hope every Member will engage in that process. We will all have to do so one way or another, whether on committees, in gov-

ernment or in opposition. However, we need to dial things down because if we do not, it will not work and we will fall prey to the failings we have seen in other western democracies. The idea of western democratic constitutional republics is under threat. We have the opportunity as a Parliament to rise above and hold the flame that we, as representatives of the people, will look after the people and treat everyone with respect. We need to go back to that core republican ideal.

All Members will be aware that we are very lucky to be in the hands of the Ceann Comhairle. That was evidenced by his election earlier today. He should take note of some of the suggestions that have been made. Deputy Sherlock stated that it may be possible to progress some non-contentious committee work when the Dáil resumes. We probably need to do so regarding Europe and Brexit. We need to be informed about some of the difficult decisions in that regard. Committees should begin to meet when the Dáil resumes, even if it takes a few weeks thereafter to form a Government. The work is done at committees. This is an honourable House. Members should hold on to the sense of excitement and pride they feel when they walk through the gates of Leinster House on the first day of a new Dáil. We live in a democratic constitutional republic and what we do in committees is important, honourable and, at this time, critical.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Business Committee will convene next week as a matter of urgency to begin the process of planning what work we can undertake.

The Dáil adjourned at 8.35 p.m. until 2 p.m. on Thursday, 5 March 2020.