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DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DÁIL ÉIREANN

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

Gnó na Dála - Business of Dáil 66
Taoiseach a Ainmniú (Atógáil) - Nomination of Taoiseach (Resumed). 73
Ceapachán an Taoisigh agus Ainmniú Chomhaltaí an Rialtais 94
Appointment of Taoiseach and Nomination of Members of Government 95
Select Committee on Subsidiarity (European Union Legislative Scrutiny): Motion 115
Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform: Motion 116

DÁIL ÉIREANN

Déardaoin, 23 Eanáir 2025

Thursday, 23 January 2025

Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 11.30 a.m.

Paidir agus Machnamh.
Prayer and Reflection.

Gnó na Dála - Business of Dáil

An Ceann Comhairle: As we reconvene this morning to discharge the functions that we have been constitutionally mandated by our constituents to perform, we have a duty to the people who have elected us to conduct ourselves in a way that is befitting of the office we hold. Our primary constitutional function is to nominate a Taoiseach for appointment by Uachtaráin na hÉireann.

The issue of the recognition of the Regional Independent Group as a technical group lies at the core of yesterday's dispute. On Friday, 17 January, I outlined in correspondence to each member of the Business Committee legal advice that my office had received from the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers. In that correspondence, I further sought submissions from those who did not agree with the advice I had outlined. I was explicit in that correspondence that I had made no decision on the issue of the recognition of the Regional Independent Group as a technical group. I invited submissions by close of business yesterday. Those of you who did not agree with the advice had the opportunity to make submissions and provide alternate advice for me to consider. I embarked on this process in the interests of fairness and recognising that Standing Orders could be open to interpretation. As of yesterday, I received one submission on the issue of the Regional Independent Group. I thank the authors of that submission. Overnight, I considered the submission and the advice that I received. I reviewed and discussed the submission with my staff.

It seems that there is significant ambiguity in the wording of Standing Order 170(1) and (4). I will seek the advice of senior counsel on this matter before coming to an impartial final decision. Therefore, in accordance with my solemn declaration that I will apply the rules as laid down by this House in an impartial and fair manner and the powers conferred on me by Standing Order 75(3), I have decided that to avoid prejudging my final decision on that dispute, the following technical groups will be recognised for the purposes of any debate during today's proceedings pending a final ruling on the matter: Independent and Parties Technical Group; and Independent Technical Group. I trust my decision today provides a roadmap for all parties and

all Members to work towards an outcome that is acceptable to all. Thank you.

I now call on the Government Chief Whip to make a brief statement.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Hildegarde Naughton): I thank the Ceann Comhairle. I would like to update Members of the House that the Government recognises that there is an ambiguity in Standing Orders which requires clarification in differentiating between members of the Opposition and the Government. The Government believes our Dáil is ever evolving and that standing orders should evolve to reflect the membership and groupings of the House. The Government will today bring forward a motion to establish the Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform, to fully engage with the committee and to work to secure agreement, as soon as possible and acceptable to Government and Opposition, as regards formation of technical groups and the rights of unaligned Members. The Government is fully committed to working with all parties and none in the committee to make the required changes that are fair not only to Members of this current Dáil but also to future Dáileanna in the years ahead. We will aim to have this resolved by 5 February.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Chief Whip might move now to the proposal for today's business.

Deputy Hildegarde Naughton: I thank the Ceann Comhairle. It is proposed that the following arrangements shall apply in relation to the business to be taken today:

- the proceedings on the nominations for Taoiseach shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion after 45 minutes and the following arrangements shall apply thereto:

    - the allocation of time shall be as follows:

        - speeches of a proposer and seconder 5 minutes each; and

        - speeches by representatives of parties who have not made a nomination 7 minutes per party;

        - if they have not made a nomination, speeches by representatives of the Independent and Parties Technical Group, and the Independent Technical Group – 7 minutes per group;

        - Taoiseach – 10 minutes;

    - members may share time;

- on the determination of any nominations for Taoiseach, the Dáil shall, unless it otherwise orders, stand suspended for three hours;

- the proceedings on the approval of the nomination by the Taoiseach of other members of the Government shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion after 1 hour and 13 minutes and the following arrangements shall apply thereto:

    - the order of speaking and allocation of time shall be as follows:

    - speeches by Taoiseach and Tánaiste 15 minutes each;

    - speeches by representatives of Sinn Féin – 15 minutes in total;

- speeches by representatives of the Labour Party and the Social Democrats 7 minutes per party;

- speeches by representatives of the Independent and Parties Technical Group, and the Independent Technical Group – 7 minutes per group; and

- members may share time;

- the proceedings on the Motion re Establishment of Select Committee on Subsidiarity (European Union Legislative Scrutiny) shall be taken as the second-last item of business without debate and any division claimed thereon shall be taken immediately;

- the proceedings on the Motion re the Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform shall be taken as the last item of business without debate, any division claimed thereon shall be taken immediately, and the Committee shall report on matters relating to the formation of technical groups in the 34th Dáil not later than Friday 31st January, 2025; and

- on the conclusion of the proceedings on the business outlined, the Dáil shall adjourn until 2 p.m. on Wednesday, 5th February, 2025.

An Ceann Comhairle: I must now put the question on the Government Chief Whip's business proposal. Is the proposal agreed to?

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: It is not agreed. I want to raise again the issue of suspending the House for two weeks. It has been quite some time since the election. We all know that there are huge challenges facing the country and, indeed, an expectation that we all get down to work. I see no reason and no rationale for a further two-week delay. In fact, people will regard it as quite scandalous, given the time-wasting so far, that we would rise for a further two weeks. We object to the Government proposal on that basis.

An Ceann Comhairle: Thank you, Deputy.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: I do welcome the fact the Government has now, finally, acknowledged that there has to be a differentiation between Government and Opposition-----

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: -----and that no TD can be in government and in opposition at the same time. I would further say that this is not a temporary arrangement for today. There has to be an explicit understanding that, procedurally and in accordance with logic and the value of democracy, that distinction is recognised and respected throughout all of our work.

By the way, considerable time could have been saved yesterday had the Government the foresight to simply recognise that logic and the value of that logic to the functioning of the Chamber.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Ivana Bacik.

Deputy Ivana Bacik: A Cheann Comhairle, I welcome your ruling this morning. I welcome the statement by the Government Chief Whip this morning and, in particular, the acknowledgement by the Government that there is a need to ensure clarification in differentiating between Members of the Opposition and the Government. That is the core democratic principle that we, across the Opposition parties and groups, united on yesterday and it is fundamental to

our democracy.

We have no difficulty with the Order of Business proposed and, indeed, we welcomed the initiative to have a meeting of leaders this morning at which we could sensibly resolve matters. It should never have had to come to the situation it came to yesterday. We had been to the fore in seeking a constructive way to resolve matters yesterday. I am glad these have now been resolved.

Our objection to the Order of Business is on the basis that we do not agree with an adjournment of the Dáil for two weeks until 5 February. That is our objection. We do not believe there is a need for that long adjournment.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Cian O'Callaghan of the Social Democrats.

Deputy Cian O'Callaghan: A Cheann Comhairle, I thank you for the work you have done in helping to bring this to a resolution for today. I also welcome the statement from the Government Chief Whip and the engagement with all of the different party leaders this morning to resolve this. It should never have come to this. All of us, on the Government benches and the Opposition benches, need to work constructively together in the future to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the Dáil and to engage properly so these things do not happen in the future.

We are not in agreement with the postponement and with the Dáil not meeting again until 5 February. In the past, when there was a break after a new Government was formed, that was in different circumstances when a new Government came together very quickly after the election. It is now almost two months since the election so there has been ample time for people to prepare and so forth. I suggest that if the Ministers are not ready to face the Dáil next week, the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste certainly would be.

An Ceann Comhairle: From the Independents and Small Parties Technical Group, I call Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: A Cheann Comhairle, I thank you for your efforts overnight to try to resolve this issue. We want to state for the record that we were not in any way trying to obstruct the nomination of the Taoiseach or the establishment of the Government. Our concern, and we are glad that the Government has now finally acknowledged it, is that there has to be a clear distinction between those TDs who are in government and those who are in opposition. If the Government is as good as its word and honours the commitment now made, that there will be a resolution that is mutually acceptable to the Government and the Opposition, then that matter can be put to bed.

An Ceann Comhairle: This is the Order of Business.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: However, we continue our opposition to the decision to suspend the Dáil for another two weeks. There are too many pressing issues for people in this country and we will be opposing the Order of Business on that specific basis.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Michael Collins of the Independent Technical Group.

Deputy Michael Collins: Like others, a Cheann Comhairle, I thank you for resolving the situation that we have had, which has now been going on for seven days. The very democracy of the Irish Republic was in question here and it had to be resolved before we could go forward. We cannot have the situation that was being put before us. That looks like it is going to be re-

solved going forward and a settlement was made here today, which I appreciate.

We will not be supporting the suspension of the House for two weeks. We have a housing crisis, with 15,000 people without homes and young children without a home.

An Ceann Comhairle: This is the Order of Business.

Deputy Michael Collins: I know. I am almost finished. We have a health crisis, with people on trolleys. We have a cost-of-living crisis and we want to discuss whether the carbon tax can continue in this country if we are not to further crucify people. We have an agricultural crisis where people are not getting their payments and we have a fisheries crisis, where the quotas of fishermen are being taken from them.

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: Is this the Order of Business?

Deputy Michael Collins: We need to be here, sitting in the Dáil, next week. On that basis, we will not be supporting the suspension of the Dáil for the next two weeks.

An Ceann Comhairle: I must put the question.

Question put: "That the proposed arrangements for the day's business be agreed to."

The Dáil divided: Tá, 95; Níl, 77; Staon, 0.		
Tá	***Níl***	***Staon***
Aird, William.	***Ahern, Ciarán.***	
Ardagh, Catherine.	***Bacik, Ivana.***	
Boland, Grace.	***Bennett, Cathy.***	
Brabazon, Tom.	***Boyd Barrett, Richard.***	
Brennan, Brian.	***Brady, John.***	
Brennan, Shay.	***Buckley, Pat.***	
Brophy, Colm.	***Byrne, Joanna.***	
Browne, James.	***Carthy, Matt.***	
Burke, Colm.	***Clarke, Sorca.***	
Burke, Peter.	***Collins, Michael.***	
Butler, Mary.	***Connolly, Catherine.***	
Butterly, Paula.	***Conway-Walsh, Rose.***	
Buttimer, Jerry.	***Coppinger, Ruth.***	
Byrne, Malcolm.	***Cronin, Réada.***	
Byrne, Thomas.	***Crowe, Seán.***	
Cahill, Michael.	***Cullinane, David.***	
Callaghan, Catherine.	***Cummins, Jen.***	
Calleary, Dara.	***Daly, Pa.***	
Canney, Seán.	***Devine, Máire.***	
Carrigy, Micheál.	***Doherty, Pearse.***	
Carroll MacNeill, Jennifer.	***Donnelly, Paul.***	
Chambers, Jack.	***Ellis, Dessie.***	
Cleere, Peter 'Chap'.	***Farrelly, Aidan.***	

Clendennen, John.	*Farrell, Mairéad.*	
Collins, Niall.	*Fitzmaurice, Michael.*	
Connolly, John.	*Gannon, Gary.*	
Cooney, Joe.	*Gibney, Sinéad.*	
Crowe, Cathal.	*Gogarty, Paul Nicholas.*	
Cummins, John.	*Gould, Thomas.*	
Currie, Emer.	*Graves, Ann.*	
Daly, Martin.	*Guirke, Johnny.*	
Dempsey, Aisling.	*Hayes, Eoin.*	
Devlin, Cormac.	*Healy, Seamus.*	
Dillon, Alan.	*Hearne, Rory.*	
Dolan, Albert.	*Kelly, Alan.*	
Donohoe, Paschal.	*Kenny, Eoghan.*	
Dooley, Timmy.	*Kenny, Martin.*	
Feighan, Frankie.	*Kerrane, Claire.*	
Fleming, Sean.	*Lawless, Paul.*	
Foley, Norma.	*Lawlor, George.*	
Gallagher, Pat the Cope.	*Mac Lochlainn, Pádraig.*	
Geoghegan, James.	*McDonald, Mary Lou.*	
Grealish, Noel.	*McGettigan, Donna.*	
Harkin, Marian.	*McGrath, Mattie.*	
Harris, Simon.	*McGuinness, Conor D.*	
Healy-Rae, Danny.	*Mitchell, Denise.*	
Healy-Rae, Michael.	*Murphy, Paul.*	
Heneghan, Barry.	*Mythen, Johnny.*	
Heydon, Martin.	*Nash, Ged.*	
Higgins, Emer.	*Newsome Drennan, Natasha.*	
Keogh, Keira.	*Ní Raghallaigh, Shónagh.*	
Lahart, John.	*Nolan, Carol.*	
Lawless, James.	*O'Callaghan, Cian.*	
Lowry, Michael.	*O'Donoghue, Richard.*	
Martin, Micheál.	*O'Donoghue, Robert.*	
Maxwell, David.	*O'Flynn, Ken.*	
McAuliffe, Paul.	*O'Gorman, Roderic.*	
McCarthy, Noel.	*O'Hara, Louis.*	
McConalogue, Charlie.	*O'Reilly, Louise.*	
McCormack, Tony.	*O'Rourke, Darren.*	
McEntee, Helen.	*Ó Broin, Eoin.*	
McGrath, Séamus.	*Ó Laoghaire, Donnchadh.*	
McGreehan, Erin.	*Ó Murchú, Ruairí.*	
McGuinness, John.	*Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.*	
Moran, Kevin Boxer.	*Ó Súilleabháin, Fionntán.*	

Moynihan, Aindrias.	***Quaide, Liam.***	
Moynihan, Michael.	***Quinlivan, Maurice.***	
Moynihan, Shane.	***Rice, Pádraig.***	
Murnane O'Connor, Jennifer.	***Sheehan, Conor.***	
Murphy, Michael.	***Sherlock, Marie.***	
Naughton, Hildegarde.	***Smith, Duncan.***	
Neville, Joe.	***Stanley, Brian.***	
O'Brien, Darragh.	***Tóibín, Peadar.***	
O'Callaghan, Jim.	***Wall, Mark.***	
O'Connell, Maeve.	***Ward, Charles.***	
O'Connor, James.	***Ward, Mark.***	
O'Dea, Willie.	***Whitmore, Jennifer.***	
O'Donnell, Kieran.		
O'Donovan, Patrick.		
O'Meara, Ryan.		
O'Shea, John Paul.		
O'Sullivan, Christopher.		
O'Sullivan, Pádraig.		
Ó Cearúil, Naoise.		
Ó Fearghaíl, Seán.		
Ó Muirí, Naoise.		
Richmond, Neale.		
Roche, Peter.		
Scanlon, Eamon.		
Smith, Brendan.		
Smyth, Niamh.		
Timmins, Edward.		
Toole, Gillian.		
Troy, Robert.		
Ward, Barry.		

Tellers: Tá, Deputies Cormac Devlin and Hildegarde Naughton; Níl, Deputies Michael Collins and Pádraig Mac Lochlainn.

Question declared carried.

Taoiseach a Ainmniú (Atógáil) - Nomination of Taoiseach (Resumed)

An Ceann Comhairle: The next business is the nomination of Taoiseach pursuant to Article 13.1.1° of the Constitution. I now invite Members to make nominations for Taoiseach. I remind Members that it is customary to second nominations for Taoiseach but it is not mandatory. I first call Deputy Albert Dolan to make a nomination. The Deputy has five minutes.

Deputy Albert Dolan: Tairgim:

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

I move:

That Dáil Éireann nominate Deputy Micheál Martin for appointment by the President to be Taoiseach.

As I was saying yesterday-----

A Deputy: We could not hear you.

Deputy Albert Dolan: -----it is an honour to finally propose to the Dáil that we nominate Deputy Micheál Martin for appointment as Taoiseach by Uachtarán na hÉireann.

By every reasonable measure, Deputy Martin has shown that he is qualified to lead our Government with distinction, that he will be a Taoiseach of substance focused every day on the hard work of serving the Irish people and that no matter how tough challenges are in the coming years, he will meet and overcome those challenges.

These are often cynical times. Many will relentlessly portray politics and political leaders as self-interested or incapable. There is rarely any space available on our public airways or elsewhere to acknowledge progress achieved by our political leaders. A premium is placed on being angry and eloquent in our debates.

When we look at the record Deputy Micheál Martin has amassed over the years we see a lasting and positive impact. We see policies that have helped people in all communities. We see the substance of a leader who has made a real difference. He was a reforming and dynamic Minister for education who put in place policies which have reduced early school leaving, increased literacy and dramatically expanded access to further and higher education. As Minister for health, he pushed forward new national strategies which transformed treatment in critical areas and he implemented a public health revolution which has saved tens of thousands of lives and inspired 74 other countries to follow Ireland's lead. As Minister for enterprise, he created new areas of activity which made Ireland an international leader in key areas and underpinned hundreds of thousands of jobs. As Minister for Foreign Affairs on two occasions, he represented Ireland with distinction, promoting the core values of peace, co-operation and humanitarian aid.

Of course, as Taoiseach, we saw his great strength as he led us through a terrible pandemic and recession which threatened many lives and livelihoods. In those dark days filled with great uncertainty and fear he never faltered. He spent countless hours working to find ways of helping people and responding to once-in-a-century problems. He spoke clearly and directly with the Irish people at all times, sharing with them the information available to him and offering hope that we would come through to better days.

During the recent election, people of all political allegiances and none came up to him as he canvassed to shake his hand and say that, however they intended to vote during that great time of turbulence, they appreciated he was Taoiseach. During that election, Deputy Micheál Martin and Fianna Fáil campaigned on the basis of a positive campaign and a positive message of leading our country forward, and the Irish people responded. They gave him the largest and clearest mandate of any party or leader.

Since then, he has worked to build a coalition government based on respect and a detailed programme. It brings together different priorities of a shared commitment to action over the next five years. Each of us who had the privilege of canvassing with Deputy Martin during the election saw at first hand the direct connection he had with the people - his ability to find ways of addressing their concerns and his sincere determination that we both celebrate success and never lose focus on the urgent challenges of today.

Is mór an onóir dom seasamh anseo inniu mar ionadaí do mhuintir na Gaillimhe. Tá mé fíorbhuíoch dóibh as an muinín atá curtha ionam agus as an deis a bheith ag obair ar a son anseo i nDáil Éireann. Tuigim an fhreagracht mhór atá orm agus tá mé réidh le tabhairt fúithi le díograis agus le dúthracht. Ag an am céanna, tá mé muiníneach go bhfuil ceannaire den scoth againn i dTeachta Micheál Martin. Tá a chumas, taithí agus tiomantas do mhuintir na hÉireann léirithe go soiléir aige thar na blianta. Tá se cróga, ciallmhar agus dírithe ar na réitigh atá de dhíth orainn mar náisiún. Tá fís láidir aige don tír seo agus níl aon dabht orm ach go mbeidh sé ina Thaoiseach a dhéanfaidh an-difríocht, a chuirfidh ár leas chun cinn agus a sheasfaidh le dúthracht do gach saoránach.

We never know what challenges will arise but what I do know is that with Micheál Martin as Taoiseach, we will have a leader who is ready to face them head on. His dedication, experience and unwavering commitment to progress will be invaluable as we navigate the road ahead. I am excited and optimistic for the future under his leadership. I believe we will continue to work tirelessly to create a better Ireland for all.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Ardagh who has five minutes.

Deputy Catherine Ardagh: Is mór an onóir dom agus tá an-áthas orm an Teachta Micheál Martin a ainmniú mar Thaoiseach inniu. Tá an t-ádh linn mar thír go bhfuil ceannaire socair, stuama agus trócaireach againn. Tá na tréithe seo riachtanach i ról an Taoisigh.

Deputy Micheál Martin has served the Irish people with honour and commitment during his distinguished career. He has overcome many challenges and shown himself to be one of the most important, influential and successful democratic representatives of these times. He has shown an unwavering belief in the value of working constructively, respecting others and seeking to solve problems, not to exploit them. He has shown a command of diverse public issues and the ability to respond to new concerns. He has shown that he has broad and deep support among the Irish people. Over the years, he has paid many visits to my constituency of Dublin South-Central. Away from the cameras he spent many hours talking at ease with communities about the issues facing them. He has always taken the time not just to listen but, importantly, to engage, understand and seek ways to help.

People see the sincerity and the commitment. As colleagues will confirm, Deputy Martin is the same wherever he goes and whomever he is meeting. This, above all, is what lies at the core of his connection with the Irish people and played a key role in Fianna Fáil's success in November's election. He has, above all, demonstrated that he will lead the new Government with determination and will strengthen our country's position in Europe and the world.

Having secured the most votes and the most seats in our free democratic election, he did not sit back and expect to be handed the Taoiseach's office. No, he showed respect for the mandates of other democratic representatives and led our party in detailed negotiations. He succeeded in securing a majority for a new Government based on an ambitious programme for moving our

country forward. Surely the first qualification to serve as Taoiseach is to show the ability to work with people and build co-operation across political lines.

During Micheál Martin's time as Taoiseach, from June 2020, he served our country well at an historically difficult moment. He took office right at the height of the worst pandemic in modern times, with our hospitals full of patients with a virus we did not know how to prevent or treat and with hundreds of thousands of people unemployed. He was head of a very uncertain Government which many commentators predicted would find it almost impossible to function. Due in large part to his leadership, it was a focused and effective period of government. Members of that Government have confirmed that he operated a policy of working with all the Ministers on promoting action and policies irrespective of who would claim the credit. I have heard many stories from Ministers, senior and junior, that his door was always open to them and that he would help them overcome obstacles wherever they appeared.

Perhaps the greatest demonstration of Deputy Martin's approach to holding high office was seen as he worked tirelessly to secure a share of new vaccines, which were the key to restoring social and economic life. In Europe and globally he lobbied other leaders and businesses for Ireland. Every day, he pushed within his Government to develop an unprecedented programme that could rapidly distribute the vaccines. Once he succeeded in this, he then took his place in the queue along with his fellow citizens. It is with full certainty that he has the character, the ability and the determination we need that I have the honour to second the motion.

An Ceann Comhairle: I now invite members of Sinn Féin. I call Deputy Mairéad Farrell first.

Deputy Mairéad Farrell: Is onóir mhór dom é seasamh os bhur gcomhair inniu agus an Teachta Mary Lou McDonald a ainmniú mar Thaoiseach. Inniu, táimid ag teacht le chéile chun Rialtas na Dála seo a thoghadh. Teastaíonn Taoiseach a thuigeann na deacrachtaí atá againn sa tír seo ach chomh maith leis sin a fheiceann na deiseanna gur féidir linn a chothú chun saol agus tír i bhfad Éireann níos fearr a chruthú. Is é sin an cineál ceannaire a bheadh i gceist leis an Teachta Mary Lou McDonald mar Thaoiseach.

It is an incredible honour to nominate Deputy Mary Lou McDonald as Taoiseach today - a woman who has shown real leadership, as leader of the Opposition and as uachtarán Shinn Féin, building our party across all 32 counties and building our team right here in the Dáil.

Central to Mary Lou is her compassion and understanding of the real needs of people. She has a vision for Ireland, a vision not confined to this room but a vision that encompasses all of Ireland and all of its people - not an abstract people but the people who come into our clinics every single day, including the nearly 9,000 people who have been on hospital trolleys in this year alone, the mother who has been turned down for carer's allowance because she is €2 over the limit and the couple in their 30s who want to save for a mortgage but whose extortionate rent means that they cannot save for a deposit. These are the people we stand for. These are the people we represent.

Mary Lou and we, as her team, are here to deliver on the politics that we believe in. We are not just here for Mercs and perks. We are here as a team that will deliver for people across Ireland, and a team led by Mary Lou.

This stands in absolutely stark contrast with what we have seen unfold here over the past number of days. Today, we see that we are only back from the holidays and the Government

parties decided that we should go back on mid-term break.

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: I will not be on a break.

Deputy Mairéad Farrell: Actually, it is my speaking time. Of course, the Government parties must be absolutely exhausted from having to relive their Leaving Certificate maths exam where they seem to have struggled with Question No. 1: how many junior Ministers does it take to form a government?

Deputy Pearse Doherty: Hear, hear.

Deputy Mairéad Farrell: The answer that they settled on was 23, which is in contrast to that in previous years' exam papers, which was lower. Anyone who would have paid attention to the way they campaigned during the general election would have been forgiven for thinking that their focus today would have been on the people and the people that we represent, but, no, they are not having their focus on people across this State but on the needs of the people in this Chamber.

We have often heard from Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael over the past five years - I have heard it so many times - that they cannot solve something overnight. There are some things that they seem to be able to solve overnight and these issues that could be solved overnight relate to Government pay, positions and allowances.

Day one of a government tells us what the government will be like. Today, we hear it loud and clear. Your focus is on you. Not only did you want to control the Government, you wanted to control the Opposition by putting your own people over here on the Opposition benches. What a remarkable feat that would have been, acquiring the ability to be in two places at once - supporting the Government's positions but trying to hold decisions to account from the Opposition benches.

Once again, the people of Ireland are left to one side. Prior to this election, the Government said it would commit to abolishing the carer's means test. After the election, it said it would commit to it, in an undefined way, by some undisclosed date, hopefully, in the not-too-distant future. Translating that from political-speak to ordinary plain language, that means, "God knows when this will happen or if it will happen."

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: That is not true.

Deputy Mairéad Farrell: The Government is making thousands of carers who are on reduced payments wait until July to get their allowance increases. Let them have them now.

It is the same when it comes to the occupied territories Bill. It has been a long-term commitment from Fianna Fáil. It was in the previous programme for Government. The legislation was done.

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: It was not.

Deputy Mairéad Farrell: It was supported by all parties in the previous Dáil and by the overwhelming majority of the electorate. What did Government parties do? They sat on their hands, talked around in circles and tied themselves in knots. Then, when the election campaign was on, it was their priority. Now that the election is over, they are telling us that they need different legislation. There were a lot of people outside this place yesterday who knew exactly

what they were trying to do.

However, it is important for people not to lose hope. The Government would not have been trying to orchestrate the charade that it was trying to do yesterday if it were not worried. This will not be a Government for the people but, my God, we are on the people's side.

Deputy Pearse Doherty: Is mór an onóir agus an phribhléid dom tacaíocht a thabhairt d'ainmniúchán an Teachta Mary Lou McDonald d'oifig an Taoisigh. Bheadh sí i gceannas ar Rialtas do na ghnáthdhaoine, do ghnáthoibrithe agus teaghlaigh ar fud an Stáit seo, agus is í an ceannaire a bhfuil an fhís agus an diongbháilteacht aici le todhchaí níos fearr a sholáthar d'Éireann.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald would make an excellent Taoiseach. I say that because she is Irish republican to the core. She is guided by principles of fairness, of equality and of economic justice. She is an individual with passion and determination, and the ability to deliver for workers, for families and ordinary people, and to deliver a fairer and better, and a united, Ireland.

There is no doubt there are uncertain times ahead. What is certain is that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael Governments have left us in a vulnerable position - a country rich on paper that feels poor in far too many ways.

The programme for Government is just more of the same. We will have five more years of carbon tax increase courtesy of the Healy-Raes. Well done, lads.

Deputy Danny Healy-Rae: Ye voted for the carbon tax.

Deputy Pearse Doherty: We will have vulture funds going around snapping up homes for first-time buyers.

Negotiations, as we know, were only about who got what jobs and what salaries. Delivering for ordinary people took a back seat.

(Interruptions).

An Ceann Comhairle: Please, Deputies.

Deputy Pearse Doherty: So, what are we going to have and what are the priorities of this Government? There will be the most junior Ministers in the history of the State, the most super juniors in the history of the State, and they will be the best paid in the history of the State. Indeed, one of the first Bills that this Government is committed to bringing forward is to increase the allowances for these junior Ministers but it did not stop there. You tried to pull a political stroke of huge magnitude - that sham where you tried to create the impression that Independent TDs who negotiated the programme for Government, who signed up for it in good days and in bad days, got to sit in the Opposition benches and use Opposition time.

We cannot forget, can we, Micheál, who was behind this grubby deal of Government in the first instance? It was Deputy Michael Lowry, the star of the Moriarty tribunal, which found that Michael Lowry received over €1 million in direct payments and loan supports from Denis O'Brien, whom he was instrumental, as Minister, in delivering a State licensing contract to. Deputy Lowry, in the Tánaiste's words, "not only influenced, but delivered, the result", "engaged in a "cynical and venal abuse of office" and "he was involved in attempting to influence an arrangement that was "profoundly corrupt to a degree that was nothing short of breathtak-

ing". Those are the Tánaiste's words. The Tánaiste called him a rogue politician; now he welcomes him back into the bosom of government. Deputy Lowry is a Government-supporting TD and the Tánaiste has pursued facilitating him with speaking time.

I wonder if Deputy Lowry will use that speaking time to come clean to set the record straight about his involvement in the Doncaster deal, which was the purchase of Doncaster football club funded by Denis O'Brien, a deal that the Deputy swore that the had no part in and was not to benefit from, which was completely and utterly false. Let me put some new information on the record of the House. Deputy Lowry had 57 meetings in relation to the Doncaster deal, including here in the Houses of the Oireachtas, with the organisers of the project and representatives of sport. He also had meetings in the boardroom of Doncaster football club itself. Will Deputy Lowry also explain why, in September and October of 2001, his accountant and his adviser paid the person putting the Doncaster deal together two bank drafts of Stg£32,500 and Stg£25,000 for his fee? When he is doing that, maybe he will explain why these payments came from an account in Gibraltar and where they originated from. These payments were never disclosed to the tribunal. Will Deputy Lowry use the Government's time to explain to this House and the public why he, on 15 March 2001, met with other key individuals in relation to this deal in Dublin? The outcome of the meeting was the creation of a false narrative and fake new documents. These fake documents were given to the tribunal. Maybe he could explain why he, it is claimed, with two others who were central to these deals met on a rural farm in August 2002 to burn the original documents pertaining to these deals. He did so to make sure that the truth would never see the light of day. The information I am now telling the Tánaiste comes directly from one of the men present. Michael Lowry has been found by the tribunal. When Micheál Martin called on the Taoiseach at the time, Enda Kenny, to reopen the investigation into Michael Lowry it was because of some information that came from the same individual who has given me this information. How does he square the circle? Back then he wanted Michael Lowry investigated and now he wants him in the bosom of government. Now he allows Deputy Lowry to play the part of king maker. Now he hands him substantial influence over this Government. Maybe the next time Deputy Martin sits down with Michael Lowry to discuss his grubby government deal-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Doherty, I now call on-----

Deputy Pearse Doherty: -----he will ask him did he burn the documents, where did the Gibraltar payments come from-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, in accordance with the-----

Deputy Pearse Doherty: -----and why did he meet and create a meeting that ended up creating false documents, and why did he lie to the tribunal.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy's time is up. I will allow a brief contribution by Deputy Mary Lou McDonald.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: I thank Teachta Farrell and Teachta Doherty for this nomination. Government, of course, is not about one individual but the person elected as Taoiseach, their politics, their priorities and their values undoubtedly shape the future of the country. The Taoiseach and, by extension, the Government, must lead from the front and by example, demonstrate in word and deed that the public interest comes first, demonstrate courage and humility, honour their word, act with strong spirit and in good faith, mean what you say, and keep promises. These, I believe, are the cornerstones of leadership.

What happened here yesterday was the result of arrogant manoeuvring from Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Michael Lowry TDs. I am not happy with what transpired and the fact that the Dáil was repeatedly suspended, but I am resolute in the stance that we as the Opposition took. We stood to defend a very simple but very important principle that no TD can be in government and in opposition at the same time. We pushed back against a brazen attempt to stymie, to silence and to sabotage the Opposition. We collectively represent hundreds of thousands of people-----

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: Fewer.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: -----and any attempt to railroad us will be met head on without fear or hesitation. We will stand our ground and we will always stand up for those who depend on us to fight their corner.

The people of Ireland have worked hard and the State now has unprecedented wealth and resources: everything needed to build a fair and equal society. The State has never been richer but so many of our people - working people - are left behind. I grew up in Dublin in the 1980s and things were tough but never in my worst nightmares did I think that the soul of our city would carry the weight of so many sleeping bags in doorways, cardboard boxes for shelter, tents lining our canals, and homeless hubs as refuge for so many families. The housing and homeless crisis crystallises the unfair society that all of you have created. Working people go to soup kitchens, families struggle for the basics, children wait in agony for life-changing operations, and trolleys line overcrowded hospitals. Why is it that in a country that is so wealthy nothing seems to work? The answer is "Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael". You have no excuses left. The resources are there yet your programme for Government is simply a charter for more of the same and a blueprint for further crises. You have no clear plans to deliver on childcare or to change the lives of low and middle-income workers, there is no clear timeline to address the issues for carers, and there is only a passing interest in the future of our country and the reunification of our island. All you have is a selection of promises, promises that have all been made before and promises that have all been broken before.

This is an incredible country. We have the best of people in communities but our communities and people have been let down for generations by bad government for whom the achievement and maintenance of power has been the first priority. The Government normalised the division between the haves and have-nots. You have delivered for the insiders but short-changed working people again and again. Our motivation remains that one day in the not too distant future we will have a government for working people, a government that ensures that people have a home, that they can see a doctor when they are sick, that childcare is affordable and that they have living costs that do not break the bank, and a government to restore the hope in our young people that they can have their opportunity for a good and decent future here in their own country. Leanaimid ag obair chun tacaíocht a mhealladh ar son rogha eile, seachas Rialtas faoi cheannas Fhianna Fáil agus Fhine Gael chun go mbainfimid lá amach faoi dheireadh le Rialtas ar son an chosmuintir oibre, ar son teaghlaigh agus ar son an phobail.

Today will not be our day but our day will come.

Deputy Joe Neville: Keep saying it.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: Our work and our ambition for building a better, fair, equal and united Ireland has never been more important. We stick to that task with real belief, with

renewed hope and refreshed determination. It is in that spirit that I accept this nomination.

The Taoiseach: Fine Gael will be supporting the nomination of Deputy Micheál Martin as Taoiseach. I will begin with some words of sincere congratulations to Deputy Martin as he returns to the office of Taoiseach. I know it is really special day for you Micheál, and for Mary, Micheál Aodh, Aoibhe and Cillian, for your siblings, your wider family and for your team, and all the people behind you who worked so hard to ensure you were elected to this House, just like all of us in this House can relate to. I know it is especially significant for you, your family and your team given the circumstances on the previous occasion of your election as Taoiseach when the Covid restrictions kept you from experiencing this great honour here together in this Chamber as you do today.

I have seen up close the trademark way in which you go about your business, as health minister when our two parties were in confidence and supply, as Minister for further and higher education in a Department that was your concept, and more recently when working together as Taoiseach and Tánaiste in, let us call it, quite an intense political period. It is fair to say that I could sense you were somewhat nurturing a mild desire to be Taoiseach again and I sincerely want to congratulate you on that achievement. I wish you well as we work together in partnership. Seriously, I know and acknowledge your wish to be in office is for all the right reasons and that you will again bring to the office of Taoiseach your dedication to public service, the benefit of your long experience in government, and your personal qualities of being simply a very good and decent person.

We have worked together and we have had intensive comprehensive engagement and negotiation to agree a programme for Government between my party, Fine Gael and your party, Fianna Fáil, and a number of Independents. It is a plan for Ireland for the next five years. I am confident it is the right prescription for our country going forward. It is an ambitious plan to drive our country forward but it is also a plan to keep our country safe and secure. The Fine Gael Party is looking forward to playing our part in the new Government in a spirit of partnership, mutual respect and shared objectives. There is much work to do and we are eager to hit the ground running. For my own part I am excited to play a leadership role as Tánaiste in the first half of the Government and I pledge to work relentlessly on delivering the programme for Government in the interests of the people. I look forward to nominating Fine Gael colleagues to join that Government later, and to working with all colleagues in government - Ministers of State, TDs, Senators and people right across this House - as we work together for the people of Ireland.

I will speak at greater length later on when the Dáil reconvenes but I would like to briefly reflect on the visions and values underpinning the new Government, which will be formed today. There is a context to the formation of every Government. For example, the last Government in 2020 was undoubtedly formed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the previous one in 2016 faced a combination of an Irish economic recovery, a looming Brexit and a very fragmented election result. On this occasion, there is no doubt the context is one of global geopolitical change and the very real challenge that presents. In this context and at a time when incumbent governments are losing power around the world, the Irish people delivered a mandate for stability and sensible leadership. Of course, there is a great need to make progress on our own domestic challenges, particularly in the areas of housing, health and disability. There is good reason, as my own party enters an historic fourth consecutive term of government, to believe that we can deliver both that essential progress and the protection of our economy in the face of potentially harsh headwinds. We in Fine Gael have worked in successive partnership

Governments with the Labour Party, Independents, the Green Party and Fianna Fáil to deliver for our country even in times of emergency. Looking towards the next five years, these are the qualities that must characterise the next Government because for the Irish people, the challenges I just mentioned, particularly in housing and disability, are nothing short of emergencies and they want to see a Government meet them with the mantra "delivery, delivery, delivery".

While it is clear that a period of some economic instability may lie ahead, our public finances are in a position to ensure we can make key progress on increasing infrastructure delivery and improving public services. In particular, we can bring a new energy to the delivery of the infrastructure – water, energy, transport and housing – needed to support the development of our country and societies.

When it comes to disability and special education, there is no point pretending that we are anywhere close to where we need to be. I have many times acknowledged that this is an area where successive Governments have not made sufficient progress but I believe we enter the new Government with the message of the people ringing in our ears that there must be a step change here. The commitments we have agreed in the programme for Government, together with the restructuring and reprioritising of relevant Departments, which will be clear later, will result in a serious focus of resources on making improvements in disability services. I can guarantee that this is an area that Deputy Martin and I will both champion from the top.

For my own part, I am looking forward with confidence, optimism and energy to delivering five budgets together-----

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: Hear, hear.

The Taoiseach: -----in this Government and making progress for our people in each of the next five years. There will be more of that later, but for now, I wish Micheál well. I look forward to working in partnership with him in this Government. I am excited, energised and determined about the time ahead for the country we love.

Deputy Ivana Bacik: I wish Deputy Martin well as the presumptive incoming Taoiseach. Today will likely be a proud day for him, his family and his supporters, and I acknowledge that. I also wish Deputy Harris, the outgoing Taoiseach and incoming Tánaiste, well.

Increasingly, this feels like Groundhog Day, or groundhog week, not just with Deputies Martin and Harris swapping roles and not just with President Trump reinstalled in the White House, but because here in Ireland in recent weeks it has felt like we have been returning to the bad old days of stroke politics, of a-nod-and-a-wink politics, with Fianna Fáil back again in the driving seat. All we need now is the return of the Galway tent to complete the picture. This would be funny if it were not so serious.

Deputy Robert Troy: Labour had its chance and ran away.

Deputy Ivana Bacik: I am very glad that we have reached agreement today and the Chief Whip read out an agreed form of words acknowledging what was a self-evident truth, namely, that a TD could not be in government and in opposition at the same time. That was the core democratic principle that we, across the Opposition, united on yesterday. The situation in the Dáil yesterday was deeply regrettable but it should never have come to that. This was a chaos of the Government's own making. I am glad that the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste reached out in the end and that we had a leaders' meeting this morning and were able to resolve things, as we

had sought to do. It is important that we have done that and can move on because the Government has an important task. The success of this Government will be for the betterment of all in Irish society. Instead of going into a two-week recess, we should be convening the Dáil next week so that we can fulfil our constitutional duty to hold the Government to account from the Opposition benches. The Government should now be actively engaging in bringing about the change so badly needed by the communities that we all serve and represent.

Change is desperately needed for the families facing eviction at the end of this month and for the 4,500 children now in homelessness. That is a source of shame for all of us. Change is also needed for the parents who cannot access autism supports or additional needs places for their children, for patients languishing on waiting lists and for all the young adults, whom we all know, who are booking one-way tickets to Australia because they see no life and no prospect of an affordable home here.

Instead of working on the radical changes that are needed, Fianna Fáil, the junior coalition partner, Fine Gael, and, of course, the wobbly leg of the stool, the so-called regional group, are offering a 160-page programme for Government that essentially is promising more of the same. If you parse that document, there is no sense of any acceptance at all of a need for change. There is no indication as to how the Government will deliver on the few new commitments or aspirations set out. Indeed, many of the measures in the programme will see us going backwards. There is nothing there on how the Government is going to achieve the ramped-up delivery homes that we all know is so badly needed. Instead, we are seeing more outsourcing of housing. There is nothing to strengthen renters' rights. The Government has even ignored its own Housing Commission's recommendations. There is no sense here of a radical reset on housing policy. It is welcome that the climate targets are retained but no meaningful pathway is set out for how we achieve them. What is worse is the slashing of funds for cycling, public transport and sustainable transport in favour of building more roads.

Deputy James Lawless: There is no slashing of funds.

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: There is no slashing.

Deputy James Lawless: That is not in the programme at all.

Deputy Ivana Bacik: As Trump might say, "Roads, baby, roads." That is what we are going to see from this Government.

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: The Deputy is making that up.

Deputy Ivana Bacik: Members of the Government have buried their heads in the sand when it comes to the impact of data centres and left the door wide open for polluting LNG. It seems the private sector will continue to be relied on to deliver essential public services like childcare while workers' rights are only getting derisory treatment. The Government has abandoned initiatives such as drug policy reform and the citizens' assembly on the future of education. There is nothing to reassure us about how we will face the threat of Trump's dangerous tariff plans. There is only lukewarm prospects, at best, in the programme for achieving the necessary passage of the vital occupied territories Bill that we have all united on. In short, the programme for Government is not up to the task. There is no sense of urgency about tackling the crises that face us in housing, climate and disability services. We are seeing no vision and a regressive set of policies.

It is not only the policies that are regressive, but also the practise of politics. We do not even know what constituency deals were done with, or sidebar commitments made to, the "Lowry lads". Those deals do not appear in the text of this programme. Let us be clear, in that many people were deeply uncomfortable, given his history, about the involvement of Deputy Lowry in the negotiation of the programme for Government. Many people are very concerned, remembering when Deputy Martin described Deputy Lowry as a "rogue politician" and called on him to resign his seat. People despair that the highest standard to which Deputy Martin can aim is an assurance that a leading negotiator of the programme for Government will "not be in government to do any corruption", as if that were something to boast about.

Deputy Ged Nash: That is okay then.

Deputy Ivana Bacik: To compound the discomfort that so many of us feel, the Lowry leg of the stool was, until today, intent upon pulling off an old-style political trick by setting up in government, having secured Ministries and commitments, and also in opposition, making a mockery of our democratic process. Bertie may not be back but grubby deals are, and this looks like such a deal. I am glad that we have now secured a commitment from the Chief Whip and the Government leaders that we will see this matter resolved with the agreement of both the Government and the Opposition. That is important and welcome.

We in the Labour Party stand for a different kind of politics than those in government in our policies and practise of politics. We have a proud track record of high ethical standards for our public representatives of transparency and integrity in our political practice and work. We have a strong political vision for change. Our vision is for the creation of an active State that can and will deliver for communities on housing, climate, care and work. That is the programme we stood for in the election and it is the programme we will be working to achieve over the course of this Dáil, even from opposition, along with others on the left with whom we share a common vision. We want to see this Government building affordable homes, protecting our climate, defending the rights of children, ending child poverty, ensuring timely access to healthcare, guaranteeing decency at work and using the machinery of the State to drive down household bills. We want to see a Government that will support integration and stand firm against the politics of hate and the politics of the far right.

Deputy Ged Nash: Hear, hear.

Deputy Ivana Bacik: As we always have, we in the Labour Party will work constructively from opposition with those who share our vision to achieve the change that we believe in over the course of this Government. We will hold the Government to account, fiercely and fairly, with integrity and transparency, as we have always done. I look forward to the challenge ahead.

1 o'clock

Deputy Cian O'Callaghan: I wish Micheál Martin well today. It is a very proud day for him and his family, especially now that his family are able to join him today having not been in the convention centre during the pandemic.

While we wish the incoming Taoiseach and Government well in their terms of office, the Social Democrats will not be supporting any of the nominations today. As a country, we face huge challenges, most acutely in housing, healthcare, the cost of living, childcare, disability services and climate change. We cannot face these challenges and increase investment in public services on the scale that is necessary while at the same time eroding the tax base. This view is

a fundamental difference between the Social Democrats and the three largest parties in this Dáil.

The rationale for the deal between Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Michael Lowry marks a new low in Irish politics. Last Sunday, Micheál Martin defended negotiating a programme for Government with Michael Lowry even though the Moriarty tribunal found his actions to be profoundly corrupt. Attempting to justify this, the Tánaiste said Deputy Lowry would "not be in government to do any corruption." This is an astonishing remark to make about a negotiating partner and it makes a complete mockery of any claims that this new Government will champion ethical standards in public life.

The programme for Government is devoid of new ideas or radical measures. The transformation that we need is nowhere to be seen. This is particularly stark for housing. During the election campaign, I met family after family who were personally affected by the housing crisis. We all did. Every day, I met adults in their 20s, 30s, 40s and older still living at home in their childhood bedrooms. I met parents with tears in their eyes as they spoke about their adult children forced to emigrate to find somewhere affordable to live. I met a mother who broke down in tears when speaking about her son who worked so hard to get a decent education and a decent job, and yet is back living at home in his 40s. The level of anxiety and despair this is causing is unprecedented.

More than 15,000 people are now living in homeless emergency accommodation and 4,658 children are growing up without a home. Where is the urgency in the programme for Government to tackle this? During the election campaign, we were told by the Government that 40,000 homes would be built last year. When the Taoiseach, Deputy Simon Harris, was asked what his source for this information was, he said it was the housing Minister, Deputy Darragh O'Brien. The CSO today confirmed that only 30,000 homes were built last year.

Disabled people are forced to fight tooth and nail for what most of us are able to take for granted, including the chance to go to a local school, have jobs, live independently and access public services. Disabled people and their families must battle from the day they are born. It is shameful that their biggest battle is often with the State to try to get basic services like an assessment of need, essential therapies or a school place. Previous Governments have repeatedly said that disability services were a priority. If that were true, it would be reflected in the make-up of the Cabinet. There should be a stand-alone, senior Minister for disability, someone with real political power who can focus solely on disability with the resources needed to ensure that disabled people can participate fully in society as equals.

On climate, we have no real idea of how this Government intends to meet its targets and avoid up to €20 billion in EU fines by 2030. We need to invest now in renewable energy, public transport and a fair transition, rather than wasting billions in fines in five years' time. We need to see a retrofitting revolution with grant reforms that make it accessible for those on low and middle incomes. Climate action is often presented as a negative. However, investment will result in a clean environment, cheaper energy and smaller bills. For years, the previous Government used one-off payment to address the cost-of-living crisis. It never worked because it did not address the underlying issue. The best way to bring costs down is to invest in quality public services and climate action. Investment in healthcare, education, childcare, public transport and clean energy would drive costs down and pay dividends in the future.

We cannot allow threats, implied or otherwise, from other countries to influence our foreign policy or stop us from standing up for human rights and international law and against genocide.

The ceasefire in Gaza and the release of hostages are very welcome. However, there must be accountability for genocide and crimes against humanity. In addition, the incoming Government cannot be allowed to renege on commitments to enact the occupied territories Bill. There was cross-party consensus during the election that we needed to enact this crucial legislation. Now the Government is talking about progressing new, weaker legislation. It is totally unjust for Palestinian families to be evicted from their homes and farms to make way for illegal Israeli settlements. We need to enact strong legislation that shows Ireland stands firmly for the application of international law and the principles of justice and peace.

The Social Democrats, with an increased mandate and enlarged parliamentary party, will play an important role in this new Dáil. Our role will be constructive, robustly holding the Government to account while also proposing solutions. We will work and co-operate with other Opposition parties, particularly those on the left. However, when parties that claim to be on the left put forward policies to erode the tax base and undermine funding for public services, we will not be silent about it.

The Government has not even been formed yet and it is already mired in controversy. The early days have been chaotic, dominated by stroke politics, jobs for the boys, a lack of ambition and vague commitments. It is not too late to change course.

An Ceann Comhairle: I move now to the Independents and Parties Technical Group. Four members will share time. I ask that they respect the time limit.

Deputy Seamus Healy: This programme for Government continues the failed policies of the previous Government. It lacks ambition. It is deliberately vague and has no costings and no timelines. That means a continuation of the housing and homelessness crisis, the cost-of-living crisis, hospital overcrowding, huge health waiting lists, a broken disability service and the health recruitment embargo, known as "pay and numbers".

The housing and homelessness crisis is the most fundamental issue facing this country. This programme continues the failed policies of its predecessor. There is no new urgency, no emergency measures, no reset of housing policy as recommended by the Housing Commission, and the commitment to hold a right to housing referendum has been reneged on. The section on disability services is weak, vague and non-specific. There is no proposal to eliminate the huge waiting lists for therapy services. In fact, the programme foresees those backlogs continuing. It also continues the situation where the law is being broken by the Government by depriving children with additional needs of their legal entitlement to an assessment within six months of referral. On these issues and many more, this Government is not fit for purpose.

Deputy Ruth Coppinger: Today we nominate a Taoiseach in a week that Donald Trump was inaugurated, surrounded by his broligarchy, his billionaires and his sexual predators. He announced that the US intends to continue to destroy the planet for profit, pick on minorities and move in a more competitive and genocidal direction. Beside him, the world's richest man did two fascist salutes for good measure. What was being announced was the end of a liberal era for capitalism and politics. That will resonate in this Dáil as well. Already, the Government has announced that it will drop the occupied territories Bill-----

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: Not true.

Deputy Ruth Coppinger: -----partly in an attempt to prostrate itself in front of Trump and the corporations and to ignore the ongoing suffering of the people of Palestine. What was a very

right-wing Government will become more right-wing, including with the motley crew of those who espouse some of the ideas of misogyny, racism and climate denial as well. They are becoming more right-wing and more clearly pro-capitalist. We need a left that is more left, more anti-capitalist and puts up a challenge and an alternative. Socialists in this Dáil will demand the resources we need for the housing crisis, disability, autism and care and will organise outside of the Dáil as well. We need a movement to challenge the direction that capitalism is taking now.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: We will not support the nomination of any Fianna Fáil or, for that matter, Fine Gael Taoiseach. There are many reasons for that but we saw one of them this week when Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael were implicated in an attempt by so-called Independents, the Healy-Raes and the Regional Independent Group to insult the intelligence of the people of this country and to undermine our democracy by trying to claim they were in opposition when they are a party to the programme for Government and are committed to supporting that Government. Thankfully, a united Opposition and public outrage has forced them to backtrack on this absurd proposal.

It is utterly outrageous that, when we are facing almost three months without a functioning Dáil, there is going to be yet another two weeks off. As somebody asked me on the street as I was coming in here today, do those making the proposal think that children living in emergency accommodation are going to get two weeks' respite from the hardship and suffering they are enduring? Do they think that section 39 workers, nurses and the health workers who are run off their feet in our hospitals are going to get two weeks' respite from the stress they are under? Do they think people who are in pain while on waiting lists for hospital procedures are going to get two weeks' respite from the suffering they are enduring? It is an insult for this government to start off with another two-week break when we should be meeting to discuss the crisis of housing and homelessness that is blighting the lives of tens of thousands of people in this country and the absolutely disastrous situation in our health service that has led those section 39 workers and health workers to ballot for industrial action *en masse*. We oppose this nomination.

Deputy Paul Murphy: Yesterday, stroke politics met robust opposition and the outrageous attempt by the Government to effectively steal time from the Opposition was blocked.

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: You are the only ones who speak.

Deputy Paul Murphy: That is not the only stroke by this Government, however. We have the three extra junior Ministers, an extra super junior Minister and approximately €30,000 extra in expenses for each of them. It has become clear that the discussions on the programme for government were really more focused on how many snouts could be fit at the public trough. These strokes are engineered for and organised by the so-called kingmaker of the Government, Deputy Michael Lowry, a politician brought into a position of considerable power by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. a politician who is profoundly corrupt. When Lowry was a Fine Gael Minister for communications, he received £447,000 from Denis O'Brien. In return, Lowry made sure that O'Brien won the competition for a mobile phone licence. When O'Brien later sold it, he made €300 million. Does this matter? Absolutely because, while Lowry is the kingmaker, O'Brien is the puppet master. This Government will run the country in the interests of the Denis O'Briens, the Michael O'Learys and the other billionaires and multimillionaires. People ask why the housing crisis and health crisis are getting worse. It is because the Government represents those who profit from these crises, not those who suffer from them.

Deputy Michael Collins: Independent Ireland congratulates Deputy Micheál Martin and

his family on his election as Taoiseach today. Independent Ireland has very serious concerns for our country and looking at the new programme for Government, which is more or less cut and pasted from the last one, leads us to believe that little will change for the next five years for the many people struggling on a daily basisi in our country. While some of Independent Ireland's policies are being adopted, such as the appointment of a Minister for fisheries and the marine, a full rejection of the Mercosur deal and a decrease in the VAT rate to 9%, which has now been promised in the programme for Government, the detail is still very vague. For the many hospitality businesses that have closed their doors, it is too little too late. The omissions from the programme for Government are alarming. These include a freeze on carbon tax increases. This has now been forgotten by Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Independents who signed up to this agreement. This is a hammer blow to the ordinary men and women who have to go about their daily business. It is a blow to the haulier who is supplying goods throughout the country and who, with every increase, will have to up the price of hauling goods to our shops. It is also a hammer blow to every farmer in this country who has to use agricultural vehicles to put food on our tables. Shame on anyone who signed up to a deal that hits the most vulnerable in this country.

We in Independent Ireland advised the Government parties to declare a housing emergency but they have failed to do so in their programme for Government. The declaration of a housing emergency would have expedited solutions to the housing crisis where more than 15,000 people, many of whom are children, are without a home. The declaration of a housing emergency should bring power over county development plans back to the people and allow planning in urban and rural communities. The Government did not take on board Independent Ireland's policies on deadlines for wastewater treatment plant completions, an issue that leaves communities all over the country without the infrastructure needed to build. Its housing targets and the housing targets of all other political parties in this Dáil will lie in tatters at the end of this year because homes cannot be built without proper infrastructure. Last week's announcement that 64,000 houses had been started in 2024 was fake news. The facts have been revealed today. There were 6.7% fewer houses built last year, only 30,330. There is no vision in this Government to resolve this issue. One of our main proposals in health was that a medical card be given to all cancer patients for the duration of their treatment. It is unfortunate that this was refused. I wish Deputy Martin well. I look forward to being constructive in opposition in the years ahead.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett. I am sorry; I meant Deputy Richard O'Donoghue.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: I will speak again if you want.

Deputy Richard O'Donoghue: I wish Deputy Martin and his family well on his nomination as Taoiseach. As the general secretary and deputy leader of Independent Ireland, I believe it is now time for people to lead. When Deputy Martin is appointing people to ministerial positions, I remind him of the one thing I have always said to him, which is that they should be spread out throughout the country to represent Ireland as a whole. A lot of the Ministries should be taken out of Dublin so they can reflect areas around the country where infrastructure is badly needed. A Dublin-based Cabinet has not worked. On health and infrastructure, we have seen failure. We have also seen failure in the number of houses delivered because of the lack of infrastructure. If there were any sports games on today, all the field positions would be covered. Ireland should be looked at in that way. The Ministers Deputy Martin will appoint should reflect that and come from around the country rather than the Cabinet being Dublin-based. A team effort is the answer to addressing infrastructure and representation for all counties.

On the 9% VAT rate that we and many others on the Opposition benches looked for, the Government has said that it will adopt this measure but it still has not fulfilled that. Businesses that employ people are closing as we are here today. Hospitality businesses and small SMEs are failing to remain open. The Government gave grants for new businesses, which only last for two years before stopping, but it has not looked after the existing businesses and helped to keep them going.

Let us look at the carbon tax, which was a red line issue for us, and at the transport network across this country. Again, there has been a failure. A lot of infrastructure in this area needs fuel. We do not have the infrastructure in place yet.

Deputy Paul Nicholas Gogarty: I said before Christmas that it looked like this Government would end up like a cold to lukewarm cup of tea with the bag still in it at a convenience store in Thurles. I had hoped that might happen a little bit later but this is far from a visionary programme for government document. It is an insipid artificial vanilla programme for paralysis that is devoid of any roadmap or tangible targets. Tá sé gan fuinneamh, gan treo, gan dóchas, gan chostálacha agus go mórmhór gan chomhbhá. It shows no compassion. This is no Seamus Heaney moment where "hope and history rhyme". It is more like good old Gilbert O'Sullivan, where nothing rhymes. In fact, Chappell Roan comes to mind painting a picture of what it will be like in five years' time:

> And when you think about me all of those years ago
>
> You're standing face to face with "I told you so"
>
> You know I hate to say it, I told you so

It does not have to turn out that way though and if we work constructively, we might have better options.

However, we need to get moving on so many issues: housing and homelessness; our health service - most recently the huge delays in the promised delivery of hormone replacement therapy products; making our streets safer; introducing legislation to ensure real consequences for violent assaults; processing school building projects in rapidly growing areas; tackling overcrowded or non-existent trains and buses; dealing with an asylum system that is clearly not fit for purpose and, similarly, climate targets that have no roadmap. In that regard, we face billions of euro in fines on our taxpayers. Equally important is the energy crisis. We need to be self-sufficient in energy but we are going to face massive imports. I also mention the occupied territories Bill. The list is endless.

On a personal level, in the context of his long, esteemed career, his integrity and the nature of him being a man of substance, I wish Deputy Micheál Martin all the very best. On the basis of this programme and its constituent parts, I cannot vote in conscience for this Government, but I wish it all the best. Good luck, colleagues.

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."

The Dáil divided: Tá, 95; Níl, 76; Staon, 0.		
Tá	***Níl***	***Staon***
Aird, William.	***Ahern, Ciarán.***	
Ardagh, Catherine.	***Bacik, Ivana.***	
Boland, Grace.	***Bennett, Cathy.***	
Brabazon, Tom.	***Boyd Barrett, Richard.***	
Brennan, Brian.	***Brady, John.***	
Brennan, Shay.	***Buckley, Pat.***	
Brophy, Colm.	***Byrne, Joanna.***	
Browne, James.	***Carthy, Matt.***	
Burke, Colm.	***Clarke, Sorca.***	
Burke, Peter.	***Collins, Michael.***	
Butler, Mary.	***Connolly, Catherine.***	
Butterly, Paula.	***Conway-Walsh, Rose.***	
Buttimer, Jerry.	***Coppinger, Ruth.***	
Byrne, Malcolm.	***Cronin, Réada.***	
Byrne, Thomas.	***Crowe, Seán.***	
Cahill, Michael.	***Cullinane, David.***	
Callaghan, Catherine.	***Cummins, Jen.***	
Calleary, Dara.	***Daly, Pa.***	
Canney, Seán.	***Devine, Máire.***	
Carrigy, Micheál.	***Doherty, Pearse.***	
Carroll MacNeill, Jennifer.	***Donnelly, Paul.***	
Chambers, Jack.	***Ellis, Dessie.***	
Cleere, Peter 'Chap'.	***Farrelly, Aidan.***	
Clendennen, John.	***Farrell, Mairéad.***	
Collins, Niall.	***Fitzmaurice, Michael.***	
Connolly, John.	***Gannon, Gary.***	
Cooney, Joe.	***Gibney, Sinéad.***	
Crowe, Cathal.	***Gogarty, Paul Nicholas.***	
Cummins, John.	***Gould, Thomas.***	
Currie, Emer.	***Graves, Ann.***	
Daly, Martin.	***Guirke, Johnny.***	
Dempsey, Aisling.	***Hayes, Eoin.***	
Devlin, Cormac.	***Healy, Seamus.***	
Dillon, Alan.	***Hearne, Rory.***	
Dolan, Albert.	***Kelly, Alan.***	
Donohoe, Paschal.	***Kenny, Eoghan.***	
Dooley, Timmy.	***Kenny, Martin.***	
Feighan, Frankie.	***Kerrane, Claire.***	
Fleming, Sean.	***Lawless, Paul.***	
Foley, Norma.	***Lawlor, George.***	
Gallagher, Pat the Cope.	***Mac Lochlainn, Pádraig.***	

Geoghegan, James.	***McDonald, Mary Lou.***	
Grealish, Noel.	***McGettigan, Donna.***	
Harkin, Marian.	***McGuinness, Conor D.***	
Harris, Simon.	***Mitchell, Denise.***	
Healy-Rae, Danny.	***Murphy, Paul.***	
Healy-Rae, Michael.	***Mythen, Johnny.***	
Heneghan, Barry.	***Nash, Ged.***	
Heydon, Martin.	***Newsome Drennan, Natasha.***	
Higgins, Emer.	***Ní Raghallaigh, Shónagh.***	
Keogh, Keira.	***Nolan, Carol.***	
Lahart, John.	***O'Callaghan, Cian.***	
Lawless, James.	***O'Donoghue, Richard.***	
Lowry, Michael.	***O'Donoghue, Robert.***	
Martin, Micheál.	***O'Flynn, Ken.***	
Maxwell, David.	***O'Gorman, Roderic.***	
McAuliffe, Paul.	***O'Hara, Louis.***	
McConalogue, Charlie.	***O'Reilly, Louise.***	
McCormack, Tony.	***O'Rourke, Darren.***	
McEntee, Helen.	***Ó Broin, Eoin.***	
McGrath, Mattie.	***Ó Laoghaire, Donnchadh.***	
McGrath, Séamus.	***Ó Murchú, Ruairí.***	
McGreehan, Erin.	***Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.***	
McGuinness, John.	***Ó Súilleabháin, Fionntán.***	
Moran, Kevin Boxer.	***Quaide, Liam.***	
Moynihan, Aindrias.	***Quinlivan, Maurice.***	
Moynihan, Michael.	***Rice, Pádraig.***	
Moynihan, Shane.	***Sheehan, Conor.***	
Murnane O'Connor, Jennifer.	***Sherlock, Marie.***	
Murphy, Michael.	***Smith, Duncan.***	
Naughton, Hildegarde.	***Stanley, Brian.***	
Neville, Joe.	***Tóibín, Peadar.***	
O'Brien, Darragh.	***Wall, Mark.***	
O'Callaghan, Jim.	***Ward, Charles.***	
O'Connell, Maeve.	***Ward, Mark.***	
O'Connor, James.	***Whitmore, Jennifer.***	
O'Dea, Willie.		
O'Donnell, Kieran.		
O'Donovan, Patrick.		
O'Meara, Ryan.		
O'Shea, John Paul.		
O'Sullivan, Christopher.		

O'Sullivan, Pádraig.		
Ó Cearúil, Naoise.		
Ó Fearghaíl, Seán.		
Ó Muirí, Naoise.		
Richmond, Neale.		
Roche, Peter.		
Scanlon, Eamon.		
Smith, Brendan.		
Smyth, Niamh.		
Timmins, Edward.		
Toole, Gillian.		
Troy, Robert.		
Ward, Barry.		

Tellers: Tá, Deputies Cormac Devlin and Hildegarde Naughton; Níl, Deputies Duncan Smith and Pádraig Mac Lochlainn.

Question declared carried.

Faisnéiseadh go rabhthas tar éis glacadh leis an gceist.

An Ceann Comhairle: I congratulate Deputy Micheál Martin on his appointment.

I now call him to speak for ten minutes.

Deputy Micheál Martin: A Cheann Comhairle, is onóir mhór a bheith tosaithe agus ainmnithe ag Dáil Éireann chun freastal mar Thaoiseach ar an saorphoblacht seo. Is pribhléid den scoth í seo agus geallaim nach ndéanfaidh mé talamh slán de go deo. Is maith is eol dom agus cuimhneoidh mé i gcónaí go bhfuil Oifig an Taoiseach ina seasamh mar chuid de chóras daonlathach níos leithne. Córas daonlathach ina bhfuil údarás agus mandáide an phobail ag gach duine againn agus dualgas orainn go léir freastal ar ár náisiún ina n-iomláine.

I would like to thank my proposer, Deputy Albert Dolan, seconder, Deputy Catherine Ardagh, and all the Deputies who supported me, and those from from my own party Fianna Fáil, the Fine Gael Party and the Regional Independent Group, all of whom negotiated a programme for Government in an upfront and honest manner.

It is a sad development in many parliaments in the world that they have become more angry and divisive. They have become forums dominated by the inflated rhetoric of demonstrations rather than a place where different groups can argue in good faith and respectfully disagree. On the day when we carry out our most important constitutional duty as representatives of the people, we should take a moment to remember and respect those things we share. It is a profound honour to be nominated to serve as Head of Government in a free, democratic and diverse republic.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Micheál Martin: Today I am deeply conscious of the democratic tradition our country has developed over more than a century. We should never take for granted the freedoms and opportunities secured for us by the generations who sat here before us, and by the

men and women who fought and campaigned for the establishment of Dáil Éireann. Our democracy has remained strong through some of the gravest challenges of a turbulent century. We have continued to have free debate and free elections. We have never wavered in our commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The most powerful thing about the mandate each of us in this House holds is that it is based on the support of our families, our supporters, in most cases, our parties and, above all, our communities.

I could not be more thankful to all of those who have been at my side and have helped me to achieve the honour of being nominated to serve as Taoiseach. It is the nature of politics that the focus is mostly on the few of us who achieve office, but the role of those who work with and for us is central. I want to thank those who work for our party and have kept our voice and our representation so strong. They never believed the predictions and had faith that our people and our policies would prevail. I also want to thank the many friends and colleagues who have helped me over the years and who, with typical Cork modesty, advocate on a regular basis for the well-being of my home city and county. As they have grown, my children Micheál Aodh, Aoibhe and Cillian have moved from being observers to being pillars for me. They are unflinching in their advice and constant in their support. I have been blessed to have a partner in Mary who has done so much more than just keeping me rooted. No position I have held, and nothing I have achieved, would have been possible without her.

I would also like to acknowledge my wider family and especially my late parents, Paddy and Lana. Yesterday was the anniversary of the passing of my late father. This week every year, I remember all he did for us and the values he lived by every day. A strong and athletic sporting man, he was also quiet and determined in the small and large steps he took every day to help others. The Córas Iompair Éireann, CIE, widow and orphans fund, which he founded, helping hundreds of families at tough times of the year, was just one example of his commitment to turning values into action. Ours was a home where service to the wider community and an understanding of shared responsibility within society was always the defining value.

Turners Cross was a wonderful place to grow up in, and I will always be grateful to Coláiste Chríost Rí, both primary and secondary, for the education and encouragement our teachers gave to me and my generation. My respect for and belief in the essential role teachers play in building communities and society stems from the inspiring guidance I received from many of my teachers, who were ambitious for us and who set the sky as the limit. It was also there that I first learned of the power of political action, as few of us working-class kids could have hoped to complete school without the revolution which the then Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, and former Taoiseach Jack Lynch introduced.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

Deputy Micheál Martin: As I look at Ireland today, it is clear that there can be a degree of cynicism towards politics. Too often we dismiss the motivation of others, especially those we disagree with. I reject this. I believe in the good faith of those who seek to serve their communities in elective office, and I believe that politics remains a force for good - a force for positive change. I hope that we can have a co-operative Oireachtas in the coming years where we try to emphasise positive discussion. For my part, I intend to remain open to constructive ideas from Deputies from all parts of the House.

When nominating members of the new Government, I will address more specific policy points, but it is important to state the core principles on which I intend to lead the Government. When reflecting on the legacy of republicanism from the 1916 generation of which he was a part, Seán Lemass always stressed the idea of responding to the needs of today and shaping the future. For him, true republicanism was not about following the past, it was about a willingness to move on and create new ways forward. He summed this up with his favourite quote from Pádraig Pearse - "every generation has its task". For us today, for this generation of political leaders, the task is to protect Ireland's strength at a moment of real threat, while also addressing critical social needs.

By any reasonable measure, this is a challenging moment in world history. Ireland is an open democracy with an open economy. We cannot expect to stand unaffected on the sidelines. We must protect and renew an economic model which delivers high employment and resources for public services. Central to this we must strengthen our three essential relationships with Europe, with the United States and with the United Kingdom. Europe is the essential foundation upon which we rely. This week marks the anniversary of the day Jack Lynch and Patrick Hillery signalled our commitment to a European future by signing the Treaty of Accession. The Government I lead will work every day in the same spirit. We will work to help reform and strengthen the European Union. We will work with others to overcome urgent economic, environmental and political challenges which threaten our shared interests and values. We will not flinch in our support for protecting Europe's freedom and democracy.

Our relationship of kinship with the United States is older than our State. It has endured because we have continued to renew bonds of respect and co-operation. We are not naive about the realities of change but, equally, the Ireland-America relationship is one which benefits us both and it will emerge strongly no matter what. The United Kingdom remains a close social, cultural and economic neighbour for us, and we will begin operating a new systematic approach to consultation and co-operation. Internationally, we will be an active voice for the values of peace, co-operation and development. We will follow the profoundly welcome ceasefire in Gaza with a sustained programme of humanitarian and reconstruction aid. We will do this through co-operation with the World Food Programme and UNRWA.

Protecting and renewing Ireland's economic strength and standing in the world must, as I have said, also be accompanied by sustained action on other urgent needs. Sixty years ago this month Seán Lemass went to Stormont to meet Terence O'Neill. They agreed that we should be able to promote our constitutional objectives while also working together for shared development. It is a great tragedy that their new departure then was not allowed to achieve more. The new Government will push forward on the historic task of building a lasting reconciliation. We will implement the largest ever programme of North-South research and investment, opening critical links and building both engagement and understanding through a further strengthened shared island initiative.

Too many people are struggling to afford a home to buy or rent. Helping them will be a priority for the new Government and for the Dáil. Too many people with disabilities and their families have to fight too hard to access the services they deserve. We must begin a new era in support for them, not just increasing resources but step-changing the scale, nature and delivery of services. This is not the work of one Minister, it must be the work of every part of Government and of this Oireachtas. We must deliver both resources and reform to help all our children to get the best start in life, through smaller classes, community development programmes and targeting resources to help families experiencing poverty. We must protect nature and biodi-

versity and move forward in tackling the existential problem of climate change.

In all of this, the Government I will lead will reject the sterile politics of the extremes, the empty gestures of those who want to impose inflexible ideologies when addressing issues which are as complex and diverse as our people. Mine will be a Government which seeks to work in a spirit of practical republicanism - a spirit which has helped our country achieve so much in the past and which is essential if we are to meet the challenges of today; a spirit which will create equality of opportunity for all, which will work to underpin and promote the status, dignity and independence of people with disabilities; a spirit that will build more houses at an accelerated pace and that will work every day to build reconciliation between the different traditions on the island of Ireland.

I mo ról mar Thaoiseach ar an Rialtas nua seo ag tréimhse chorraitheach mhíshuaimhneach timpeall na cruinne, tá aidhm láidir agam obair leanúnach gan stad a dhéanamh gach aon lá mar Thaoiseach chun an tír seo a chur chun cinn, buntáistí agus luachanna na hÉireann a léiriú thar lear agus gan amhras beidh an Rialtas ag dul i ngleic leis na dúshláin mhóra timpeall orainn inniu. Geallaim daoibh go mbeidh mé ag freastal ar mo dhícheall ar son na tíre seo. Go raibh míle maith agaibh agus ní neart go cur le chéile.

An Ceann Comhairle: I thank the Deputies and reiterate my congratulations to the Taoiseach. In accordance with the business proposal agreed earlier, the House now stands suspended for three hours.

Cuireadh an Dáil ar fionraí ar 1.58 p.m. agus cuireadh tús leis arís ar 4.58 p.m.

Sitting suspended at 1.58 p.m. and resumed at 4.58 p.m.

Ceapachán an Taoisigh agus Ainmniú Chomhaltaí an Rialtais

Appointment of Taoiseach and Nomination of Members of Government

An Ceann Comhairle: I call on the Taoiseach, Deputy Micheál Martin, to confirm his appointment by the President as Taoiseach and to move the motion.

The Taoiseach: B'áil liom cead a chur in iúl, mar eolas don Dáil, gur chuir mé m'ainmniú mar Thaoiseach in iúl don Uachtarán agus gur cheap sé mé dá réir.

I beg leave to announce, for the information of the Dáil, that I have informed the President that the Dáil has nominated me to be the Taoiseach and that he has appointed me accordingly.

The comprehensive programme for Government contains a significant number of matters which will require the assignment of responsibilities and the creation of new functions. In addition, there is a series of changes to co-ordination within Government which I will be implementing in the Department of the Taoiseach. I will give more detail concerning these changes in my comments following the formal nomination of members of the Government.

Tairigim:

Go gcomhaontóidh Dáil Éireann leis an Taoiseach d'ainmniú na dTeachtaí seo a leanas

chun a gceaptha ag an Uachtarán mar chomhaltaí den Rialtas:

I move:

That Dáil Éireann approve the nomination by the Taoiseach of the following Deputies for appointment by the President to be members of the Government:

- Deputy Simon Harris as Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Minister for Defence.

- Deputy Paschal Donohoe as Minister for Finance.

- Deputy Jack Chambers as Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.

- Deputy Helen McEntee as Minister for Education and Youth.

- Deputy Darragh O'Brien as Minister for Climate, Environment and Energy and Minister for Transport.

- Deputy Norma Foley as Minister for Children, Disability and Equality.

- Deputy Peter Burke as Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment.

- Deputy Dara Calleary as Minister for Social Protection and Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht.

- Deputy Patrick O'Donovan as Minister for Arts, Media, Communications, Culture and Sport.

- Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill as Minister for Health.

- Deputy James Browne as Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

- Deputy Jim O'Callaghan as Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

- Deputy Martin Heydon as Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and the Marine.

- Deputy James Lawless as Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

- Rossa Fanning SC as Attorney General to the Government.

- Deputy Mary Butler as Government Chief Whip and Minister of State attending Cabinet with responsibility for mental health.

- Deputy Hildegarde Naughton as Minister of State attending Cabinet with responsibility for disability.

- Deputy Noel Grealish as Minister of State attending Cabinet with responsibility for food promotion, new markets, research and development.

- Deputy Seán Canney as Minister of State attending Cabinet with responsibility for international and road transport, logistics, rail and ports.

In addition, in the coming days I will take steps to propose further Deputies to serve as Ministers of State covering an expanded range of responsibilities in order to fully address the priorities set out in the programme for Government.

The legislation required to give effect to this will be introduced without delay.

The Government that I am nominating today is a Government that will work every day to protect Ireland's strength at this moment of real threat, and it will also take sustained action to address critical social needs. Each member of the new Government will have responsibility for a distinct programme of action but each will also be required to actively contribute to the Government's core priorities. A whole-of-government approach, taking key issues out of departmental silos and delivering action on multiple fronts at once, will be a defining characteristic of the Government's work. In a number of priority areas, a series of new co-ordination mechanisms will be put in place that will be led from the Taoiseach's office.

We can all see that there is growing turbulence in the world and there are very real threats to institutions that are fundamentally important for Ireland. A core priority for the Government will be to protect and strengthen Ireland's position within the European Union and in wider international fora. As a fundamental part of this, we must protect the trade which is vital to our economy and the institutions which are vital to promoting our values. We will join with others in seeking to strengthen the EU, complete essential economic reforms within the Union and insist on its democratic values.

We will also seek to accelerate the opening of new markets and expand the opportunities for Irish companies to prosper through trade. We will further emphasise the importance of trade to our international diplomacy. In order to underpin this, the trade function will transfer to the newly renamed Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which will be led by the new Tánaiste, Deputy Simon Harris.

Next year, we will assume the rotating Presidency of the Council. We will use our Presidency to promote a positive agenda of concrete actions across a range of social, economic, political and environmental fields. It will be a Presidency defined by action.

The Minister of State with responsibility for Europe will be assigned to both the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He will play a central role in planning for the Presidency and also implementing a range of permanent measures that will deepen the contacts between Ireland and our fellow member states.

Everyone who believes in the cause of peace and basic values must hope that the ceasefire in Gaza holds and that we can quickly move to a massive programme of humanitarian aid and reconstruction. Gaza is, however, one part of a wider and deeply troubling development where civilians are increasingly targeted in conflicts, and the impacts are escalating. We can see it in Russia's savage war against Ukraine, in the decade of atrocities committed by the Assad regime and Russia in Syria and in Sudan. In our aid programme and in our work globally, this Government will be a leading voice in building alliances to challenge this appalling drift in recent conflicts and wars.

The development of a new relationship with the United Kingdom is also a vital part of our work. We will begin holding regular, formal summits to promote active co-ordination. Each Minister will be tasked with building bilateral relations to replace those that were once a routine part of shared membership of the European Union.

Moving forward, the work of building a lasting peace and reconciliation on our island will continue to be led by me through the shared island initiative. The unit co-ordinating the initiative will be strengthened and we will implement a major expansion in the actions covered by the initiative. We will seek to work closely and constructively with the democratic representatives of the people of Northern Ireland, and aiding the effective working of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement will form part of the work of every member of the new Government.

A strong economy that supports high employment and funds public services must never be taken for granted. Ireland has succeeded in the past because we have kept evolving and we have understood that we must work to shape our economy's direction and capacity. We will retain strong public finances, including the provision of reserve funds that can protect investment programmes and protect services in tougher times, but we will also deliver a comprehensive programme of investment in both services and infrastructure.

In order to ensure that we deliver major projects efficiently, cost-effectively and faster, the structure and operation of the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform will be significantly reformed and strengthened. A new infrastructure division will be established and headed by an official at deputy Secretary General level. The unit, together with its Ministers, will have responsibility to remove unreasonable roadblocks to essential projects, strengthening expert oversight and ensuring that investment programmes are implemented without delay.

The new Government will also work to support Irish businesses, not only to find new markets but also to reduce costs. A roadmap for long-term stability and growth for small and medium-sized industry is an early priority which will include extensive research and consultation. As part of this, and recognising the importance of tourism to much of our economy, the tourism function is being transferred to the Department of enterprise.

The Minister for higher and further education and research will lead an effort to ensure that we maximise the economic impact of the investment we make in those sectors. We will ensure that we secure their financial foundations and implement measures to systematically consider the science and research dimensions of Government initiatives. We will plan and work on a major new initiative in the research field.

Education will be as important to shaping our future as it has been in shaping our past. We will move forward with a programme of modernisation and reform that will go hand in hand with increased resources that go directly to classrooms in every community in our country.

I am determined that this will be a Government that step-changes the level and scale of support for people with disabilities and their families. Existing approaches will not achieve the breakthroughs we need and it is time to move beyond them. Disability will be represented at Cabinet by a full Minister for the first time in our history. The Minister will have responsibility for many services and will lead cross-government action. This will include a new model of delivery for vital therapies. In order to reinforce this work, a new disability unit will be established in my Department.

I am determined that we will begin a new era of community development. In rural, provincial and urban areas, many challenges can only be met if we bring together all relevant agencies, work with the communities and develop interventions targeted specifically at each community's distinct needs. The Minister for Social Protection will lead this work but all Departments will

contribute.

Ensuring the safety of our communities, the ability to walk the streets or to be in your own home without fear is a fundamental responsibility of Government. We need to improve the level and impact of community policing, and we need to address new forms of behaviour which are causing great damage. The Department of Justice will be significantly reformed to make sure that it is focused on our programme of action. In addition, we will address the fact that Government activity on migration is too dispersed and requires more direct leadership. A new division of the Department of Justice will take responsibility for the control of our borders, management of immigration and co-ordination of integration. This will be headed by a Secretary General with a distinct budget and more direct oversight.

We understand the enormous pressures and difficult circumstances of many of our citizens who cannot find a secure home to buy or rent. Accelerating the number of homes available and delivering direct support to people is critical to our work. We will ramp up investment in the required infrastructure and I will shortly announce details of a new co-ordination and implementation group that will operate from my Department.

Rural communities and the agrifood sector remain a vital part of our social, economic and cultural life. We will work to deliver a sustainable and prosperous future for them. Recognising the importance of fishing and the marine, I will appoint a dedicated Minister of State to lead investment in this sector.

The achievement of climate and biodiversity goals is not just a challenge for this Government and Dáil; it is the defining challenge of our age. The scale of investment we need to transform to a green economy means that we must step-change investment, both public and private. Based on an approach that has been successful in financial services, I will establish a new climate investment clearing house that will initially focus on energy transformation.

Both during the pandemic and in the years since, we have shown that reform and progress are possible in health. The full benefits of major reforms, such as the new consultant contract and service development, will only be fully felt in the next few years. However, we have to also look for ways to transform how we run our health services, not just administratively but, more importantly, in how we treat individual patients. A programme of health digitalisation is central to this transformation. Its implementation is a priority for us and work will begin without delay.

Each member of the new Government will have clear responsibilities for delivering on the ambitious programme we have set out. It will be an outward-looking Government, one which is focused on protecting our economy and delivering sustained progress in housing and education, in helping communities, in transforming services for people with disabilities and in many other areas.

Our country has shown time and again just how much it can achieve. In building one of the longest continuous democracies in the world, we have overcome many great challenges. I have great faith in our strengths and I have no doubt that we can, working together with a positive agenda of change, move our country forward together.

The Tánaiste (Deputy Simon Harris): I congratulate the Taoiseach, Deputy Micheál Martin, on his election and appointment as Taoiseach of our country and Government. I congratulate all colleagues in Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Independents who are assuming ministerial office today and others who will assume ministerial office in the days to come. I very much

look forward to working together in partnership for the next five years. We have much to do.

It is clear to me from the very detailed and thorough negotiations we undertook on the programme for Government that we have a very strong, shared understanding of the scale of work we must do and the scale of delivery we must achieve. Between us, we have a very clear mandate from the Irish people, which I believe is summed up in one word, "delivery". This has been re-emphasised by our parties, in the case of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, in an extraordinarily strong endorsement through our respective ratification processes. Where my party is concerned, we had a new process for the first time, which entailed five regional meetings right across the country and which really energised me and the elected members of our parliamentary party as we embark on this new Government.

For Fine Gael and the Fine Gael Ministers appointed here today entering a fourth consecutive term in government, we are very conscious that this is an historic opportunity. We feel the weight of our responsibility keenly and we are looking forward to serving the country to the best of our abilities. Personally, I am deeply honoured to be appointed Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Minister for Defence at a time when I consider these to be critical portfolios for the continuing success and the future security of our country. Ireland's place in the world has never been more important. We are a small, open economy and that model has served us extremely well. We are also a proud and active member of the European Union, with the many advantages of the Single Market. We are, however, much more than just an economy. Ireland believes in multilateralism and international law and we will always use our voice to stand up for what is right, be that in Ukraine, the Middle East or our work through the excellent Irish Aid in the global south.

As Tánaiste, I will continue the expansion of our diplomatic strengths through Global Ireland. We will not only increase the breadth of our influence by opening new missions but, crucially, we will also increase the depth of our influence with new skills and focus in our existing embassies and consulates, particularly trade depth. In the coming hours, I will convene a trade conference of all of our consulates and our embassy in the United States with the sole focus of engaging with the thousands of decision-makers of the Trump Administration and ensuring that they know the two-way relationship and strength of Irish investment in the United States. The United States is vital, but we will also bring new focus to the untapped potential of our diplomatic and trade relations across India, the Far East and South America. We will continue to protect our citizens abroad through the meticulous consular work that is carried out and the online transformation of the passport service.

We have no more important sets of relationships that the ones on these islands. The British-Irish reset has worked. It is under way. Our Governments are working closely together as partners, and that will be evident in the first intergovernmental summit. A new group of Ministers here in new roles will prioritise meeting their counterparts in Northern Ireland to ensure that every opportunity to work together is taken. I travel to Belfast all the time, but will officially travel to Belfast in my new role in the coming days for a round of official meetings. We are putting effort into our relationship, but we are also putting money into projects and infrastructure that matter through the shared island fund the Taoiseach referenced. Our bridge-building will be both physical and philosophical. Ireland will host the biggest international gathering of leaders that has ever come to our shores next year. As well as the EU Presidency, we will welcome 40 presidents and prime ministers for a summit of the European political community. I will prioritise the planning and execution of this, and a Presidency that showcases our country, while steering the EU agenda in 2026.

The Defence Forces is an institution that goes above and beyond. It serves Ireland with distinction every single day. When a naval ship sails over the horizon, when our Air Corps aircraft fly out of sight or when a battalion of peacekeeping troops leaves Dublin Airport, they may leave our immediate consciousness, but for the men and women of the only army in Ireland, the work has just begun. They do that work with skill, dedication and honour. I want thousands more young people to consider serving their country, community and families through a career in the Defence Forces. To achieve this, the biggest transformation in the Defence Forces' history needs to be followed through on. Investment has increased. Working conditions and pay have been improved. Together there is much more to do. Being militarily neutral but still having the ability to protect ourselves are not contradictory. We are investing in new aircraft, radar, equipment and vessels. We also need the biggest investment ever undertaken in facilities at our Army barracks, at Casement Aerodrome and Haulbowline.

On policy, Ireland will fully participate at EU level on all matters of defence. Our allies and colleagues in eastern Europe are under attack. Physical war rages on our Continent and cyberwar and espionage threaten us all. Defence cannot be an added extra and must remain at the heart of policymaking.

I move now to my Fine Gael ministerial colleagues who have the honour of being appointed to office today. I congratulate our deputy leader, Deputy Helen McEntee, on being appointed the Minister for Education and Youth, where I know she will prioritise a workforce plan for the sector, oversee increased capitation to schools, establish a new DEIS plus scheme to support schools with the highest level of educational disadvantage, the creation of a dedicated national therapy service in education, and continue to increase the number of special schools and special classes across the country.

I congratulate Deputy Paschal Donohoe on being appointed Minister for Finance again. His primary priority will be the overarching essential of ensuring the economic security of our State with a strong enterprise and fiscal framework which will prioritise economic and employment growth, competitiveness, fiscal responsibility and investment in innovation, energy and decarbonisation. He will, working with Cabinet colleagues, prepare and submit a new medium-term fiscal plan, which will set out sustainable budgetary plans for the next five years, and will, working with the Minister, Deputy Chambers, bring forward in the next budget a range of measures to help our small and medium businesses and help to contain energy costs for businesses and households.

I sincerely congratulate Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill on her appointment as Minister for Health. She will oversee an absolute game-changer in marrying resources with reform by bringing forward multi-annual funding for our health service, developing a new workforce plan for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and advancing a statutory home care scheme for old people. I know she will also build on the significant progress which has already been made in transforming women's healthcare.

I am delighted to congratulate Deputy Martin Heydon on being appointed Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and the Marine, a role I know he will take on with great experience and energy. He will have many priorities in the time ahead but I want, in particular, to highlight the work I want him to undertake on Ireland's nitrates derogation renewal plan, on implementing an audit of all farm schemes with the intention of cutting red tape for farmers and in ensuring a farm succession scheme which supports generation renewal.

I congratulate Deputy Patrick O'Donovan on his appointment as Minister for Arts, Culture, Communications, Media and Sport, where his priority actions will be working with the Minister for Justice on the passage of a defamation Bill, ensuring stable funding for RTÉ and other public service broadcasters and accessible funding for local radio and print media, the redevelopment of our GPO, examining the feasibility of the minor capital works grants scheme to support arts and cultural facilities that are not funded through the Arts Council and continuing the vital roll-out of the national broadband plan.

I congratulate Deputy Peter Burke on being reappointed as Minister for enterprise, but this time as Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, where his key priorities will be the publication of a whole-of-government action plan on competitiveness and productivity within the first year, launching The Year of the Invitation as a new tourism initiative, and publishing and implementing a new national tourism policy until 2030. Crucially, we have agreed the establishment of a new small business unit in the Department to help bring a dedicated focus to this area.

I congratulate Deputy Naughton on being appointed a Minister of State attending Cabinet with responsibility for disability, which will be a vital role for all of us in government working across key Ministries to deliver the step change required in disability services. The Minister of State's priorities will be the publication and funding of a new national disability strategy; working in partnership with disabled people and their representative organisations to co-design improvements to services; identifying measures to attract and retain staff and developing a new work force plan for the sector; implementing the action plan for disability services; reforming the Disability Act 2005; and implementing the autism innovation strategy.

I commend and congratulate all Ministers, from the Fine Gael Party, the Fianna Fáil Party and Independents. I am excited to work with each of them in their respective briefs.

Aside from the individual ministerial portfolios I have highlighted, we face a number of key collective challenges that, as I said earlier, the public wishes us to address with renewed energy and focus. The need to make further progress on housing is intrinsic to the social contract in this country. It was a priority for all parties in the programme for Government talks and will be driven by us with a relentless focus on delivery, delivery, delivery. We will work together to bring a new focus to delivering the infrastructure required to bring our country to the next stage of its development and enable faster delivery of housing and much more. We will work together to prioritise investments across the justice system, recruiting at least 5,000 additional gardaí and building stronger, safer communities. This Government will be ambitious on climate action to decarbonise the economy, continue to reduce emissions and lead a revolution in renewable energy in pursuit of energy independence, while ensuring energy security, protecting nature and promoting a circular economy. Most importantly, at a time our country and our world yearn for stability, this is a Government that will deliver five budgets. That is vital and that is our mandate. We will continue to have the fundamental commitment to deliver at all costs.

I believe we have got the balance right between investment and reform. We stand at the outset of a five-year term that will see significant advances in the social, economic and environmental goals we share and fulfilment of the mandate given to us by the Irish people. For my own part, I am excited and energised to play a leadership role as Tánaiste and to work with this talented team of people. I pledge to work relentlessly on delivering the programme for Government in the interests of the people of this great country. Go raibh maith agaibh.

An Ceann Comhairle: Thank you, a Thánaiste. We move to the Sinn Féin slot. I call Deputy McDonald.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: I am having a serious episode of *déjà vu*.

The Tánaiste (Deputy Simon Harris): You lost again.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: All of a sudden, I am transported back to 2020. The Tánaiste spoke of a balanced programme. I have to say what is manifest and obvious: you have got the gender balance wrong. You are very male. Some of you are pale but you are very, very male. In politics in a representative democracy, we should strive to reflect and mirror the communities we represent, inasmuch as we can. I have to say as an Irishwoman, leaving aside that I am a parliamentarian, I find it kind of depressing that again we see the absence of us. I want to put that on the record.

The Taoiseach said he has "a positive agenda for change" and that we face historic opportunities. He is always good at grandiose claims at the beginning of the game of politics. I am old enough to remember that last time he told us housing was the priority and that he would sort out housing, and that he had heard the electorate and recognised how bad things were. That is what he said and pledged. Where are we now? Many are struggling to put an affordable, secure roof over their heads. There are sky-high house prices and extortionate rents, and those in need of council housing are spending years and years on waiting lists. The Taoiseach presides over a shameful level of homelessness. We have structural, ongoing, growing homelessness in Ireland at a rate none of us imagined or dreamt of. That is the Government parties' record on housing. That is what they have done. If that was their priority, and that was their best shot at their priority over five years, then God help us if we see what a mediocre performance on issues they do not care about looks like.

People cannot get the healthcare they need when they need it. Our hospitals and accident and emergency departments are constantly overcrowded. Hundreds of thousands of people languish on treatment waiting lists. The trolley crisis is now a daily occurrence; it is mundane. It is taken as read, day in, day out. It is nearly impossible to get a GP or dentist appointment. That is the Government parties' record on health. Working parents fork out the equivalent of a second mortgage on childcare fees. There is a serious lack of places in the system. There has been no real demonstration of respect and advancement for early childhood educators and childcare workers, and thousands of children are on waiting lists. Stress, worry, pressure is the Government parties' record on childcare. Households continue to struggle to make it to the end of the week, light and heat their homes and put food on the table, with soaring grocery bills and rip-off insurance costs, never mind the rent or mortgage. Hard-working people see their wages go out as quickly as they come in, sometimes more quickly. That is the Government parties' record on the cost of living.

All these problems existed when Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael clubbed together in 2020 and they are still with us today, worse than before, a testament to their collective failure. Being entrusted with ministerial office is a big responsibility and I genuinely wish anybody determined to make a real and positive difference well. However, mark this: without a radical change of policy and approach, the Cabinet announced tonight will amount only to a rearranging of the deckchairs. As this Government takes office, I have no doubt ordinary people face more of the same. For anybody who believed the leopard had finally changed its spots, the cynical approach to Government formation taken by Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the so-called Indepen-

dents surely disabused them of that notion. Instead of focusing on the challenges facing our people, they wrangled over the rotation of Taoiseach, who got which ministerial office and who got the big meeting room in Leinster House. They turned their attention, in other words, to feathering their own nests.

Now it feels like a bumper season of "The Late Late Show" for you lot with a Ministry for everyone in the audience: more super junior Ministers, more junior Ministers, more expenses for Ministers. This smacks of entitlement. It is the largest number of junior Ministers in the history of the State. The electorate has every right to ask: "Are we getting value for our money?" Did anybody go to a polling station on 29 November last thinking what Ireland really needed was a raft of new junior and super junior Ministers? I do not think so. Parents who cannot get an assessment of need for their child certainly did not. Patients who cannot get a hospital appointment did not. Mothers and fathers raising children in emergency accommodation certainly did not. Communities impacted by crime and antisocial behaviour did not. We need more nurses, therapists, gardaí, teachers and SNAs, but the needs of ordinary people, it seems, are an afterthought. The Government instead drove on to fashion a brazen, grubby deal to grease the wheels of power. If the previous Government was formed on the back of a Micheál Martin U-turn regarding Fine Gael, this Government is formed on the back of a Micheál Martin U-turn regarding Deputy Michael Lowry.

6 o'clock

We know, following the Moriarty tribunal's findings of corruption, the Taoiseach's view of Deputy Lowry was that he was unfit to hold public office. Described as a rogue politician, demands were made by the Taoiseach for him to resign his seat, but today he is happy to have him as the kingmaker in the formation of this Government. The question for the Taoiseach that he has not answered is simply this: what changed? When did he stop considering Deputy Lowry to be a rogue politician? When did he go from viewing him as someone unfit to hold public office to viewing him as someone with whom he wishes to form a Government? The answer is clear: that changed when it suited the Taoiseach and when it suited his interests.

This demonstrates that Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil will do anything to attain and hold on to power at all costs. They prioritise doling out sweeteners to Michael Lowry's group to satisfy the Regional Independents. They attempted to engineer a stroke to allow those TDs to be in government and in opposition at the same time, a move that would make a mockery of this Dáil and undermine the integrity of this House. However, we saw that off as a united Opposition, and thank goodness for that.

This is a Government built on stroke politics as seen in its programme for Government. This is where things get interesting and where the lofty rhetoric really gets tested, because what is noteworthy is the lack of timelines, specifics and clarity, and the lack of ambition too. The lack of any new ideas is mind-blowing.

The outgoing Government's greatest failure was in housing, a failure so profound and so deep that it affects every aspect of our society. However, rather than change direction, which a rational serious government would do, it seeks to dress up your failure as success. Throughout 2020, Micheál Martin, Simon Harris and Darragh O'Brien trumpeted the claim that 40,000 new houses would be built by the end of last year, and they repeated this during the election campaign. Today's CSO full-year report exposed their claim as bluff and spin, with housing completions for 2024 falling far short of that figure, missing even the original target. The fact

is that fewer homes were built last year than the year before. Far from turning a corner, as the Taoiseach so frequently claims, they are going around in circles.

The programme for Government guarantees that the Fianna Fáil-Fine Gael housing disaster will continue, that home ownership will remain beyond the reach of working people and that the need to ramp up the delivery of affordable housing and of council housing will remain unmet. It is not only in housing where their poverty of ambition leaps from the page. Where is the public model of childcare that Simon Harris talked a big game on? Not a whisper. Where is the delivery date for €200 a month childcare - the plan that we had and which you borrowed but are not going to deliver? Where is the specific commitment to abolish the means test for carers? There are just more vague pledges to improve the lives of carers but no specific actions. There is nothing in this document to convince us that the scandal of children with scoliosis and spina bifida being left to wait in agony for their operations will be brought to an end, which is shameful and a shame on you.

Irish reunification represents the greatest opportunity for the progress, prosperity and future of our country. Any government worth its salt would actively plan and prepare for constitutional change, for the ending of partition and for a united Ireland. In its programme, the Government claims it is committed to the unity of the Irish people. It talks about a focus on investment, reconciliation and the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, which is all well and good. However, the document contains no meaningful commitments to achieving Irish unity. There is no plan for unity and no effort to reach out to those with a different view on unity. It dodges entirely the need for a citizens' assembly. The programme is completely silent on how this Government will prepare for Irish unity referendums as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. Generational change is happening in Ireland. The day will come when people will have their say on unity, so treading water is not good enough. The Government needs to put Irish reunification at the very heart of its work for the future.

For 15 months, the people of Ireland have protested in support of the people of Gaza and Palestine and have stood with them as they faced genocide. They have also repeatedly called on the Government to sanction Israel and to pass the occupied territories Bill as a matter of urgency. Now, despite previous assurances and posturing, Micheál Martin proposes to scrap the Bill-----

Deputies: Not true.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: -----to set back the goal of ceasing trading with companies that profit from the dispossession, the apartheid and the brutal dehumanisation of the Palestinian people. I regard this as a stunning betrayal. Humanitarian aid is necessary and reconstruction is absolutely vital, but we need to be clear that on their own these are not enough.

Deputy Paul McAuliffe: We are the strongest defenders of UNRWA.

Deputy Mary Lou McDonald: Israel must be held to account. There have to be consequences for the Netanyahu regime and its genocidal actions. I feel certain there will be a united call from these benches, the Opposition benches, and from the Irish public that this Government should do the right thing by Palestine.

I have said before that elections are where Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael make their promises and it is in government where they break them. If this document is the product of Fine Gael's supposed new energy, then I am afraid the tank is running on empty and the lights have gone

out. If this document is where Fianna Fáil's moving forward together intends to bring us, then it points in the direction of continued failure. Our people deserve much better. They are entitled to see ambition to make their lives better. Another five years of mediocrity simply will not cut it. The priorities for Government must be to ensure that everybody can have a home of their own, to transform our health services, to deliver affordable childcare and to really tackle the cost of living. These things can and must be fixed but they will only be fixed by moving beyond the broken politics that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have followed for generations. I believe the day will come when we will have a new government for working people. That is why we will work harder than ever to represent people, to stand up for them, to fight their corner, to convince and to reassure more people that there is a better way.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Bacik, who is sharing time with four of her colleagues.

Deputy Ivana Bacik: I offer personal congratulations to the new Ministers. We wish them well in their portfolios. We need to see positive change delivered by this new Government. There is one very negative change: we see a reduction in the number of women in Cabinet from four to three. There are as many men named James as there are women in this incoming Cabinet. That is a negative change, and we do not see any sign of positive change either from the programme for Government. There is no transformative vision, no State construction company, no public childcare scheme, no strengthening the protection of workers' rights and no radical measures to protect our climate and biodiversity. We in Labour cannot support this programme for Government; it is a recycled programme in a circular economy. Our new TDs will outline further why it lacks vision and lacks any sense of positive change for the communities we represent.

Deputy Conor Sheehan: I dtús báire, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil le muintir chathair Luimnigh as ucht an deis seo a thabhairt dom agus déanaim comhghairdeas leis an Taoiseach agus an Rialtas nua. As I rise here to speak for the first time as a TD for my home city of Limerick, I want to sincerely thank the people for electing me. Without them, I would not be here today. I am cognisant of what an enormous privilege and responsibility it is to be able to speak freely in Dáil Éireann, the Parliament of a free republic.

They say to govern is to choose. This coalition of convenience has chosen, in the flowery language of ambivalence, to do very little to deliver the meaningful change that the people who elected me are seeking. There is nothing flowery about this governing arrangement and this whole sordid arrangement has more than a whiff off it. As we meet here today, I am conscious that homelessness, house prices and rents in this country have never been as high, with the number of new homes built last year falling by 7%. Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and their coalition colleagues have shown, through deed, that they will not and cannot deal with this crisis. The Government's own Housing Commission report has called for a radical reset of housing policy and the Government's response to this has been to effectively pretend that it does not exist. It is clear from the programme for Government that this Administration is intent on ploughing the same failed furrow as the previous one. We, in Labour, believe in an active State and a social floor for health and housing, a threshold beneath which no citizen would be allowed to fall, and it is on that basis we will hold this Government to account.

An Ceann Comhairle: Thank you, Deputy.

Deputy Conor Sheehan: The people of Limerick elected me to be a strong young voice to represent them and I will not let them down.

An Ceann Comhairle: Thank you, Deputy. I call Deputy Ciarán Ahearn.

Deputy Ciarán Ahern: First, I thank the people of Dublin South-West for placing their trust in me, and particularly thank my parents, Mary and Maurice, my wife, Maeve, and our son, Fionn, for all their support, without which I just would not be here.

I also extend my personal congratulations to the Taoiseach and all the Ministers appointed today. Their success will be our success.

However, I must say I am deeply concerned at the lack of ambition on climate in the programme for Government and, indeed, the lack of priority in their speeches today for it. The Greens may be gone from Government but the climate emergency remains the greatest collective challenge facing our country and facing this world. I fear that many of the proposals in the programme for Government and even some of the individuals involved in this Government contradict any notion of positive climate action. What hope have we of reducing transport emissions and increasing the use of public transport and cycling as viable options if the major policy change of this Government is to pour more Tarmac and induce more private traffic? This new Government has also opened the door to more data centres, but bowing to the needs of the tech billionaires without a net increase in renewable electricity is irresponsible, contradicts our climate obligations and increases electricity costs for ordinary people. We must secure Ireland's energy future. We must provide thousands of new green jobs.

An Ceann Comhairle: Thank you, Deputy. I call Deputy Eoghan Kenny.

Deputy Eoghan Kenny: I congratulate my fellow Cork man, Micheál Martin, on his election as Taoiseach and congratulate his wife, Mary, and their children.

As the youngest Member of this new Dáil, it is a real privilege to address the House. I thank the people of Cork North-Central who have given me this opportunity.

As a secondary school teacher, I have witnessed successive Governments failing on education, particularly in relation to special educational needs. One parent in my constituency has applied to ten schools for her child, who has special needs, to start secondary school in September. That family remains second on the waiting list at the tenth school. Fianna Fáil want to class themselves as the party of education and want to talk about their proud legacy in education, as we heard earlier. I would ask them to consider every day over this Dáil term the families calling to my constituency office in fear that their child will not have a school place for the coming academic year. We, in the Labour Party, understand that sufficient current and capital funding is needed to meet the demand for school places both in special schools and mainstream classes and we must ensure every school's designs are fully accessible for all.

The problems of parents do not stop there. There is the cost of childcare. Parents will tell you that in order to pay for early years childcare, it will cost almost an entire wage. The State should be ensuring that parents can afford early years childcare. As with many socioeconomic issues-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Thank you, Deputy.

Deputy Eoghan Kenny: -----it is those with the least have the most to lose.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy George Lawlor.

Deputy George Lawlor: At the outset, I thank my family, the people of Wexford, my friends and supporters and the Labour Party for affording me this opportunity to stand in this historic Chamber.

I congratulate and wish well the Taoiseach and his Cabinet. If I could single out one of the Jameses, James Browne, my fellow-county man, on his elevation to Cabinet; he is the first Fianna Fáil senior Cabinet Minister in 60 years from Wexford.

The re-election of President Trump in America is likely to present some challenges, to the say the least, in the context of world, European and, indeed, Irish trade. From an Irish viewpoint, if even a partial amount of what President Trump is threatening to impose in terms of trade and tariffs comes to pass, our economic relationship with the USA faces an uncertain future. If his threats come to pass, we could find ourselves in serious difficulties from a trade relationship point of view. Sadly, in my home town of Wexford this week, we saw the Trumpian ways at work when some 310 workers at BNY Mellon, an IDA-supported company, learned their fate in an eight-minute meeting which indicated that the majority of them were to lose their jobs. I ask the newly-reappointed Minister for enterprise to immediately engage with the workers and management in Wexford of BNY Mellon in an effort to find a total replacement with another company. It is up to the Government and the IDA to work closely on this and immediately, with urgency, find-----

An Ceann Comhairle: Thank you, Deputy.

Deputy George Lawlor: -----a replacement company to offer employment to these highly skilled workers.

An Ceann Comhairle: I now call the Social Democrats. I have no names but I take it it is yourself, Deputy O'Callaghan.

Deputy Cian O'Callaghan: At the outset, on behalf of the Social Democrats, I congratulate the Taoiseach on his election. Today is a special day for you and your family, for your wife, Mary, and your friends. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the crucial role that families and partners play in supporting all of us in public life, very much behind the scenes. This is rarely acknowledged and it is appropriate to do so.

I also congratulate all those who have been appointed to Cabinet. It is a proud day for you and your family and friends.

However, this Government is already going in the wrong direction. There are only three women with senior Ministries appointed to Cabinet. That is down, from four in the previous Government. Does the Taoiseach not see anything wrong with this? It is 2025. Does the Taoiseach really think this is acceptable? Does he not think women should have equal representation at Cabinet level?

Earlier, I said that the Social Democrats would work constructively with the Government and other members of the Opposition in this Dáil and I reiterate that now. The Social Democrats have always been evidence based and solution focused in our efforts to make Ireland a more equal, sustainable and inclusive society. That will be our approach in this Dáil too. We will also robustly hold this Government to account. As members of Opposition, that is our job.

The decision by the Government to prevent the Dáil sitting next week is a brazen attempt

to avoid sufficient scrutiny and accountability. Where is the urgency to tackle the challenges that we face in housing, disability, health and climate action? Where is the new energy that we heard so much about during the election campaign? It seems to have fizzled out. It is now three months since the Dáil sat regularly. The country faces huge challenges that need urgent action.

While Government work has ground to a standstill, one unilateral action was taken last week which I want to highlight today. The Taoiseach endorsed the IHRA definition of antisemitism which has been routinely weaponised to smear critics of the State of Israel as antisemitic. We saw examples of this ourselves on the front page of the *Sunday Independent* earlier in the week. The outgoing Israeli ambassador, H.E. Ms Dana Erlich, accused Simon Harris of being antisemitic and claimed that President Michael D. Higgins is fostering incitement. In the article, it was clear that she was relying on the IHRA definition to make these scurrilous accusations and the Government, by endorsing this definition, has opened up the door to these kind of baseless attacks. Does the Taoiseach now regret his decision? Antisemitism is vile and must be opposed in all of its forms. Criticism of the State of Israel is not antisemitic and this country should not endorse a definition that has been used to silence critics of a genocide.

In the run-up to the election, the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste and the previous Minister for housing all insisted that 40,000 homes would be delivered last year in the absence of any evidence. In fact, you contradicted forecasts from the CSO, the ESRI and the Central Bank to spin this yarn, trying to massage home-delivery numbers in advance of an election. You have now been found out. There was a shortfall of almost 10,000 homes. Your dismal failure on housing is causing huge levels of anxiety and suffering. The Government is creating a society where only those on the highest of incomes can afford a home. It is dangerous and dystopian.

Fewer homes were delivered last year than in 2023. That does not sound like a plan that is working. The Government's housing plan is taking the country backwards, not forwards. Median house prices last year increased on average by €40,000. Who can possibly afford these kinds of eye-watering price increases? We need a radical reset on housing.

The recent election had an air of unreality about it. Far from being prudent fiscal stewards, Fianna Fáil and, in particular, Fine Gael threw around tax and spending promises like snuff at a wake. They and others pretended that one can ramp up spending while slashing taxes. What we did not hear from either Government party, not to mention the motley crew of Independents, was a coherent strategy for continued economic growth and stability. This is needed to facilitate the investment in infrastructure and public services that this country so badly needs. It is simply not credible to plan those investments while massively eroding the tax base. Nor was there any sense of a contingency plan should the global economy take a turn. Donald Trump's inauguration this week brings this risk into sharper focus given his plans to upend trade. His announcement that he will exit the OECD tax deal poses a particular threat. Ireland, as a small, open economy, will be heavily exposed. There are risks, not only to our windfall tax corporation receipts but also to jobs and incomes. We need an alternative economic strategy.

Donald Trump is not the only threat on the horizon. In Europe right-wing and far-right populists are on the rise on a platform of nationalism and xenophobia. Ireland, as we know, is not immune to the far right and the spread of disinformation. There are those who seek to blame every problem on vulnerable minorities and those who seek to thrive on hate. All of us in this Dáil should stand against these malign actors. Ireland is a country that has always been welcoming. We do not punch down. It is, therefore, deeply concerning that the programme for Government includes proposals to restrict the movement of international protection applicants.

This sounds like de facto detention. Seeking international protection is not a crime. The Government must urgently clarify this proposal.

It is nearly two months since the people went to the polls on 29 November. The message they sent us was very clear. They want action on the many challenges this country faces, not inertia. The Social Democrats will work constructively with all parties in this Dáil to make this happen.

An Ceann Comhairle: We now move to the Independents and Parties Technical Group.

Deputy Charles Ward: I congratulate the Taoiseach and his family on his appointment.

For far too long, Donegal has been left behind. The waiting times in Letterkenny General Hospital this week are, on average, 24 hours. When going into Letterkenny by the Polestar roundabout, the emergency services cannot even enter because they get stuck. What used to be a five-minute journey now takes 45 minutes.

The boats in Killybegs are tied up and the fish factories are silent. This never used to be the case but it is what is going on now.

The Creeslough families are still waiting for a public inquiry. Ten people lost their lives and the families are still waiting on a public inquiry. The biggest humanitarian crisis of them all is the defective concrete crisis. Tonight, as we speak, there are families going to hotels. With a red weather warning coming, they cannot stay in their houses because they are structurally unsound. There are houses that have been remediated on top of Weetabix blocks. We are in a humanitarian crisis in Donegal. There are 10,000 families stuck in a loop waiting.

The Taoiseach talks about concrete action. The concrete in Donegal is not even regulated. The Tánaiste spoke about building bridges. Why not build a bridge over the Swilly to relieve Letterkenny and stop it choking? That is what is going on. The A5 is the corridor to the north west. Let us help the A5 project and Letterkenny. Let us build a bridge over the Swilly.

I am here for the people of Donegal. Donegal is the most important thing for me. The families need help. I am asking the Taoiseach now to prioritise Donegal over the next five years.

Deputy Brian Stanley: I congratulate the Taoiseach on his appointment. We now have a new Government but we have a new Government of two old conservative parties and one regional group. The two Civil War parties are united now like never before. The problem is that nothing separates them, except one letter; they are FF and FG. The Government's first action was to create more jobs for the boys - the girls seem to have been forgotten - and to suspend the Dáil yet again until 5 February.

We now have a programme for Government which, on the big issues facing workers and families, fails. For example, on housing where is the rent freeze that hundreds of thousands of people across the State need so badly? There are not even effective rent controls. We are going to have a rent register instead. Where is the massively expanded affordable housing scheme for those middle-income families that desperately need it? Where is the commitment to drive on with cost-rental schemes to provide homes for those low-paid workers who are just above the income limit for social housing? It is very important that this is addressed.

Last year, the then Minister for housing, Deputy Darragh O'Brien, promised that up to 40,000 - the figure was at least in the high 30,000s - new homes would be finished. What hap-

pened? We had 30,000 new homes finished, which was 3,000 fewer than in 2022.

In health there is no evidence of a commitment or determination to get a national health system in place, as envisaged under Sláintecare, which was put in place back in 2016 or 2017. There are no timelines to put that system in place. Instead, we are a muddling along with the inefficient two-tier system we have. There is no sign of the system that has been in place in most European countries for the past 60, 70 or 80 years. Hundreds of thousands of people will continue to languish on hospital waiting lists and waiting for appointments.

Schoolchildren who should have a dental check-up in third or fourth class in primary school are instead having one in fourth, fifth or sixth year in secondary school. This is happening in County Laois. It is an absolute scandal. The dental treatment services scheme will continue to be non-existent in many counties, including Laois, because private dentists will not operate the scheme. The Taoiseach must get it into his head that public dentists have to be hired within the HSE system. That is the only way the service can be provided. Unfortunately, the private system is not working.

Deputy Catherine Connolly: Ar dtús báire, is mian liom chomhghairdeas a ghabháil leis an Taoiseach. Is pribhléid iontach dó a bheith ina Thaoiseach ar an tír - ní hamháin den chéad uair ach don dara huair – dá chlann, atá 100% taobh thiar de, agus do na hAirí nua.

Ba mhaith liom mo thacaíocht a thabhairt don Taoiseach ach ní féidir liom mar tá easpa aitheantais ó thaobh na n-athraithe bunúsacha atá ag teastáil go géar ag eascairt as an bpaindéim Covid-19, as an bpaindéim tithíochta agus as na cogaí atá ag dul ar aghaidh go leanúnach.

I will not repeat. I recognise and congratulate my super colleagues from Galway West and Galway East, Deputies Grealish, Canney and Hildegarde Naughton. I also acknowledge the new Chief Whip who worked extremely hard in the previous Dáil and worked with everybody.

While I would love to work with the Government, and I will do so in as far as I can on those issues on which I agree with it, I am extremely concerned that it has utterly failed to recognise that we need fundamental change arising from Covid, climate change and the normalisation of war.

I am very concerned about the programme for Government. It smacks a little of artificial intelligence when we look at the wording in it. It is very vague and aspirational but it is then very specific when it comes to reforming the triple lock. It states the Government is going to "progress" the occupied territories Bill, not enact it as a matter of urgency but "progress" it, whereas it will reform the triple lock. It is extremely worrying to see what the Government "will" do as opposed to the other matters.

I am also extremely concerned that the Taoiseach has adopted and included in the programme for Government the definition of antisemitism. It is leaving us wide open to charges of being antisemitic when I unreservedly condemn the actions of Israel. What Israel is doing is genocide. It is carrying out genocide. Then we have this definition the Government has adopted without discussing it with the Dáil.

The Taoiseach did not refer to climate change. The Minister to his right is on record as saying the planet is burning. If the planet is burning, the programme for Government has got to reflect that. It does not reflect it at all. What the Government has done is to normalise homelessness. I am ashamed to stand here today when 15,000 people are homeless in our country.

I congratulate the new Minister for Health and wish her the best. I come from a city where 61 people were waiting on trolleys yesterday with no hope of a bed.

Deputy Peadar Tóibín: It looks like this is an east-coast Government. It looks like there is only one Minister from Connacht or Ulster in the Cabinet. Some 60% of the Ministers in this Government are from the greater Dublin area. That is not spatial development. The west is certainly not awake in this Government.

It is incredible that the Cabinet is being named on the day the news broke that 30,000 homes were built in the State last year. Housing is the biggest issue affecting this country and the Government has been in reverse. When the new Taoiseach awoke this morning, on the day of his elevation, tens of thousands of people in this country awoke in homelessness. While the Taoiseach was in Áras an Uachtaráin, young families were in the airports, emigrating to escape the high price of rents and houses. Ministers had to wait for one day for their ministerial seals but there are hundreds of thousands of people in this country who are waiting for hospital and health treatment at the same time. It is interesting that so much of the Leinster House campus was festooned with gardaí when many of our citizens are dodging town centres because of the lack of gardaí in those areas.

It is also important to say that many parents are lying awake every night trying to decide how they are going to make ends meet with the money they have. Yet, we have newly minted Ministers of State who are going to be counting €800 per day in salary for every day they work over the next while. One of the biggest problems I have with this Government is the fact that things are moving so slowly on so many different projects. It is interesting that 89 days will have passed from the last time there were consecutive sittings of the Dáil until the next time it next sits on consecutive days. There is a slow, bureaucratic culture at the heart of this Government. That is also to be seen in practically every infrastructural project that is happening at the moment and it has consequences. This Government has the urgency relating to the national children's hospital.

Deputy Paul Lawless: It is nearly two months since the people of this country went to the polls. I stand here today humbled by the trust and faith the people of Mayo have put in me. Thousands of people elected me to speak for them and yet today is my first opportunity to do so. It took two months to form a Government when it is effectively the same Government. There has been no real change of Government. It was voted today that there would be another break of two weeks. TDs, it seems, get more holidays than junior infants.

While Ireland waits, this Government delays. I was elected by farmers who work day and night to keep food on their tables but who can hardly keep their heads above water. I was elected by parents who have not seen their children in years because they were forced to emigrate for a better future. I was elected by young couples who cannot afford to rent, buy or build in the communities in which they grew up. For them, I take this job seriously. I came here to work, to challenge this Government and hold it to account and to offer positive and proactive solutions over the years ahead. What is the first thing the Government has done? It has voted for further delay. Delays, it seems, are the order of the day in housing, infrastructure and healthcare. If delays were an Olympic sport, this Government would certainly bring home gold. The people of Mayo and, indeed, the entire country deserve better than excuses and inaction. They deserve a Government that shows up and shows the urgency the Tánaiste speaks of.

I congratulate the Cabinet and my constituency colleague Deputy Calleary. I look forward

to working with the Government.

Deputy Ken O'Flynn: I congratulate the Government and the newly appointed Ministers. This is a special day for them and their families. The Government that has been presented to us tonight is like a shabby, broken down house that has had a slap of paint thrown over it. The hope is that it will all be fine on the night, lads. That is what this Government is. I read the programme for Government. I thought I would be in for a long night's reading. I was shocked to find out that this programme for Government is a copy of the previous programme for Government. This Government is out with the same and back in with the same.

The Government has ignored the fact that 15,000 people will be homeless tonight and that 611 people are on hospital trolleys as we speak. People are living in boxrooms in their parents' houses. A generation of people will never own their own homes thanks to this Government and 20 years of Fine Gael, being backed up, in one form or another, by Fianna Fáil. This house that has been built and that has had a slap of paint over it has been reinforced by a set of Independents with a serious crack in their foundation.

Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice: I wish the Taoiseach the best of luck. I say to the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs that I listened to Mr. John Deasy the other day, and, my God, we have some work to do in America to build relations. I heard that our diplomats shunned the Americans on the side that is in now. We have some work to do. I wish the Tánaiste the best in that regard.

On housing, it was sickening to see the report two weeks ago that 60,000 houses have been started. A child would know that was because there was a rebate. Today, we see that we have fallen back by 7% in terms of housing. More people came into this country than we have houses to accommodate. Those are facts. That is also the case in respect of the people we have here.

I wish the new Minister for agriculture well. There is one thing he needs to work on straight away. In the agri-climate rural environment scheme, ACRES, there is a major problem in Wexford. Farmers have been waiting for two years. They have had inspections but on the IT systems, it is the same BS we hear every day.

I wish my colleagues from the west, Deputies Calleary, Canney, Naughton and Grealish, the best of luck. I ask the Minister for agriculture to think of a retirement scheme. For farmers with suckler cows, we see this evening that there are going to be layoffs in a factory. I ask the Minister to address that straight away. We have lost the suckler herd over the past five years.

We intend to work constructively with the Government but it will be about producing the goods and not being like "The Late Late Show" and offering one for everyone in the audience.

Cuireadh an cheist: "Go gcomhaontóidh Dáil Éireann leis an Taoiseach d'ainmniú na dTeachtaí seo a leanas chun a gceaptha ag an Uachtarán mar chomhaltaí den Rialtas."

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

The Dáil divided: Tá, 97; Níl, 72; Staon, 0.		
Tá	***Níl***	***Staon***
Aird, William.	***Ahern, Ciarán.***	
Ardagh, Catherine.	***Bacik, Ivana.***	

Boland, Grace.	*Bennett, Cathy.*	
Brabazon, Tom.	*Brady, John.*	
Brennan, Brian.	*Buckley, Pat.*	
Brennan, Shay.	*Byrne, Joanna.*	
Brophy, Colm.	*Carthy, Matt.*	
Browne, James.	*Clarke, Sorca.*	
Burke, Colm.	*Collins, Michael.*	
Burke, Peter.	*Connolly, Catherine.*	
Butler, Mary.	*Conway-Walsh, Rose.*	
Butterly, Paula.	*Cronin, Réada.*	
Buttimer, Jerry.	*Crowe, Seán.*	
Byrne, Malcolm.	*Cullinane, David.*	
Byrne, Thomas.	*Cummins, Jen.*	
Cahill, Michael.	*Daly, Pa.*	
Callaghan, Catherine.	*Devine, Máire.*	
Calleary, Dara.	*Doherty, Pearse.*	
Canney, Seán.	*Donnelly, Paul.*	
Carrigy, Micheál.	*Ellis, Dessie.*	
Carroll MacNeill, Jennifer.	*Farrelly, Aidan.*	
Chambers, Jack.	*Farrell, Mairéad.*	
Cleere, Peter 'Chap'.	*Fitzmaurice, Michael.*	
Clendennen, John.	*Gannon, Gary.*	
Collins, Niall.	*Gibney, Sinéad.*	
Connolly, John.	*Gogarty, Paul Nicholas.*	
Cooney, Joe.	*Gould, Thomas.*	
Crowe, Cathal.	*Graves, Ann.*	
Cummins, John.	*Guirke, Johnny.*	
Currie, Emer.	*Hayes, Eoin.*	
Daly, Martin.	*Healy, Seamus.*	
Dempsey, Aisling.	*Hearne, Rory.*	
Devlin, Cormac.	*Kelly, Alan.*	
Dillon, Alan.	*Kenny, Eoghan.*	
Dolan, Albert.	*Kenny, Martin.*	
Donohoe, Paschal.	*Kerrane, Claire.*	
Dooley, Timmy.	*Lawless, Paul.*	
Feighan, Frankie.	*Lawlor, George.*	
Fleming, Sean.	*Mac Lochlainn, Pádraig.*	
Foley, Norma.	*McDonald, Mary Lou.*	
Gallagher, Pat the Cope.	*McGettigan, Donna.*	
Geoghegan, James.	*McGuinness, Conor D.*	
Grealish, Noel.	*Mitchell, Denise.*	
Harkin, Marian.	*Murphy, Paul.*	
Harris, Simon.	*Mythen, Johnny.*	

Healy-Rae, Danny.	***Nash, Ged.***	
Healy-Rae, Michael.	***Newsome Drennan, Natasha.***	
Heneghan, Barry.	***Ní Raghallaigh, Shónagh.***	
Heydon, Martin.	***O'Callaghan, Cian.***	
Higgins, Emer.	***O'Donoghue, Richard.***	
Keogh, Keira.	***O'Donoghue, Robert.***	
Lahart, John.	***O'Flynn, Ken.***	
Lawless, James.	***O'Gorman, Roderic.***	
Lowry, Michael.	***O'Hara, Louis.***	
Martin, Micheál.	***O'Reilly, Louise.***	
Maxwell, David.	***O'Rourke, Darren.***	
McAuliffe, Paul.	***Ó Broin, Eoin.***	
McCarthy, Noel.	***Ó Laoghaire, Donnchadh.***	
McConalogue, Charlie.	***Ó Murchú, Ruairí.***	
McCormack, Tony.	***Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.***	
McEntee, Helen.	***Ó Súilleabháin, Fionntán.***	
McGrath, Mattie.	***Quinlivan, Maurice.***	
McGrath, Séamus.	***Rice, Pádraig.***	
McGreehan, Erin.	***Sheehan, Conor.***	
McGuinness, John.	***Sherlock, Marie.***	
Moran, Kevin Boxer.	***Smith, Duncan.***	
Moynihan, Aindrias.	***Stanley, Brian.***	
Moynihan, Michael.	***Tóibín, Peadar.***	
Moynihan, Shane.	***Wall, Mark.***	
Murnane O'Connor, Jennifer.	***Ward, Charles.***	
Murphy, Michael.	***Ward, Mark.***	
Naughton, Hildegarde.	***Whitmore, Jennifer.***	
Neville, Joe.		
Nolan, Carol.		
O'Brien, Darragh.		
O'Callaghan, Jim.		
O'Connell, Maeve.		
O'Connor, James.		
O'Dea, Willie.		
O'Donnell, Kieran.		
O'Donovan, Patrick.		
O'Meara, Ryan.		
O'Shea, John Paul.		
O'Sullivan, Christopher.		
O'Sullivan, Pádraig.		
Ó Cearúil, Naoise.		

Ó Fearghaíl, Seán.		
Ó Muirí, Naoise.		
Richmond, Neale.		
Roche, Peter.		
Scanlon, Eamon.		
Smith, Brendan.		
Smyth, Niamh.		
Timmins, Edward.		
Toole, Gillian.		
Troy, Robert.		
Ward, Barry.		

Tellers: Tá, Deputies Hildegarde Naughton and Mary Butler; Níl, Deputies Cian O'Callaghan and Pádraig Mac Lochlainn.

Question declared carried.

Faisnéiseadh go rabhthas tar éis glacadh leis an gceist.

7 o'clock

Select Committee on Subsidiarity (European Union Legislative Scrutiny): Motion

The Taoiseach: I move:

That, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders—

(1) the Whips and other nominees shall appoint thirteen members to the Select Committee standing established under Standing Order 140 (which shall be called the Select Committee on Subsidiarity (European Union Legislative Scrutiny));

(2) a Minister or Minister of State shall announce the names of the members appointed under paragraph (1) for the information of the Dáil on the first sitting day of the Dáil following their appointment;

(3) Standing Order 113(2) will not apply in the case of this Committee, which shall not be subject to the d'Hondt system for the allocation of Cathaoirleach posts;

(4) the Select Committee shall meet where necessary to perform the following functions:

(a) to consider the potential requirement for a reasoned opinion that a draft legislative act does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity as provided for in paragraph (1) of Standing Order 142,

(b) to consider such notifications under paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) of Standing Order 143 as may be referred to it by Dáil Éireann,

(c) to consider potential infringements of the principle of subsidiarity as provided for

in paragraph (1) of Standing Order 144, and

(d) to consider other draft legislative acts which it deems appropriate,

(5) the Select Committee shall have the powers defined in—

(a) Standing Order 104(1), (2), (3), (4) and (10), and

(b) Standing Orders 142, 143 and 144.

Question put and agreed to.

Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform: Motion

The Taoiseach: I move:

That notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders and until further notice in the 34th Dáil—

(a) the parties and groups shall appoint 19 members to the Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform standing, established under Standing Order 128 ('the Committee'), as follows:

(i) 10 members appointed by the Government parties,

(ii) four members appointed by Sinn Féin, and

(iii) one member each appointed by the rest of the parties and the prospective technical groups; and

(b) the Ceann Comhairle shall announce the names of the members appointed under paragraph (a) for the information of the Dáil on the first sitting day of the Dáil following their appointment, and eight members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum.

Question put and agreed to.

Cuireadh an Dáil ar athló ar 7.05 p.m. go dtí 2 p.m., Dé Céadaoin, an 5 Feabhra 2025.

The Dáil adjourned at 7.05 p.m. until 2 p.m. on Wednesday, 5 February 2025.