



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

SEANAD ÉIREANN

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

An tOrd Gnó - Order of Business	71
National Screening Advisory Committee Bill 2020: First Stage	89
State Airports (Shannon Group) (Amendment) Bill 2020: First Stage	90
Sitting Arrangements: Motion	90
Report of Committee on Procedure and Privileges: Motion	91
Select Committee on European Union Affairs: Motion	91
Select Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement: Motion	92
Establishment of Select Committees: Motion	93
Work Programme of Select Committee: Motion	96
Election of Leas-Chathaoirleach	96
Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Bill 2019: Report and Final Stages	107

SEANAD ÉIREANN

Dé hAoine, 18 Meán Fómhair 2020

Friday, 18 September 2020

Chuaigh an Cathaoirleach i gceannas ar 10.30 a.m.

*Machnamh agus Paidir.
Reflection and Prayer.*

An tOrd Gnó - Order of Business

Senator Regina Doherty: The Order of Business is No. 1, motion regarding the arrangements for the sittings of the House on Wednesday, 23 September and Thursday, 24 September, to be taken on conclusion of the Order of Business, without debate; No. 1a, motion regarding Standing Orders 16 and 29, to be taken on conclusion of No. 1, without debate; No. 2, motion regarding the establishment of the Select Committee on European Union Affairs, to be taken on conclusion of No. 1a, without debate; No. 3, motion regarding the establishment of the Select Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, to be taken on conclusion of No. 2, without debate; No. 4, motion regarding the establishment of the select committees, to be taken on the conclusion of No. 3, without debate; No. 5, motion regarding the work programme of select committees, to be taken on the conclusion of No. 4, without debate; Nos. 6 and 7, motions regarding the election of the Leas-Chathaoirleach, to be taken on conclusion of No. 5, and to be discussed together; No. 8, Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Bill 2019, Report and Final Stages, to be taken at 1 p.m. or after 20 minutes on conclusion of Nos. 6 or 7, whichever is the later.

Senator Lisa Chambers: I agree to the Order of Business as proposed by the Leader, but I do want to raise some issues. We need to discuss the very real prospect that Dublin will now face increased restrictions. This House should acknowledge, and on behalf of the Fianna Fáil group I acknowledge, the severe implications that these increased restrictions will have for businesses and livelihoods and on citizens living in the city centre and beyond. I know these recommendations were not made lightly, and I am sure that a Cabinet decision to implement NPHET's recommendations will also not be made lightly.

I hear loud and clear, however, what has been said about the challenges and difficulties that these restrictions will pose for businesses. I was having a cup of coffee and talking to a member of staff in a business close to Leinster House just this morning, and it was obvious that there is genuine worry for livelihoods and businesses. The person I spoke to referred to his colleagues who have already been laid off and who may never return to work. This situation, therefore, is

having a serious impact on our capital city.

Remarkably, however, small towns and villages beyond the capital are doing well. We had a very good tourist season in Mayo, for example. People left our cities and large towns and came to rural Ireland, so it is an ill wind that does not blow some good. If our capital is not doing well, though, our country has a serious problem and we must look at the long-term impact of these restrictions on businesses and communities in the capital city.

I also raise the issue of maternity restrictions. This matter has been raised in the Lower House, but we also need to examine the trauma being imposed on women. Many thousands of them are sitting in consulting rooms on their own and hearing very difficult news about the pregnancies. These women are also going through labour on their own and some hospitals are not even facilitating visitors. I have been there myself and I can attest to how difficult, challenging and traumatic is the experience. We must look at how we look after women in maternity care settings for the foreseeable future, because this pandemic is not going to end any time soon.

I turn to the issue of the migrant camp on Lesbos. I proposed a Commencement matter on this issue, but it was not selected this week. I have been in discussions with the office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Deputy O’Gorman, because I think it is incumbent on us, as a First World country and a member of the European Union, to do something about this situation. We have been asked to take in unaccompanied minors, children without parents, guardians or protection, and look after them. I do not think we have stepped up to the plate on this issue. It is unfair to expect Greece to have to deal with this issue on its own.

Senator Martin Conway: Hear, hear.

Senator Lisa Chambers: France and Germany have provided some help, but we are also a member of the European Union, and either we are in the club and in the community or we are not.

Senator Martin Conway: Hear, hear.

Senator Lisa Chambers: Regarding turning a blind eye to the situation, I have seen some commentary online to the effect that we need to look after our own first. My response to such comments is let us do both. A message should issue from this House that we are willing, with arms open, to take in those children immediately. I want the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Deputy O’Gorman, to listen to this message and I hope he hears it loud and clear.

Senator Martin Conway: Hear, hear.

Senator David Norris: I propose an amendment to the Order of Business: “That No. 12 be taken before No. 1.” This Bill concerned deals with genetic screening, an issue on which I spoke at some length in the previous Seanad.

I also raise the business of fobbing in. We are certainly getting mixed messages from the Government. We are being told on the one hand to stay at home, isolate and work from home, but then we are also being told to come into the House because we must fob in. I raise this issue because I am in four vulnerable categories. My health is threatened and I am being penalised for being vulnerable. I think this is absolutely absurd, and talk about mixed messages.

I would also like to comment on the recent death of Desmond Guinness, who was a most remarkable man. I was lucky to enjoy his friendship for more than 50 years. Desmond and

his wife Mariga founded the Irish Georgian Society in the early 1960s. They were derided by the authorities, particularly by the then Government, and made a nonsense of, but they rescued Castletown House and a very large section of our cultural heritage. We should be very grateful to them. Among the other houses rescued were several associated with my own family. I am very grateful to the Guinnesses for doing what they did. Their not having doing so would have been such a loss. The point that Desmond always made, which I made myself, was that we should say to hell with the ascendancy and the people who built these houses — one can have different views about them and they were a mixed bunch — but we should think about the Irish craftsmen, including the stuccadores, plasterworkers, ironmongers, timber carvers and bricklayers. These were essentially Irish. There is a considerable difference in feeling between the plasterwork in Edinburgh and London and that in Dublin. Dublin has a lightness, grace and beauty that are unsurpassed.

An Cathaoirleach: A bit like yourself, Senator.

Senator David Norris: Absolutely, but especially since I lost 5 stone.

An Cathaoirleach: Congratulations on losing 5 stone. Do not lose any more, now.

Senator Fintan Warfield: I want to address the complete lack of clarity behind, and the lack of an explanation for, the reported decision to close indoor eating spaces in Dublin. Communication and basic thoughtfulness were completely lacking in this process. Last night, thousands of workers in pubs, cafés and restaurants across the city found out through the media that they may well be unemployed by the weekend. I have heard stories of workers becoming visibly upset as the news spread through their restaurant. The Government may be bad at disseminating information but people are not fools. News spreads fast. It was terrible that people had to find out in such a haphazard way. Many still have questions. When will the regulations come into force? How many people sitting outside may be served? Would it even be feasible to stay open if the outdoors were the only resource? There seems to be a new three-step decision-making process, extending from NPHET to the subcommittee to the Cabinet. I wonder whether the Government even thought about workers on this occasion. I hope detailed reasoning will be given to workers in the sector.

There were 6,800 inspections of pubs over one weekend, yet there have been only five clusters associated with pubs, according to the figures released two days ago. Outbreaks in meat plants have accounted for one third of all workplace clusters, that is, 44 clusters. Thousands of premises will close across Dublin this weekend. Why was a meat plant with 226 associated cases not shut down? There is a perception that certain industries are being treated with kid gloves, and today's expected move does nothing to counter that theory. Therefore, the Minister, Deputy Donnelly, needs to come to this House next week, if only for a few minutes, to set out clearly the rationale for the closures. Pubs and restaurants are not the problem. They are controlled environments. The latest figures identifying clusters show that there were just three clusters associated with pubs and restaurants across the State last week.

Senator Rebecca Moynihan: Just before the summer, we voted in this House to lift the eviction ban that protected renters in the course of the Covid emergency. We are seeing new restrictions in Dublin and, as my colleague referred to here, many people in the events, arts, hospitality and restaurant sectors have been told their jobs are likely to be lost by the weekend. We are aware that a disproportionate number of these people are renters, that renters were most affected by the job losses back in March, and that they will be most affected by the new restric-

tions coming in. For renters, support and security are essential. I ask that the relevant Minister come to this House to review the ban on evictions. We were told the legal advice underpinning the ban on evictions was that people were being asked not to move. We are told this week that people in Dublin are being asked not to move. We need emergency support to bring back the ban on evictions and the enhanced rent supplement that was applied.

Threshold has said in a report it sent to me that, from March to August of this year, 163 people have been threatened with eviction and served with eviction notices. The other day, somebody had to have nine people troop through the house in the middle of a Covid-19 emergency because the landlord was selling over 12 units in the house and was interviewing potential buyers. If we are asking people to restrict their movements and limit contacts, we must have supports in place now, as we did in March. The Minister with responsibility for housing should immediately come to the House to address the issue of the enhanced rent supplement that renters need and we are relying on. We have reverted to the old rules, and we must also reinstate the eviction ban.

I also raise the review of co-living and change of use applications. Over the summer, we have seen some developers either apply for co-living developments or move to apply for them while the Minister has said they are under review. There is a planning application going through in my area that is to change student accommodation into tourist and visitor accommodation. The argument is that the international student market is collapsing but the domestic tourism market is not. We need to get a hold on our planning system to try to build the right type of housing. Co-living student and tourist accommodation is not what we require and I would like to see an update, three months on, for the co-living review.

Senator Vincent P. Martin: General practitioners and pharmacists have grave concerns for their patients about the initial delivery and roll-out of the flu vaccine. Delivery of the flu vaccine has already been delayed and, worse still, the number of vaccines that some doctors have been told they will receive is tiny. I have spoken to GPs and pharmacists, one of whom has received 20 vaccines. One large GP practice received an initial delivery of 60 vaccines. GPs and pharmacists are correctly worried and perplexed about this on behalf of their patients. Surely, this year of all years, the Health Service Executive should have ensured timely delivery of the vaccine and a sufficient number of vaccines to meet patient demands. The last thing this country needs is a surge in flu cases during a Covid-19 pandemic when there is an already overcrowded system.

The House will debate Brexit in a more substantive way but it appears the attitude being adopted by the British Government is that if it does not get what it wants, it will legislate for it anyway. It is not that it will legislate but it is already producing that legislation. It is playing dangerous games with hard-won peace and adopting a Harvey Smith type of attitude to the other party to the contract. The more senior Members in the House will remember who Harvey Smith is.

Senator David Norris: I certainly do.

Senator Vincent P. Martin: I heard he was a very good showjumper. The British people should speak up on this. I appeal to my fellow parliamentarians in the House of Commons and the House of Lords not to undermine peace or relegate Britain to a state where it cannot be trusted in negotiations.

I have concerns about America and Britain and the damage that could be done to western democracy. At least in America there is a possibility that a certain outcome in November's election will alleviate our fears. The British situation is far more serious. Peace has been so hard won and the reckless disregard shown for building on that peace is little short of a scandal.

Senator Eileen Flynn: I will address the rise of the far right. It is very rare that I would say I am afraid of anything but right now I am very afraid of the rise of the far right in Ireland. I hold great fear for the future if we do not stand together against hate and division. We do not have to agree on everything. We do not have to agree on economics and social policies. This threat should unify us as a country and as people. There is no place in our country for an agenda that divides us from one another and that seems to be the aim: to pit neighbour against neighbour, brother against brother and sister against sister. The only way to fight this is to stand together against it. I do not have to remind anyone in this House of our Proclamation's powerful pledge as a nation to cherish all the children of the nation equally. As a child, my mother always told me that blowing out someone else's candle will not make mine shine any brighter. She was right; it is by helping others that makes our own candles shine brighter.

There have been protests on our streets in recent weeks where people have not worn masks, with people engaging in pure nonsense behaviour in the middle of a pandemic. They have drawn attendance by and included speeches from members of far-right parties. There has been violence. We have seen our tricolour, the flag of every person who lives in Ireland, being used during these violent protests. The word "patriot" has been used as something to divide rather than unite us. Whether someone is a member of a political party or none, everyone has a duty of care and a responsibility to the people of Ireland. We should stand together against the rise of the far right. Now is the time for all Ireland to stand and unite in solidarity, not division. If we do not stand together against this threat, we will live to regret it. We should live and let live. I encourage everyone, especially this weekend, young and old, to wear their masks to protect themselves and others around them.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Senator for her contribution. Her mother's words are true, that blowing out others candles does not make one's own shine any brighter. I call Senator Ardagh.

Senator Catherine Ardagh: I ask that the Minister, Deputy Eamon Ryan, examine why Bus Éireann removed its discount to people with epilepsy for services on Bus Éireann and Expressway services. This was removed without any notice whatever. People with epilepsy can be temporarily or permanently restricted from driving. The discount, which was about 10% of fares on Bus Éireann or Expressway services, can make the difference between someone undertaking travel, including for work, or not. This move is contrary to the Oireachtas report on accessibility to transport for people with disabilities, specifically recommendations 9 and 10. We understand the National Transport Authority, NTA, directed that the discount be removed. I ask the Leader to ask the Minister to seek a reversal of this move, which affects up to 700 people. It is unfair. I acknowledge we are experiencing a Covid-19 pandemic but there are issues affecting vulnerable people in society for which Members must stand up.

I wish to thank the Minister for Education and Skills for meeting myself and representatives from Dublin South Central about opening Scoil Choilm as a hub for pupils with autism. We met the D12 ASD group. The meeting was very promising. I ask that momentum is kept behind the project. There is a great lack of services nationally for those with autism, whether it be children who need a specific school or autistic spectrum disorder classes in mainstream schools. Each

child is different and has different needs. Finally, I support my colleague, Senator Chambers, on welcoming unaccompanied minors from Lesbos. I know many people who are involved in charities in Lesbos and they are finding it very difficult at present to do any fundraising, as people cannot meet or organise events. At this time, when these children do not have shelter, accommodation or basic rights, it is a small gesture on our part to take them in.

Senator John McGahon: Five days ago, the 59th anniversary of the Battle of Jadotville occurred. This topic has been raised consistently by Senator Craughwell whom I saw earlier in the Chamber, by our former colleague, Gabrielle McFadden, and at the monthly meeting of Kerry County Council by Councillor Jim Finucane. On 13 September 1961, A Company of the 35th Infantry Battalion found themselves under attack from the army of the Katangan government. It is a story that we all know extremely well. In essence, 3,500 enemy soldiers launched an offensive attack against 155 Irish troops. At the end of the battle, A Company suffered five wounded in comparison to 300 dead and 750 wounded of enemy forces. The fact that there was not one single Irish casualty is something else. The Jadotville action is one of the best defensive perimeter battles in the history of military action. It has been taught by the German army for the past 28 years and the Australian army for the last 15 years. It has been presented in presentations to armies of 25 countries worldwide.

In 2016, supported by the Minister, Deputy Coveney, a unit citation was awarded to A Company. This is the first and only time in the history of the Irish Army that a unit citation has been awarded. That was known as the Jadotville Medal. It is not to be confused with the medals for gallantry and the distinguished service medal that Commandant Pat Quinlan recommended to 31 of his men for bravery in action for the events of 13 September 1961. Currently, eight of these men are still alive and living in Ireland. On his last day in office, the former Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, met Commandant Leo Quinlan and stated that those 31 medals should be awarded as a matter of urgency. As we have passed the 59th anniversary and only eight of the 31 who were so recommended are still alive, I would greatly appreciate if this House could convey to the Minister for Defence and to the Taoiseach the urgency of having these medals awarded. I am sure we can all agree that 59 years for bravery in action is far too long a wait.

Senator Victor Boyhan: I thank the Leader for presenting the proposed Order of Business for our consideration today. I second Senator Norris's proposed national screening advisory committee Bill. I acknowledge what Senator Chambers said in respect of the minors in Lesbos. It is important. I lived in Greece for a number of years myself; they are a remarkable and resilient people. It is beholden on all of us as European citizens to play our full and active part. It is something we should consider in more detail and I thank Senator Chambers for raising it.

I thank the Government Chief Whip, Deputy Chambers, for circulating the legislative programme for the autumn session for 2020. It is particularly interesting and I advise colleagues to have a good look at it and to mark out the areas in which they may have a particular interest. I am on the agricultural panel and note that under agriculture, which is one of the first things on the list, is the agriculture appeals (amendment) Bill. The legislative programme suggests that it is the Government's commitment to have pre-legislative scrutiny. However, I learned last night that the Business Committee of the Dáil took the decision to have no pre-legislative scrutiny of it. That is something. A document that was circulated yesterday refers to pre-legislative scrutiny. Government members on the committee took a decision, as is their right and prerogative, to have no pre-legislative scrutiny. That brings me to another issue. Everyone will be aware that we had a public consultation about this Bill. We will be dealing with it next week. I do not intend to talk about the Bill here today. We know that there are 8,889 of our citizens engaged

in a public consultation and it would be helpful and meaningful if the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and our Senator, who is the Minister of State in respect of this area, could allow us to see a copy of those submissions today.

More important, it would be helpful if we could see an index of those who made submissions. Politicians made submissions, and I have copies of many of those, so I look forward to seeing a consistency of approach in this process.

I welcome that the legislation will be before us next week. I will deal with that matter later.

Senator Timmy Dooley: The House will be well aware of the considerable issues that have resulted from Covid-19 and of its impact on the tourism, hospitality and aviation sectors. It is appropriate that the Minister for Transport should appear before us to set out in a clear and concise way the Government's plans for reopening those sectors. The devastation caused to the lives and livelihoods of the many people attached to them cannot be underestimated.

If we are to ensure that we protect the key infrastructure of our aviation sector, some certainty needs to be given to airlines. We have all heard the rumours of Ryanair and Aer Lingus removing aircraft from bases at Shannon in County Clare and at Cork Airport. We know how the aviation sector works - if that happens, it could be two to three years before those airlines consider reopening those routes. I cannot overstate for the House the impact that this would have on the capacity of the mid-west and south to rebuild our economy when we get to the other side of Covid, which I have no doubt we will. If key infrastructure is not protected, we will effectively be working with our hands tied behind our backs. I do not doubt that Dublin Airport will prosper again. It is the capital city and, when things get moving, it will see activity again. However, if we do not retain key services in places such as Shannon and Cork, we will be in real trouble.

11 o'clock

The Government must consider the public service obligation, PSO, elements that existed previously. Routes were not profitable for a time but they were necessary for developing, growing and sustaining regions' economies. State support was provided to airlines to ensure that those key routes remained open. We need that kind of thinking again. The House must debate this matter so that certainty is given to the aviation sector, including airlines, and the tourism facilities that depend so much on such services.

Senator Micheál Carrigy: I wish to discuss the future of the 30 county childcare committees throughout the Twenty-six Counties. On 27 July, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Deputy O'Gorman, announced a review of the current model to support the delivery of accessible, affordable and high-quality early learning and care and school-aged childcare services. Part of the review was to examine the architecture of the administration of the various childcare schemes and institutions, with a remit to recommend improvements based on the principle of best practice. This process, which forms part of the programme for Government commitment to devise a workforce development plan and a new funding model, was opened for consultation in mid-August and is to close on 2 October.

There was a recent article in *The Sunday Business Post*. I will not read it all, but I will highlight the comments in one section. According to the article, there are more than 30 county childcare committees operating at an annual cost of €11 million, which may well need to be axed to make way for the proposed Childcare Ireland. The article also asserts that the civil servants in the Minister's Department are distinctly unenthusiastic about these committees and

have stated in briefing notes that the childcare committee structure does not lend itself to providing the national consistency sought by the Department. This concerns me greatly, because it appears that the outcome of the process has been determined before the consultation has even finished.

Although civil servants might feel that county childcare committees do not lend themselves to providing the national consistency sought by the Department, has consideration been given to the idea that one size might not fit all in the provision of support to local early years and school-aged services and parents? Needs vary from county to county and even within counties, from town to town, where local relationships are vital to supporting the sector. I was involved in setting up an afterschool service in my local area a number of years ago. Based on that experience, I know the supports that county childcare committees give and the significant work done behind the scenes by voluntary committees. Alongside a number of others, my wife is involved in providing support to such a scheme.

I know the Longford County Childcare Committee extensively. It has collaborated with a number of local agencies on promoting specific initiatives in our communities, including the Longford Sports Partnership, Music Generation Longford, the refugee resettlement programme and intercultural working groups, to name a few. The priority should be to increase pay in the childcare sector. That is where the issues lie and those problems need to be sorted. Further investment is needed in childcare to bring pay to a certain level, rather than dismantling a structure that works in communities and the childcare sector.

Senator Elisha McCallion: I bring to the attention of the Leader a matter on which I have written to the Minister for Health and which colleagues in the North have also raised. Issues have arisen with tracking and tracing of cross-Border workers. I ask that we immediately find out for employers what the current protocols are for employees who reside in the South but live in the North and *vice versa* because there seems to be mixed messages coming from both jurisdictions. I am sure the Leader will agree that the 30,000 cross-Border workers and their families deserve the same treatment as everyone else on the island. It has come to my attention that there have been errors in sharing data, particularly in Border constituencies. While we have raised the issue with the Minister in writing, it needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency given the significance of the spread of the coronavirus. I ask that the Leader relay my concerns to the Minister and his officials and ask that they immediately have conversations with officials in the North to see if these problems can be rectified sooner rather than later.

Senator Malcolm Byrne: While it is very important that we continue to highlight the plight of professional artists and musicians, I draw the attention of the House and the Minister with responsibility for the arts to the situation facing the amateur arts community. Normally, around this time of year, amateur drama groups are preparing for one-act or three-act drama festivals and amateur musical societies are preparing their productions for the 2021 season. Obviously, because of Covid these cannot go ahead this year. It will be arts and drama organisations, as well as sporting and other organisations, that bring communities back together in cities, towns and villages. I welcome that the Minister has set up a task force to consider ways to rebuild the arts. However, it is also important that we support community arts and local drama and theatre groups. I ask that specific measures be put in place to support the amateur drama community.

At the start of this month, An Post was deservedly named company of the year at *The Irish Times* business awards. We are all familiar with the work of our postmen and postwomen. In the course of this pandemic, they have gone beyond delivering letters and parcels, often look-

ing in on the elderly and vulnerable people in our communities. I ask the Cathaoirleach, on behalf of this House, to write to An Post congratulating it on being named company of the year and thanking its workers for their continuing service, particularly during the course of the pandemic. It would be appropriate to acknowledge them.

Senator Martin Conway: I propose an amendment to the Order of Business, that No. 11 be taken ahead of No. 1. No. 11 is the State Airports (Shannon Group) (Amendment) Bill 2020, which proposes to amend the State Airports (Shannon Group) Act to facilitate the appointment of an elected member of Clare County Council to the board of the Shannon Group. Shannon Airport is in the rateable authority of Clare County Council and pays its rates to the council. However, there seems to be a lack of connectivity between the airport authority and Clare County Council. No one is at fault here; it is simply because there is no political representative of the county council on the board. Given that Clare County Council successfully built the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience from 600,000 visitors originally up to just under 2 million in 2019, I believe that it has a unique perspective on tourism, its growth and building a tourism product. Having run very successful events such as the Irish Open and participated very fully in the development of the concept of the Wild Atlantic Way, I believe that the appointment of a member of the council to the board of the Shannon Group, in whatever future guise it will have in the aftermath of the Minister's review, is important. The board has not benefited from that knowledge. Issues concerning Shannon Heritage and what happened in recent months may have been avoided if a county councillor elected by the people of Clare had been on the board.

I hope the State Airports (Shannon Group) (Amendment) Bill 2020 will receive the support of Senators across the House because, in situations such as that to which I refer, it is always good to have a county councillor, an elected member, there to articulate the voice of the people of a particular area. Councillors are elected by the people every five years. We need to consider having local authority representatives on various boards of this nature throughout the country.

Senator Marie Sherlock: On behalf of the Labour Party, I echo the sentiments expressed by Senators Chambers and Boyhan in welcoming yesterday's announcement by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Deputy O'Gorman, on the intake of four unaccompanied minors from Lesbos to Ireland. As we know, Ireland's record in the context of taking migrants has been patchy. We have had promises but the numbers have been lowered than promised in recent years, so we welcome the development. Médecins Sans Frontières is seeking that Ireland would do more and we call on the Government to do that.

I wish to refer to the restrictions to be announced later today for Dublin. In this House, we all understand that compliance is critical to suppressing the virus. If we are to have compliance across the board within communities, however, then people need to understand why restrictions are being imposed. Senator Warfield referred to the proposed ban on indoor dining. There is a behavioural change sub-committee of NPHET but I have not heard anything from it for weeks or even months as to what it is advising NPHET to do. There is much confusion and a lack of clarity as to how the ban on indoor dining, in a controlled environment, will have the effect of suppressing the virus in Dublin. There is a very serious question here about the behavioural signalling relating to such a measure because we know that the incidence of transmission of the virus is happening in people's homes as opposed to occurring in controlled environments. This measure will have a devastating impact on the businesses involved.

There is an irony in the fact that yesterday we saw the first of the cuts to the pandemic unemployment payment, PUP. The payment is going in one direction, namely, decreasing, while

the level of restrictions is increasing. This is a very serious issue and we want the Minister for Health, the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection to come before the House to outline the support measures they are going to provide to people in the pub, hospitality and arts sectors who are facing into a very long winter.

Senator Pat Casey: The issue I wish to raise relates to a number of Departments. I refer to the local property tax. We are in a year when all family and household incomes have suffered a negative impact due to Covid-19, yet we are asking local authority members to increase the property tax, thereby increasing the burden on those same households.

Senator David Norris: Get rid of it.

Senator Pat Casey: That could have been avoided if previous Governments had addressed the two fundamental issues of the revaluation process and the fact that the property tax was not paid on new homes that were built, thus increasing the burden on the owners of existing properties. I accept that dealing with this issue is now in the programme for Government, but regretfully, legislation is required to deal with the revaluation and bringing new properties into the net. What does not need legislation and is in the programme for Government is the commitment that all money collected locally be maintained locally in each county.

The second issue here relates to the self-funding element and the baseline element. We have an opportunity to give the council some break before the budgetary process starts in a month. The Ministers for Finance and Housing, Planning and Local Government should look at both those elements, which can be adjusted and can give additional funding to local authority members to provide the services that are badly needed, while we try to address the legislation that is needed for the other two matters I have raised.

Senator Frances Black: I wish to raise two issues today. The first is that of the Debenhams workers. We cannot forget about them and their appalling treatment by Debenhams. The workers have been picketing the stores since April for a just redundancy settlement of four weeks' redundancy per year of service. The workers are showing great resilience in their fight for fairness and have rightly rejected as insulting the offer made by the liquidator KPMG. Debenhams should not be allowed to walk away from its obligations and claim inability to pay a fair redundancy to workers who have given years of service to the company. The workers have been resolute in their determination in mounting pickets on the stores to halt the transfer of the stock to the British stores. As the trade unions have suggested, the Government should introduce a statutory scheme under which the State would pay workers enhanced levels of redundancy payments, provided for in the collective agreements in cases involving companies that go into liquidation, such as Debenhams. I would like the Minister to come to this House and give us an assurance that the Government will pass new legislation to ensure that no more workers have to go through a similar situation.

Second, I must raise the apparent ignoring by Britain of international law in its Brexit negotiations. The shared island unit that was set up should give assurances to the people in the North that they will be subject to the protections of international law. I was contacted by an Irish citizen living in the North who asked if she could now legitimately ask for a Border poll so she could be assured that she lives under international law and that it will be applied. She also said that "all arguments that this is not the right time or in any way contentious have just been blown out of the constitutional water". The concerns expressed by people over this lat-

est statement must be addressed by the Irish Government as a co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement. I ask the Minister to come in here and give an assurance that the new unit will be composed of representatives of all groups who have been working towards a shared Ireland, as it is deeply worrying when one of the parties to the Good Friday Agreement feels it is no longer bound by international law.

Senator John Cummins: I raise the issue of school transport, though I know it is proposed to have a debate on it next Thursday. I have been dealing with a particular family in west Waterford who, due to connectivity issues and through no fault of their own, submitted a late application for school transport for their three children, two of whom received a seat on the school bus last year. Bus Éireann has since accepted their application and payment for school transport for the three children this year. While I understand that priority has to be given to those who submitted their applications on time, there are four free spaces on the bus that passes this family's door but these three kids have not been able to access them. Common sense is seriously lacking. This is not just an issue for me in west Waterford. I am sure this is an issue for many Members of this House right across the country because common sense and joined-up thinking are clearly lacking. This needs to be addressed at ministerial level. If it is necessary to establish a clearing house to which Oireachtas Members can submit common-sense issues, then I ask that the Leader ensure this is done. We cannot allow this situation to continue. The bus passes the house of the family to which I refer. There are four free spaces on the vehicle and only three children in the family waiting to get on it. However, they are prevented from doing so. That is ridiculous.

Senator Ollie Crowe: Like others, I wish to comment on the restrictions that will possibly be imposed throughout Dublin later today. I fully appreciate the rising number of cases. In that context, the increase in the number of cases in hospital ICUs is a matter of deep concern for all Senators. If further restrictions are to be imposed on the hospitality sector, which has already taken a huge hit, then I request that the advice and evidence on which these restrictions are being introduced be published because, naturally, we want to bring the people with us. We must provide certainty and give them the information that is required. The data I have seen so far informs me that only a handful of outbreaks have been linked to restaurants and bars since they reopened. I must say that 99% of restaurants and pubs have adhered to the restrictions and if they have not then they should be closed forthwith. The Garda has the powers now to do that and regardless of whether it is a gastropub or a restaurant, it should happen immediately.

The real likelihood is that removing the current socialising options that exist in controlled settings will lead to an increase in the number of uncontrolled settings. I have huge concerns about that. Certainly, in respect of the city of Galway and the Airbnbs, I have been inundated with complaints, as are the Garda and the local authority. It is an area we need to look at because the residents and the people of this country who are trying to live in the correct manner are being affected. In one house in Galway recently, 73 people attended a party. That is totally unacceptable.

The impacts beyond Covid-19 must also be considered. I refer to the economic impacts of course, but the mental health and well-being of people is a major issue, as the Cathaoirleach will be aware. Some 50,000 employees and business owners are affected. It is simply unacceptable and we need to look at it. I ask that this House supports the hospitality sector.

Senator Michael McDowell: I sympathise completely with the remarks made by other Senators regarding what we are being told in the media about what the Government intends to

do on the basis of the advice from NPHET. I have no confidence in NPHET for the very simple reason that the difference in treatment of meat plants and restaurants between it and the HSE is dramatic and inexplicable. I have no confidence in the HSE because for the three years from 2016 to 2019, report after report recommended increasing the level of ICU provision in hospitals but practically nothing was done. When this situation arose again in March, we heard at the Covid committee that sanction had been given for an increase in ICU capacity. That is the politics and the administration of paralysis.

Closing down restaurants on this day in this capital will condemn vast swathes of vulnerable, underpaid people to go home to their bedsits, or wherever they live, and spend weeks alone without proper wages. That is what will happen. What is being proposed has not been scientifically justified and is wrong. It flies in the face of the strategy announced two weeks ago by the Government that it was going to open these places again. It flies in the face of science. It is wrong.

This House should debate these regulations. We have not debated them. We stand up and speak for two minutes on them. They are misguided. NPHET does not deserve our respect. The HSE does not deserve our respect. They are implementing policies which are cruel, wasteful and extremely damaging to our economy and extremely damaging to public health in terms of cancer, psychiatry, psychology and well-being across the board. It is time we stood up and demanded that these regulations be properly debated in this House.

Senator Jerry Buttimer: I second Senator Conway's amendment. I agree with Senator McDowell that it is important that the House would debate the regulations and that we also hold people to account.

I join Senator Dooley in calling for a debate next week on the aviation sector. I raised this matter in the House prior to the summer recess and I do so again today conscious that Government is to announce a further suite of measures today. The report of the task force for aviation recovery has been published. We are at a critical juncture for the aviation sector and the airports in Cork and Shannon. This is not about Cork versus Shannon; it is about airports being able to continue to operate. This is critical. If we do nothing else in this House in the next two weeks prior to the budget, we need to have the Minister of State, Deputy Naughton, or the Minister, Deputy Eamon Ryan, come into the House to discuss this issue. There are jobs and livelihoods at stake. To put it in context, Ryanair has bases in Cork and Shannon. If they are moved, it will be devastating not only for the people working in the airports but for the offshoot businesses, particularly in Cork.

There are 12,180 people in full-time employment as a consequence of Cork Airport. It generated €904 million for the Irish economy last year. Notwithstanding the sabre-rattling of Ryanair, those of us who met them in Cork saw a chief executive who was not raising a flag but was genuinely giving an opinion and a view, as were the staff accompanying him. I call on the Leader to provide for a debate on this issue in the House next week. We cannot obfuscate any more in regard to our aviation centre.

Senator Eugene Murphy: I agree with the comments of Senator McDowell in regard to meat factories. The public is not happy with what is going on in the meat factories. We all know the importance of the jobs in that area and the importance of the export market but for this particular business to be up and running, we must have in place the strictest conditions and testing. That is not happening and there are question marks over what is going on there. I ap-

peal to the Government and the HSE to ensure the strictest testing structure is put in place immediately. I note there was reference to the situation in Cork as well. This needs to be rectified as a matter of urgency. The Government is expecting people to accept new measures that are to be introduced.

Flooding has been a massive issue throughout this country. It has got worse in the context of climate change. I will not spend too much time speaking about the River Shannon basin and the damage that has been to it for years and years. It is now in a worse condition. Farmers and businesses in that area have suffered. It has to be acknowledged that the previous Government and former Minister of State, Mr. Moran, did a lot on flooding. It provided a huge budget for it. It is important that particular campaign of helping people to deal with the flooding issue continues. As I said, a lot of work has been done. We have protected towns and villages but we have pushed the water out into rural areas, which is causing more flooding of agricultural land and affecting businesses in rural areas. I ask the Leader to ask the Minister of State with responsibility for this issue, Deputy O'Donovan, to come to the House and give us an update on what is planned to deal with what will be a very serious problem for the nation.

Senator Ivana Bacik: Today is the first United Nations international equal pay day and I ask the Leader for a debate on legislation to close the gender pay gap. This House passed legislation that I and the Labour Party group initiated previously but unfortunately it seems to have run into the ground. I would like a debate on it.

I echo the words of Senator Sherlock in welcoming the decision by the Minister and the Government to bring in unaccompanied children from the Moria camp. We need to do more and show more generosity in this regard.

In respect of the reports that Dublin is facing increased regulation and restriction, what we need is clarity. I do not think it is helpful to blame NPHE or the HSE. Responsibility lies with the Government. I agree with those who say we should debate the regulations in the House. We did debate them in the context of the Criminal Justice (Enforcement Powers) (Covid-19) Bill. It ended up being a debate about the regulations and which were penal provisions and which were not. What we need to see, and what we have not had from the Government this week, is clarity on whether it is following NPHE recommendations, which are only recommendations, and why it is doing so. We need to see the rationale and rational evidence-based political decision-making by the Government. Where we are looking for responsibility it lies with the political decision makers.

Senator Aisling Dolan: August was a busy time for the west. There were more than 600 submissions to the Galway to Athlone cycleway project office in Ballinasloe, which shows the desire and need for the cycleway from Dublin to Galway to happen as soon as possible. I thank the more than 200 people who called to my office in Ballinasloe to make a submission on why Ballinasloe would be the perfect next destination on the greenway route. It would transform our town, particularly through working together with all other towns by consensus. Along with having the newest streets in our town we also have the shiniest shops. I congratulate the more than 90 business owners who took the time in this particularly challenging period to make an application to have their streetscapes enhanced. This is a pilot measure conducted by Galway County Council in Athenry and Ballinasloe. Will the Leader ask the Minister with responsibility for housing to see how we can ensure the maximum number of businesses are supported under this initiative? It is fantastic to see there is a desire to do this but support is needed for it to happen.

Ireland is up for the first public citizenship award in Natura 2000 and I ask all of my colleagues to take two minutes today to log on to the Natura 2000 awards website and support Ireland's living bog project. We have 12 raised bogs in Ireland, including one in Mountbellew and two in Roscommon. We are chasing the Italians and the Bulgarians for the award. If colleagues vote for the living bog project and share it, Ireland could win a Natura 2000 conservation award for the first time. We have 2,996 votes against 6,000 for the Italians and 10,000 for the Bulgarians so let us get voting. Our unique boglands inspired our Nobel laureate, Seamus Heaney, so I am sure they will inspire all of us to take two minutes to vote.

As spokesperson for innovation, I call for the support of everyone in the House to maintain the budget for Horizon Europe and European Research Council, ERC, funding. It is important with the challenges we have now to invest in the best. Innovation is the way to answer this and to build a better future. We need to ensure that ERC funding is maintained.

An Cathaoirleach: As the Senator is canvassing for Ireland she might share the information on the vote for the European award.

Senator Aidan Davitt: I agree with Senator McGahon, who raised an issue on the soldiers who fought at Jadotville. It is a matter I have raised in the House on several occasions. It would be apt if the Minister came to the House to discuss this issue. A lot of work has been done on it and progress has been very slow. Some of the people who were at the battle in Katanga have passed away recently.

The second issue was brought to my attention by a couple of secondary school teachers. Some pupils seem to consider it a badge of honour if they are able to get an exemption from wearing masks and visors. This seems to be a bit of craze in some schools, which is disturbing to hear. I have heard about it from two secondary school teachers, one of whom rang me and was quite distressed about it, while the other sent me an email on the matter. I will pass this on to the Leader, who might bring it up with the Minister for Education and Skills and the Department of Health.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: On Wednesday night, RTÉ1 broadcast the ground-breaking documentary film "Unquiet Graves", the story of the Glenanne gang, which was directed by Seán Murray and features much of the Trojan research carried out by Anne Cadwallader for her book *Lethal Allies* and by Margaret Urwin, who will be familiar to many Members, for her book *A State in Denial*. Between 1972 and 1978, more than 120 people were killed by the notorious group known as the Glenanne gang. I commend the film, although I know that many Senators will be familiar with this issue and will have watched the film. It is available on the RTÉ Player and other outlets online. I strongly encourage all Senators and anyone following these debates to watch it. It unravels the British state collusion at the heart of a sectarian campaign, and how members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Ulster Defence Regiment and the British intelligence services collaborated with that gang.

Like many campaigning families in the North, tragically having already lost, been hurt and undergone such a trauma, those involved in the Glenanne murders had to find themselves in court simply to ensure that the police and the British state would respond with the most basic entitlement they should have, namely, a proper, full, effective police investigation into the murder of their loved ones, which has been denied to them and so many others for so long. The Lord Chief Justice in the North said the police had not honoured the legitimate expectation of bereaved relatives that an overarching investigation into the Glenanne gang would be held. The

gang, as Senators will know, was responsible for some of the most notorious incidents in the conflict, including the massacre of the Miami Showband and the Dublin-Monaghan bombings, which led to the single largest loss of life in the conflict.

In asking Senators to reflect on that, I remind them that another international obligation of the British Government, the Stormont House Agreement, for which we passed all the legislation relevant to this jurisdiction in the House last year, remains unfulfilled. In fact, it is very worrying that the British Government is reneging completely on that commitment and, in so doing, is denying families such as the Glenanne families the most basic entitlement and right to access truth and justice for their loved ones.

Senator Tim Lombard: I raise the issue of meat plants and where we are going with the sector. It is one of the big issues. Yesterday in the Dáil, a Member claimed there was a certain number of cases in Cork and the southern half of the country. We need clarity on the entire structure, including how things are happening and how the reporting is happening. If there was a case of Covid-19 in a school, the information would be published and we would be aware of it. Strict restrictions have been introduced for the bar and restaurant sector, where customers' names are taken and businesses must be very transparent as to how they are running their show. In respect of the Meat Industry Ireland issue, we need to find out exactly where the cases are, how many there are and what the issue on the ground is. At the moment we are dealing with a dangerous vacuum, with rumour and counter-rumour, and nobody has a clue what is happening on the ground.

This morning, I took the opportunity to call the chairperson of Meat Industry Ireland to have a conversation about getting that information out to the general public. He was open to the idea of Meat Industry Ireland telling the general public if there are cases and where they are. We are in a dangerous vacuum and that leads to paranoia among the general public. I do not know if there are 200 cases in a meat plant in Cork but the issue is that we do not have clarity one way or the other. The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine must come before this House, hopefully in the next few days, to set out what guidelines Meat Industry Ireland will use to provide information to the general public. This will follow what the education and training boards and the pub and restaurant sector are doing. We need to have that information because, without it, we will have rumour and counter-rumour and that is not good for society. I do not believe we have 200 cases in a meat plant in Cork but because of the lack of clarity, we have no idea exactly what the true story is.

Senator Pauline O'Reilly: Last week, we all witnessed the devastating fire in Lesbos, which again brought into sharp focus conditions in the Moria camp, particularly for children. In light of the announcement yesterday by the Minister with responsibility for children, Deputy Roderic O'Gorman, that Ireland will take four more unaccompanied children, it would be remiss of me to fail to point out that we, as a Government, are not doing enough. As the leader of a Government party in the Seanad, I wanted to make that statement. Humanitarian efforts are needed now more than ever, with democracies under threat and the devastating consequences of climate breakdown we will see over the next few years. Tusla has a deficit of €20 million and all of these unaccompanied minors will be brought under its care. I ask that the Government introduce an ongoing programme to provide proper funding over the next few years to bring more of these children under the care of the State.

Senator Lynn Ruane: I call on the Leader to bring the Minister of State at the Department of Health, Deputy Feighan, to the Chamber to discuss the national drugs strategy, with particu-

lar reference to Covid-19. During the first lockdown, addiction services were not necessarily seen as essential services with the result that many of them had to close their doors. Many residential aftercare services sent home people who were in the middle of their recovery journey because some of these services, for example, the Keltoi rehabilitation unit, were taken over for use as isolation wards. People who were in addiction were sidelined and the HSE's addiction counselling line was closed down.

As well as my role in this House, I also chair the Canals Communities Local Drugs Task Force and I am a director of the SWAN family support organisation in Tallaght. I have also been working closely with Safetynet primary care services with regard to referrals of members of the homeless community and people in direct provision and hostels. Now that these services are beginning to re-engage with people in some of the most vulnerable communities, they do not know how they will continue. There is a real fear in that regard. I ask for a discussion with the Minister of State on the current national drugs strategy and on whether we can add to that strategy in terms of Covid as we move forward.

Safetynet is a brilliant service. There are many amazing doctors and nurses involved. It is about health equity. I congratulate it on a preventative piece of work it did on public health last week when it identified a cluster of Covid cases in a working-class community where a large number of vulnerable people are living on top of each other. Staff arrived with a mobile health unit and swabbed more than 200 people in the complex in question. They were able to catch an outbreak before it spread. This is an example of the preventative public health care that could be provided as part of the national drugs strategy or a community development approach. I would love an opportunity to discuss with the Minister of State, Deputy Feighan, how we can utilise and fund a resource such as Safetynet to do this preventative work with vulnerable groups.

Senator Mary Fitzpatrick: I support the comments of the leader of the Green Party in the Seanad, Senator Pauline O'Reilly. It would be helpful if the Leader wrote to the President of the European Commission and emphasised the importance and urgency of a progressive migration programme for the European Union. Europe should be leading on this. It has been far too slow. We should call on the President of the European Commission to take immediate action.

Nearer to home, Dublin city is more my concern this morning. I would like the Leader to be a strong voice for the young people of Dublin, for parents, for the owners and operators of public houses and restaurants, for those who work in the entertainment business and for taxi drivers. Our city is on its knees. It is dead. I walked down Molesworth Street yesterday evening and it was empty. I was coming in this morning and Dorset Street was empty. There is nobody in the city. The restaurants are dead. The children of this city and their parents have taken the lead. Children have gone back to school. Young people in this city are sitting in classrooms with masks on for eight hours a day. If we are going to talk about shutting the city down, we need to do it in a proportionate way. Young people have had the courage to go back into classrooms. They and their teachers are putting up with masks for eight hours a day. We need to ask the Government not to stop them from playing football, hurling, soccer or whatever. Gardaí are tackling higher levels of antisocial behaviour in the city than in previous times. Young people need outlets and they need to be able to use their energy. Their parents need to be supported.

The outbreaks in Dublin city have not happened in public houses or restaurants. We need to ensure that testing is freely available and without referrals from GPs. A system in this regard has been piloted in Limerick. I would like the Minister to make that available in Dublin so that

people will be encouraged to get tested and will not be obliged to wonder whether it will take 48 hours to get a result or if they will be out of operation for five days. I ask that the Minister for Health come to the House next week to talk to us about testing in Dublin city.

Senator Sharon Keogan: Like the leaders of Fianna Fáil, Labour and the Green Party, I welcome the announcement yesterday by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs that Ireland will be taking in four children from Lesbos. It is a pathetic number to take as a nation but I know the constraints and the pressure that Tusla is under at this time. I arrived late to the House because I am a foster parent and I had a meeting this morning with Tusla about someone in my care. We could all do much more. We all have to look at ourselves. There are many kids in care for whom long-term placements cannot be found because it is not possible to find families to take them. That is really sad. Kids go from emergency home to emergency home and cannot find forever homes. We need to look at ourselves, as do people listening in today, and we need to ask what we can do to protect the children of this nation. Do we have a spare bedroom? Could we be a leading light in a child's life? Some of the kids get to 18 and aftercare services are not there for them. They have nobody. Last week, one teenager was out on the street at 9 a.m.

The buck stops with us. It stops with me. What can I do? It stops with every one of us. We can all come in here and say that we are disgusted that we can only take four children. My daughter said to me that we should take five because we have five bedrooms. I cannot take five kids. I would love to, but I cannot. The buck stops with us, as a people. We have to ask ourselves what each and every one of us can do. Can we take a child? I encourage any parent or family listening to get in touch with Tusla. They need us, they need families - they are desperate for families. It is taking much longer to assess parents to take children at this time, perhaps up to a year, because the regulations mean they cannot visit the families or carry out the assessments that are needed in a timely fashion, and they are relying on the existing force.

I want the Minister to come to the House to explain what he is going to do to try to encourage families and parents to take children into their homes.

Senator Gerard P. Craughwell: We have discussed the issue of Jadotville veterans in both Houses several times and every county council in the country is putting forward motions. There are only eight of the recipients of distinguished service medals and military medals for gallantry who are still alive. I think it would be a terrible shame if we lose any more of them before we give them the honours that were recommended for them 61 years ago. I ask the Leader to ask the Minister for Defence where he stands on this right now and to see whether we can get something done.

The desecration of the altar in Islandbridge by graffiti over last weekend is something we should all condemn. That altar represents the thousands of Irish men and women who were lost in the first and second world wars, and to think that somebody would go in and spray paint on it is beyond belief.

Senator Regina Doherty: I thank Senators for all of the wide and varied items they brought up this morning. As I have so little time, I will respond by saying that for anybody who has asked me to write letters on specific topics, I will do so and I will send them a copy of the letter individually. With regard to anybody who has asked for a debate, I know it is a symptom of this House that we stand up and ask for the debate, and we want it immediately or next Tuesday. While next week's business is obviously arranged, for debates that are particularly important,

such as those on bus transport, aviation and the Moorhead report, I am trying to organise those for the beginning of the following week. Members should rest assured I will get to them as quickly as I can.

While I am speaking about aviation, I know many in this House and in the other House had representations from the thousands of workers in Aer Lingus as to the major difficulties they have had in recent weeks in accessing a simple short-time working scheme because they have had their salary reduced from 50% to 30%. I have no idea what is going on in Aer Lingus but I want to call publicly on Aer Lingus to pull out all the stops today for those employees who are waiting to get that extra few bob, just to keep them on the bloody breadline. It is not even what we would call having a decent standard of living but just to give them what they are entitled to. It should pull out all the stops to make sure that the forms are signed and that the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, which is ready and willing to engage with the staff through its Intreo offices, gets all the assistance it needs from Aer Lingus. Aer Lingus should also make a very clear statement that any moneys it has claimed through the wage subsidy scheme or the unemployment payment scheme, individually and on behalf of independent employees, was passed on to those employees - not the general statement that has been made that all moneys that were taken through the temporary wage subsidy scheme were passed on to employees, but that any money that was claimed in the name of a person was 100% passed on to that person, not to the general population of employees in Aer Lingus.

I disagree with the statement made by Senator McDowell this morning that he does not have confidence in either NPHET or the HSE. I would have to tell him, from personal experience, that the people who give up all of their time, and it is all of their time, to providing us with the regulations and the recommendations do it purely to protect our public health. We can all have opinions as to whether the communications are up to scratch, and all that stuff, and a lot of fair criticism has been made, but they are making recommendations purely on the basis of our best interests and in the best interests of public health. There are competing economic interests and competing social interests, and that is obviously what the Cabinet Covid committee has to decide on, and then make those recommendations. However, honest to goodness, these people are giving up all of their time just to make sure we are safe. If one is looking for clear communication, all one has to do is listen back to Mr. Paul Reid on "Morning Ireland" this morning. He could not have made it more simple and clear that the recommendations NPHET is making are to get us all to remind ourselves of the things we did religiously, probably over-zealously, in March, April and May and to go back to the basics of taking personal responsibility and behaving responsibly towards others. The number of people moving around Dublin city is the major problem at the moment. We will all be devastated if we cannot support the restaurants and bars and the artists and others who make parts of our cities, towns and counties so vibrant but, at the end of the day, we have to mind public health. There are sacrifices that we will not be happy about but they will have to be made in the next couple of weeks and months. I ask for Senators' understanding for the work NPHET is doing.

I had the pleasure of spending a day in a camp in Greece. It was one of the most profound things I have done in my life. It had such an impact on me that I am still in contact with some of those, including refugees, I met. Small children, aged four, five and six, came up to me, held my hand and brought me to what they considered their homes, which were square boxes. I do not mean to be disrespectful or critical of the Government response or of a Minister's response, but taking four children is a joke. We have issues in this country and Senator McGreehan beautifully described the challenges we have and her mother's advice with regard to the rise of the

18 September 2020

far right in this country, but we are a welcoming nation and we can and should do more. On that basis, I will write to the Minister and say that we want to do more. If it is a question of money, by God, we are borrowing money to beat the band at the moment. The least we can do is borrow a few bob more to show the humane side of the Irish people. With Senators' permission, I will write that letter to the Minister.

Senator Fitzpatrick mentioned that we need strong leadership and a strong plan from the European Union. Some Senators may have had the time to listen to Ursula von der Leyen's speech on Wednesday morning. This speech showed the powerhouse and political force that she is and I hope it won over her detractors, and there have been a few in the last year who questioned her suitability for the job. Mark my words, Dr. von der Leyen will make sure that there is a strong immigration plan and that the humanity that exists in most countries in the EU extends to all countries and all migrants who find their way to our shore. I thank Senators and apologise for rabbiting on for such a long time.

I accept the two amendments to the Order of Business proposed by Senators Norris and Conway, respectively.

An Cathaoirleach: Senator Norris has moved an amendment to the Order of Business, "That No. 12 be taken before No. 1." Is the amendment being pressed?

Senator David Norris: Yes.

An Cathaoirleach: The Leader has indicated she accepts the amendment.

Amendment put and agreed to.

An Cathaoirleach: Senator Conway has moved an amendment to the Order of Business, "That No. 11 be taken before No. 1." Is the amendment being pressed?

Senator Martin Conway: Yes.

An Cathaoirleach: The Leader has indicated she is prepared to accept the amendment.

Amendment put and agreed to.

Order of Business, as amended, agreed to.

National Screening Advisory Committee Bill 2020: First Stage

Senator David Norris: I move:

That leave be granted to introduce a Bill entitled an Act to provide for the establishment of a body, to be known in the Irish language as an Coiste Comhairleach Náisiúnta um Braitheoireacht or in the English language as the National Screening Advisory Committee, to advise on the operation of health screening programmes in the State and to provide for related matters.

An Cathaoirleach: Is there a seconder?

Senator Victor Boyhan: I second the proposal.

Question put and agreed to.

An Cathaoirleach: When is it proposed to take Second Stage?

Senator David Norris: On Tuesday, 22 September.

An Cathaoirleach: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Second Stage ordered for Tuesday, 22 September 2020.

State Airports (Shannon Group) (Amendment) Bill 2020: First Stage

Senator Martin Conway: I move:

That leave be granted to introduce a Bill entitled an Act to amend the State Airports (Shannon Group) Act 2014 and to provide for related matters.

An Cathaoirleach: Is there a seconder?

Senator Jerry Buttimer: I second the proposal.

Question put and agreed to.

An Cathaoirleach: When is it proposed to take Second Stage?

Senator Martin Conway: On Tuesday, 22 September.

An Cathaoirleach: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Second Stage ordered for Tuesday, 22 September 2020.

Sitting Arrangements: Motion

Senator Regina Doherty: I move:

That, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders relative to Public Business:

(1) the Seanad shall meet in the Seanad Chamber at 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 23rd September, 2020, and at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, 24th September, 2020, and the following arrangements shall apply:

(a) Commencement matters shall be taken in accordance with Standing Order 29;

(b) Standing Order 30 shall stand suspended;

18 September 2020

(c) There shall be no Order of Business;

(d) The business to be taken shall be confined to the items set out in the Schedule to this paragraph and, accordingly, no other business shall be taken unless the Seanad shall otherwise order on motion made by the Leader of the House or such other Senator as she may authorise in that behalf.

Question put and agreed to.

Report of Committee on Procedure and Privileges: Motion

Senator Regina Doherty: I move:

That the Report of the Committee on Procedure and Privileges on the amendment of Standing Orders 16 and 29 be adopted, laid before the House and printed.

Question put and agreed to.

12 o'clock

Select Committee on European Union Affairs: Motion

Senator Regina Doherty: I move:

(1) That a Select Committee, which shall be called the Select Committee on European Union Affairs, consisting of 5 members of Seanad Éireann, be appointed to consider such matters arising from—

(a) Ireland's membership of the European Union, and

(b) Ireland's adherence to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as it may select and which are not referred to any other Committee.

(2) The Select Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 72, other than paragraphs (6) to (10).

(3) The Select Committee shall be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Dáil Éireann, to form the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs, which, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), shall consider—

(a) the European Commission's strategic planning documents including the Commission Work Programme,

(b) cross-sectoral policy developments at European Union level,

(c) matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the General Affairs Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,

(d) such regulations under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009 and other instruments made under statute and necessitated by the obligations of membership of the European Union as the Committee may select,

(e) notifications referred by the Seanad under Standing Order 117 (1)(a),

(f) notifications of proposals for the amendment of the Treaties received from the European Council pursuant to Article 48.2 of the Treaty on European Union,

(g) notifications of applications for membership of the European Union received from the European Council pursuant to Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union, and

(h) such other matters as may be referred to it by the Seanad from time to time.

(4) The Joint Committee shall report to both Houses of the Oireachtas on the operation of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002.

(5) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 72, 116 and 118 and shall have the power to make recommendations to the Minister for Foreign Affairs (or Minister of State) on European Union matters.

(6) The following may attend meetings of the Joint Committee and take part in proceedings without having a right to vote or to move motions and amendments:

(a) Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,

(b) Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and

(c) at the invitation of the Committee, other Members of the European Parliament.

(7) The Joint Committee shall represent both Houses of the Oireachtas at the Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC) and shall report to both Houses of the Oireachtas thereon.

(8) The Chairman of the Dáil Select Committee shall also be the Chairman of the Joint Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Select Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement: Motion

Senator Regina Doherty: I move:

(1) That a Select Committee consisting of 5 members of Seanad Éireann be appointed to be joined with a Select Committee to be appointed by Dáil Éireann to form the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement to consider—

(a) issues arising from Ireland's role as a signatory to the Good Friday Agreement,

18 September 2020

(b) ongoing developments in the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, and

(c) any proposals relating to the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and such related matters as shall be referred to it by the Dáil and/or the Seanad from time to time, and to report back to both Houses of the Oireachtas at least once a year.

(2) The Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 72, other than paragraphs (3) to (9) inclusive thereof.

(3) The Minister for Foreign Affairs (or a member of the Government or Minister of State nominated in his or her stead) shall be an ex officio member of the Committee and shall be entitled to vote in proceedings.

(4) Members of the Westminster Parliament elected from constituencies in Northern Ireland may attend meetings of the Joint Committee and of its sub-Committees and may take part in proceedings without having a right to vote or to move motions and amendments.

(5) The Chairman of the Dáil Select Committee shall also be the Chairman of the Joint Committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Establishment of Select Committees: Motion

Senator Regina Doherty: I move:

(1) That Select Committees as set out in column (1) of the Schedule hereto are hereby appointed pursuant to Standing Order 71.

(2) Each Select Committee shall perform the functions set out in Standing Order 71 in respect of the Government Department or Departments listed in column (2) opposite each Committee (in anticipation of the coming into effect of the necessary Government Orders in relation to names of Departments and titles of Ministers and transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions).

(3) The number of members appointed to each Select Committee shall be 5

(4) Each Select Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 72, other than paragraphs (6) to (10).

(5) Each Select Committee shall be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Dáil Éireann to form a Joint Committee to carry out the functions set out in Standing Order 71, other than at paragraph (5) thereof.

(6) Each Joint Committee shall have the powers defined in Standing Orders 72, 116 and 118.

(7) The Select Committee on Justice shall have the powers defined in Standing Order 117(1)(b).

SCEIDEAL

	(1)An Coiste	(2)An Roinn/Na Ranna
1	An Roghchoiste um Thalmhaíocht agus Muir	Talmhaíocht agus Muir
2	An Roghchoiste um Leanaí, Míchumas, Comhionannas agus Lánpháirtíocht	Leanaí, Míchumas, Comhionannas agus Lánpháirtíocht
3	An Roghchoiste um Ghníomhú ar son na hAeráide	Gníomhú ar son na hAeráide, Líonraí Cumarsáide agus Iompar
4	An Roghchoiste um Iompar agus Líonraí Cumarsáide	
5	An Roghchoiste um Oideachas, Breisoideachas agus Ardoideachas, Taighde, Nuálaíocht agus Eolaíocht	Oideachas
		Breisoideachas agus Ardoideachas, Taighde, Nuálaíocht agus Eolaíocht
6	An Roghchoiste um Fhiontar, Trádáil agus Fostaíocht	Fiontar, Trádáil agus Fostaíocht
7	An Roghchoiste um Ghnóthaí Eachtracha agus Cosaint	Gnóthaí Eachtracha
		Cosaint
8	An Roghchoiste um Shláinte	Sláinte
9	An Roghchoiste um Thithíocht, Rialtas Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht	Tithíocht, Rialtas Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
10	An Roghchoiste um Dhlí agus Ceart	Dlí agus Ceart
11	An Roghchoiste um na Meáin, Turasóireacht, Ealaíona, Cultúr, Spórt agus Gaeltacht	Na Meáin, Turasóireacht, Ealaíona, Cultúr, Spórt agus an Ghaeltacht
12	An Roghchoiste um Coimirce Shóisialach, Forbairt Pobail agus Tuaithe agus na hOileáin	Coimirce Shóisialach, Forbairt Pobail agus Tuaithe agus na hOileáin
13	An Roghchoiste um Airgeadas, Caiteachas Poiblí agus Athchóiriú, agus An Taoiseach	Airgeadas, Caiteachas Poiblí agus Athchóiriú, An Taoiseach

SCHEDULE

	(1)Committee	(2)Department(s)
1	Select Committee on Agriculture and the Marine	Agriculture and the Marine
2	Select Committee on Children, Disability, Equality and Integration	Children, Disability, Equality and Integration
3	Select Committee on Climate Action	Climate Action, Communications Networks and Transport
4	Select Committee on Transport and Communications Networks	
5	Select Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	Education
		Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
6	Select Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Enterprise, Trade and Employment
7	Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence	Foreign Affairs
		Defence
8	Select Committee on Health	Health
9	Select Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Housing, Local Government and Heritage
10	Select Committee on Justice	Justice
11	Select Committee on Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport and the Gaeltacht	Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport and the Gaeltacht
12	Select Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands	Social Protection
		Community and Rural Development and the Islands
13	Select Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach	Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, Taoiseach

Question put and agreed to.

Work Programme of Select Committee: Motion

Senator Regina Doherty: I move:

It shall be an instruction to each Select Committee appointed pursuant to Standing Order 71 that the work programme provided for in Standing Order 77(4) shall include the consideration of such aspects of—

- (a) the State's response to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- (b) science, research and development and innovation; and
- (c) progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as are within the scope of the Committee's orders of reference as set out in Standing Orders.

Question put and agreed to.

Election of Leas-Chathaoirleach

Senator Regina Doherty: I move: "That Senator Joe O'Reilly be elected Leas-Chathaoirleach."

I am privileged to stand here today and nominate Senator Joe O'Reilly because he is one of my oldest friends, not in age but in terms of the length of time we have been friends, in my short political life. He is a titan not only of this House but of the Dáil and Cavan County Council. I propose him for the position of Leas-Chathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann.

The Senator entered politics when he was elected to Cavan County Council in 1985 when I was only a young one. Since then, he has represented his county and neighbours numerous times in the Seanad, Dáil and at council level over the past 30 years. He is a familiar face on posters at almost every level of politics - local, national and European. Perhaps a run for the Áras might be in his future.

We all know the Senator as a great orator, intellect and a wise man. I will put the emotional and human nature of him. In 2006, before my very first election in 2007, I was nobody. Nobody had heard of me in my own county, let alone in my party. I was heavily pregnant with my fourth child and there was not a huge amount of support coming from quarters. I got a lovely letter and gift from Joe in the post. He did not know me, had never even met me before, so that is a testament to the kind of man he is, politically and personally. He is a gent and I give him my full support.

I know the House will face difficult and challenging times ahead. Tough decisions are going to have to be made and strong debates will be had. I know the roles of Cathaoirleach and Leas-Chathaoirleach will be regularly tested and there is a real need for respected and experienced voices in the Chair for these debates. I know that Senator Mark Daly and, please God, Senator Joe O'Reilly will provide the most impartial and fair rulings for the running of this House in the future. I nominate the Senator.

Senator John McGahon: I am pleased to follow the Leader of the House, Senator Doherty, and second the nomination of my friend and colleague, Senator Joe O'Reilly, for the position of Leas-Chathaoirleach. My family's connection with Senator O'Reilly goes back to many years before I was even born. It started in 1980 when my dad first started to go out with my mam. They used to meet in a pub called Beagans in Seatown in Dundalk. Back then, a young Joe O'Reilly used to travel from Bailieborough over cross-country roads to Dundalk to meet his future wife, Mary. It gives me great pleasure as a Member of Seanad Éireann, 40 years later, to propose Senator O'Reilly for the position of Leas-Chathaoirleach.

Joe was first elected to Cavan County Council in 1985 and he was then elected to the Seanad in 1989 on the cultural and educational panel. I say with the greatest of fondness and respect that Joe ended up in the most unenviable position in which any Senator would ever want to find themselves. In 1993, he was beaten on the inside-outside rule. On the first count in the Seanad elections in 1993, he scored 76 votes while his Fine Gael colleague, Maurice Manning, scored 60 votes. However, Maurice was on the inside and Joe was on the outside and despite Joe having 127 votes to Maurice's 86 at the final count, Joe was beaten on the inside-outside rule.

I am thankful to say that, 14 years later, Joe found himself back in the Oireachtas after achieving 10,000 votes in the general election of 2007, the highest of any unelected candidate in the country. He then returned to what I would hope he calls his natural home, Seanad Éireann. After five years in Dáil Éireann between 2011 and 2016, which I would refer to as his wilderness years in the Lower House away from his natural home of Seanad Éireann, he found his way back here to all of us in 2016. I believe I speak for all of my newer Fine Gael colleagues in the Seanad when I say that the Senator is something of an elder statesman for us. He is always there to provide a listening ear and to give us advice about the inner workings of the House and how we, as new Senators, can navigate the issues of the day. His renowned wit and ability to get along with colleagues of all political persuasions and none is a testament to his character and to his likeability. It is, perhaps, one of the key reasons he is held in such high regard by so many of us in this House.

To wrap up, I will acknowledge a career of 35 years of public service. We are all public servants in this House. A career of 35 years cannot be achieved without the support of a loving family. While today is a wonderful day for the Senator personally, it is also a wonderful day for his family - his wife, Mary, and his sons, Eoghan, Alexius and Daire. Today is their day as much as the Senator's. It is an absolute honour to second the nomination of Senator Joe O'Reilly for the position of Leas-Chathaoirleach.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: I move: "That Senator Fintan Warfield be elected Leas-Chathaoirleach."

In nominating Senator Warfield, I make the point that we in this House are very lucky and very privileged to have candidates of such calibre before us this afternoon. I echo and agree with the remarks made in respect of our colleague, Senator Joe O'Reilly. I have spoken to the Senator and I know he understands our thinking behind this process this afternoon. I have got to know the Senator since coming into the Seanad in 2016. Apart from his thoughtfulness and leadership in this Chamber, which have been mentioned, one of my abiding memories of him was that he led a delegation from the Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the UK from the EU on a visit to Belfast. He did so impeccably and with all the astute political prowess he has gained as a Member of this House. I am very thankful to him for that and, like Senator Warfield, I wish him very well in today's business and in what may come after. The

Leader touched on the possibility of a run for Áras an Uachtaráin down the line. I hope we get that referendum. One never knows where the Senator might feature on the card. Given that I am doing this to the Senator today, I may owe him a vote, should I get one.

Our candidate this afternoon is, to put it bluntly, not old enough to run for the Áras as one has to be 35 to do so. It shows quite positively the breadth of experience and perspective in this Chamber that we are able to nominate a young man such as Senator Warfield, who could bring something entirely different although equally as positive and worthwhile to the role of Leas-Chathaoirleach. He could take on that position in an outward-facing and active way which showcases to a whole range of groups in our society that, no matter where one comes from or what one's background is, one is able to attain a position in this House and in that prestigious Chair. On behalf of the Sinn Féin grouping, I nominate my friend and comrade, Senator Fintan Warfield, for the position of Leas-Chathaoirleach. I wish him and Senator Joe O'Reilly the very best.

Senator Elisha McCallion: I second the motion.

Senator Pauline O'Reilly: As leader of the Green Party in the Seanad, I am delighted to see both of these candidates nominated. I have known Senator Joe O'Reilly for a considerable length of time, which is to say two and a half months, and in that time we have spent a good bit of time chatting together. I am delighted to see an O'Reilly nominated for the position. Senator O'Reilly gave me some homework to do over the recess. I am delighted to say I have completed that homework and we will chat again afterwards. I wish to formally say that I am delighted to see him in this position today. I know that my colleague is keen to say a few words as well at some point today, with your permission, a Chathaoirligh.

Senator Victor Boyhan: We are fortunate to have two capable and qualified candidates for the post. I am the leader of the Independent group and I will share with the House a discussion we had. Some of us chatted the other day when there was talk or speculation of three candidates from Fine Gael. A number of us suggested that if Fine Gael did not propose Senator Joe O'Reilly then we would propose him. I shared that with him yesterday.

I know Senator Warfield. He has an exceptional record but on this occasion we will vote for Senator Joe O'Reilly. We do so because he is an exceptional man. He is, as I have described in this House, a bit of a character. I mean that in the nicest sense. My own father was described as a character and it was not perhaps always positive. It is a term we use in Irish life. At funerals we say the deceased was a great character. I say that in the best way. He is a wonderful character. He is articulate and friendly. To lose a seat and come back is the hardest thing. The hardest thing is to fall and get back up and running again but Senator O'Reilly did that.

It is important that we have a competition. We are fortunate on this occasion. These are difficult circumstances, especially in how this position is being filled. I want to acknowledge Senator Buttimer for his work as Leader in the past and as Leas-Chathaoirleach. He did an exceptional job. He brought extraordinary energy to the job and was greatly committed. Times move on, however, and these are different times and different circumstances. I wish both the candidates well but in particular I want to wish Senator O'Reilly well, as I have connections with Cavan and he is a Cavan man.

An Cathaoirleach: Another Cavan man who wishes to make a contribution is Senator Wilson.

Senator Diarmuid Wilson: I speak as a Cavan man, on behalf of my colleagues in the Fianna Fáil party and as a personal friend of Senator Joe O'Reilly for many decades, even though I am far younger than him. If times were different - I hope they will be in the not too distant future - we would be welcoming his wife, Mary Tully. Senator McGahon has referred to her. She is a native of Roscommon. It was not until Mary Tully encountered the then Councillor Joe O'Reilly that he started to be formed properly into the person we see before us on a daily basis in this House. Mary is a public health nurse and, along with her colleagues, has done Trojan work to ensure the people of Bailieborough and east Cavan have been well looked after during the Covid-19 crisis. I would also like to refer to his sons, Alexius, Eoghan and Daire, all three of whom I have known from when they were young children. They are a credit to both Joe and Mary. I know that Senator Joe O'Reilly would want me to mention his late brother Alexis, to whom he was very close, as well as his sisters Caroline and Bea. I am deeply indebted to our colleague, Seán McKiernan, a former member of Cavan County Council, for filling in some of the blanks among the few brief words I have to say about Senator O'Reilly.

Bearing in mind that we are privileged and speak under privilege when we speak in this House, I am aware of the high legal qualification that Senator O'Reilly has. In order not to libel him I will put down some words to give the House a slight background to the man who we will be voting for here today. Before I do that I want to pay tribute to Senator Fintan Warfield. I know that his day will eventually come.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: Senator Wilson is right.

Senator David Norris: Tiocfaidh ár lá.

Senator Diarmuid Wilson: I am going to stick to the English language, if Senator Norris does not mind.

Senator O'Reilly is a native of Mountain Lodge, County Cavan. He is the son of the late Francis O'Reilly, a founding member of the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association, and his wife Susan. Incidentally, God be good to her, she lived to her 96th year, so Joe could be around for some time yet. At a time of limited education and mass emigration, Joe's father Francie was the local scribe for the people of Mountain Lodge, Laragh and Kill, a trade Joe picked up on at a very young age and put to great use politically in subsequent years. He attended St. Aidan's comprehensive school in Cootehill, along with a future constituency colleague of his and ours, the Minister, Deputy Heather Humphreys, although if given the opportunity she always stresses that she was in first year when Joe was sitting his leaving certificate. He went on to earn a BA degree in Irish at UCD, a first class honours master's degree in history, a higher diploma in education, a national school teaching qualification and the very highly rated diploma in law to which I referred earlier. He taught at all three levels of education before settling on national school teaching. I know from my former role as a Youthreach co-ordinator that Joe had a great passion for working to tackle educational disadvantage in Cavan town before it became common practice. Joe was a great debater while in UCD and even before he got to UCD he won many national debating awards as Béarla and as Gaeilge. It is worth noting that his classmates in UCD included our constituency colleague, Deputy Brendan Smith, Deputy Charles Flanagan and Professor Gerry Boyle, who is now head of Teagasc. Joe is following in great footsteps and is rightly going into high office. If the vote goes the right way his elevation will be well deserved.

Senator Joe O'Reilly has shown great personal and political resilience in his life, while

weathering family tragedy and political loss. He has always kept a very strong sense of self, while displaying a great sense of humour and a huge capacity for helping others, maintaining friendships and making new friends. He was elected to this House in 1989 and in 2007, but there was a gap of 15 years when he was not a Member of the Oireachtas. The next comparable gap I can find is in the case of my party colleague and former Senator, Terry Leyden, who was out of the Oireachtas for ten years. Even during the time when Senator Joe O'Reilly was not in this House, the people of County Cavan affectionately called him "Senator Joe". It is also worth noting that he has been elected to this House on three separate panels: cultural and education, industrial and commercial and labour. In this feat, he emulates his great friend, and a great friend and mentor of mine from the 1980s, the late Senator Andy O'Brien, who was also elected on three panels and spent 18 years in this House.

Joe was chairman of Cavan County Council from 2004 to 2005. I was honoured to serve with Joe on that council from 1999 to 2004. He initiated the chairman's award, which continues to this day. He represented Cavan County Council in two different electoral areas, Cavan and Bailieborough, as well as serving on County Cavan VEC, which allowed him to share and develop his love for education. He served in the Dáil from 2011 to 2016 but, sadly, lost his seat by a very narrow margin against the backdrop of the constituency losing a seat and significant territory. He has been a Member of this House since 2016. As both a Dáil Deputy and Senator, Joe is known for his wide network of clinics and his personal attention to ensuring any query brought to him is pursued as far as it can possibly go.

Joe is a founding chairman of Bailieborough Mental Health Association and both he and his wife Mary have used the Hideout bar, which they still own - I hope it is serving food - to host many worthwhile charitable fundraising events down through the years, especially for the Irish Wheelchair Association. Some Senators might be amazed to discover that Joe was also well known as the PRO of the Cavan Ploughing Association.

Senator Joe O'Reilly is a good man. He has devoted his entire adult life to politics, his community and the Fine Gael Party while also nurturing a family and not forgetting his friends. There has been much talk of new politics in recent years but Senator Joe O'Reilly represents everything good about old politics - decency, loyalty, courtesy, kindness and consideration. The new politics needs more of these values. To paraphrase James Dillon, who was a hero of the Senator's, Senator O'Reilly has shown that politics is a vocation. Even though it has drawn him into stormy waters as well as calm ones, he has not given up or given in. The people of County Cavan are proud of him. I trust that, in presiding as Leas-Chathaoirleach of the House, the Senator will remember another great maxim of Dillon's also: united we stand and divided we fall. I wish the Senator the very best of luck.

Senator Gerard P. Craughwell: While I appreciate Senator Warfield's qualities and I am sure he will see his day come, I will be supporting Senator Joe O'Reilly. I am delighted to see him as a candidate. As my colleague Senator Boyhan said, if the Senator's party had not nominated him, we would have nominated him. That is how highly thought of he is in this House. I note that the Leader mentioned the only post the Senator has not yet challenged for is that of President of Ireland. I would be very happy to advise him on that when the time comes----

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: The Senator should not listen.

Senator Gerard P. Craughwell: -----as I have some experience in that area. I wish Senator O'Reilly well.

Senator Sharon Keogan: I am delighted to support Senator Joe O'Reilly today. I am from County Cavan as well. There was always a division in our house between my mother and my father. My father used to say he was Fine Gael and my mother was a staunch Fianna Fáil woman so there were always rows in our home. Senator O'Reilly was the local councillor in our area. He served on the council with my uncle, the late Danny Brady and my late aunt, Veronica Sharkey. They would want me to support the Senator today. I am also supporting him because he is very close to the Keogans of Killyteane and they too would want me to support him. I am going to do the honourable thing and support the Senator today. I wish him well; he is a gentleman. He has a very kind and gentle nature and I am very pleased he will be taking the position of Leas-Chathaoirleach today.

Áras an Uachtaráin awaits Senator Warfield; his time will come.

Senator David Norris: I echo the Members who have said we were lucky in this House to have two such talented candidates for this office. I have known Senator Warfield for some years and have been very impressed by his meticulous attention to detail in discussions with Government and so on. On a number of occasions on which I have visited Government offices with him, he has given very commanding performances.

I am interested that so many Senators have today admitted that they come from County Cavan. I must say I have no such distinction. My roots are firmly in County Laois, which, as Senators will know, is the greatest of all of our 32 counties. I have known Senator Joe O'Reilly for many years and have the greatest respect and affection for him. He is a man of great decency and integrity and we have been privileged to listen to his contributions in this House over many years. The only negative or sad thing I can say is that it is such a pity that Senator O'Reilly's family cannot be here with him today because of Covid. I expect they are watching proceedings on the twiddly-diddly, the thingamajig, and I am sure they are rejoicing with him and us today.

This is a good day for Seanad Éireann. It is also rather good that there was such cross-party support for Senator O'Reilly. Hearing such an informed and positive contribution from Senator Wilson of Fianna Fáil about a Member from Fine Gael is how the Seanad should go. Well done to all involved.

Senator Vincent P. Martin: Senator Wilson's generosity in his remarks epitomises the spirit in the Seanad. It is also a great tribute to Senator Joe O'Reilly. There is a bit of a scene. Senator Norris left out Monaghan. The constituency is Cavan-Monaghan. Many careers that were launched in Cavan-Monaghan crashed and burned. When Senator O'Reilly had his success postponed in 2007, there was another wannabe on the ballot paper. There were about 16 runners and riders. I was in the loser's camp on that occasion. There was a lovely collegiality in the count centre, and Joe was always very inclusive, warm and consoling to those two great imposters, victory and defeat, in exactly the same way. In parts of Cavan and Monaghan he is endearingly known as Gentleman Joe, a gentleman to his fingertips and a wise person. I am confident that in his new and important role he will put co-operation before confrontation and inclusivity before exclusivity.

Although I am long since happily ensconced in the lilywhite county of Kildare, I come from Monaghan. There is a lovely respect in our constituency of Cavan-Monaghan. It does not extend to the Ulster championship. If Iraq was to play Monaghan in the first round of the Ulster championship, in Monaghan we would worry who Cavan would support. When a team from the province of Ulster qualifies, there is always 110% well-wishing and support for that team

to go through.

The class of 2007 really goes back to 1999. So many people have made acquaintances: Senator Joe O'Reilly, Senator Wilson, Senator Gallagher and the Minister, Deputy Humphreys. A then very young Deputy Matt Carthy and I were elected at the same time in 1999. There is a lot of respect. Politics can be brutal at times. It is tough and, without patronising the profession, a real vocation. I think all politicians have great empathy, understanding and respect for one another as we all go about trying to do our best. I know and I am assured that Senator O'Reilly will do his absolute very best in this new role.

Senator Warfield is just like me in 2007, I am afraid to say. It is never over until it is over, but if there were a bookmaker in the House he or she would say Senator Warfield could be a few votes short today. I hope that will be only a postponement of his success because it is great to see young people going forward. We should celebrate the fact that there is a contest today. There is nothing wrong with democratic contest; in fact, it strengthens the mandate of the successful person and doubles the resolve of the person who would be his or her successor, temporarily postponed. I wish Senator Joe O'Reilly well on this occasion. Although we cannot always be taken for granted, the Green Party is in Senator O'Reilly's camp.

Senator Eugene Murphy: I will keep this brief because I know we have to move on. Senator Wilson's contribution was very fitting. I have known Joe for many years. I think we first met during my broadcasting days, on one of many trips I made up to Cavan when I was with Shannonside Northern Sound. I always got a céad míle fáilte from Joe. Senator Wilson mentioned that Joe's wife comes from Roscommon. I know the Tully family very well. They are very well thought of in County Roscommon, and I know that Joe is also very well thought of in the county. When there are fewer restrictions around, we hope to have a little celebration down in Roscommon for him. I am glad to support him today. I know he will be an outstanding Leas-Chathaoirleach. He is always a gentleman and a great man to give advice in a gentle and mild-mannered way. That is very important, and I echo all the words around the House today. I wish to acknowledge Senator Warfield, a very hard-working Member, for putting his name forward. I also wish to remember Senator Buttimer today for his hard work and fairness.

Senator Seán Kyne: I wish to take this opportunity to wish Senator Joe O'Reilly the very best in what, I hope, will be his new role and also to wish Senator Warfield well in his future. As others have said, a contest is important but obviously I will support Senator Joe O'Reilly. I have known him since 2011, when we were both new Deputies. Our paths diverged after that but it was a pleasure to serve and he is certainly one of the most honourable, if not the most honourable, person that one can find in politics. He has cross-party support and respect for his manner and being. He has significant experience as a Senator having served three different terms and, as Senator Wilson said, he was on three different panels, which I did not know. He has had a long and distinguished career in these Houses and at local authority level. We all wish him the best in his future role as Leas-Chathaoirleach. We look forward to working with him and to continued friendship in the coming years.

Senator Micheál Carrigy: I wish Senator O'Reilly well. I will support him. I am not from Cavan but from Longford. They are neighbouring counties and rivals on the football field. I have family from Cavan who have known the Senator for many years and have been great supporters of his. Everything has been said here today. I came in when Senator Wilson was speaking and he epitomised Joe in the way he spoke. Well done to Senator Wilson on his comments. "Gentleman Joe" has been said, and he is a pure gentleman. I wish him well in his role. I wish

Senator Warfield well as well. He has a bright future. Senator O'Reilly is an ideal man for the job. I also echo what Senator Murphy said and acknowledge Senator Buttimer.

Senator Emer Currie: I congratulate both candidates. I will support my colleague, Senator O'Reilly. It will be lovely to see a fellow northerner in the Chair. It is a proud day not only for his family but also the network of Fine Gael in Cavan and the councillors there. I enjoyed listening to Senator Wilson's contribution. He is absolutely right about old politics versus new politics. Much of politics is about building relationships and that is what Senator O'Reilly epitomises. One can even see that today in the people who are here supporting him. It is cross-party, cross-age and cross-life stage. He has substantial support because he gives us substantial support. As a new Senator, we need people across the board who we can go to for friendly advice. I wish him the best of luck. It is a proud day for him and his family. It is a pity that Mary is not here but hopefully good times are ahead.

Senator Aisling Dolan: I congratulate Senator O'Reilly. It is a wonderful day. There was much support in Roscommon, especially from Pat, Mary's brother. It is a special day and the Senator will celebrate it well with his family. These are difficult and challenging times but the Senator will show us, in the time to come, all the wisdom and experience that he has learned so far. He has been very helpful to us, particularly to new Senators such as Senator Currie and I. It is a baffling, bewildering world at times, but Senator O'Reilly has always had a kind word and the door has been open for us to have a chat. I wish Senator O'Reilly well and look forward to seeing him as Leas-Chathaoirleach in the years ahead.

Question, "That Senator Joe O'Reilly be elected Leas-Chathaoirleach," put and declared carried.

An Cathaoirleach: As the motion in respect of Senator O'Reilly's nomination has been successful, the motion proposing Senator Warfield lapses. I call on the Leas-Chathaoirleach, Senator O'Reilly, to address the House.

Senator Joe O'Reilly: Is cúis áthais dom a bheith tofa inniu mar Leas-Chathaoirleach. Tá a fhios agam go dtagann freagracht thromchúiseach leis an onóir a chuir sibh orm. Tá sé de dhualgas orm mo dhualgas a chomhlíonadh go cóir agus go huile. Bí cinnte go ndéanfaidh mé mo fíor-dhícheall jab den chéad scoth a dhéanamh. Oibreoidh mé leis an gCathaoirleach agus leis an bhfoireann riaracháin ar bhealach comhoibritheach. Táim ag tnúth le bheith ag obair go dlúth agus go measúil le gach Seanadóir.

A Chathaoirligh and fellow Senators, if I might say on a whimsical note, I was thinking as people were speaking that so many people on this Earth do not have this experience. They are hearing it from the other side, but it is nice to have a pre-run of this while one is alive. It gives me a flavour and I hope some of this will transfer there.

I thank the Cathaoirleach and my fellow Senators for conferring this great honour on me today. I am appreciative of and moved by their overwhelming, generous and enthusiastic support. I thank my Fine Gael colleagues for selecting me to go forward and in doing so, I acknowledge the quality and ability of my two fellow candidates, Senator Kyne, our honoured and regarded Chief Whip, and, of course, Senator Lombard. Either of them would have been outstanding in the role. I appreciate Senator Kyne's generous remarks and I can assure him, as I did previously, that were the role reversed, and they could readily have been, I would be proudly making the same speech. Senator Kyne is an absolute gentleman, as is Senator Lombard.

I thank Senators Doherty and McGahon for proposing and seconding me. I actually did not write their speeches nor did they even consult me. It is gratifying that they could say such nice things while not under duress.

It may be a good juncture at this point to remember my council colleagues around the country who elected me here. In that regard, as was so eloquently put in such a lovely speech by Senator Wilson, I want to remember my old mentor, the late Senator Andy O'Brien, whose daughter, Madeleine, I believe called up a number of Senators on the phone before our votes etc. It is an appropriate time to do that.

I wish to thank the Independent Senators here for not opposing my nomination. By this I mean all the collective Independent Senators who break into a couple of groups. I will do my very best to honour the trust and friendship arising from our years of working together.

I pay a heartfelt tribute to Senator Warfield, who is a highly regarded person by all of us. There is an old saying that third time is lucky. Senator Warfield has a crack at the next time although I hope that will not be for a while. I wish him well.

I acknowledge our colleagues in government from Fianna Fáil and the Green Party for their support here today. In that regard, I wish to thank the contributors. It is because I am naturally a little moved by the occasion and a little unsteady, as we all are in these situations, that I will not go through the individual speeches or people who said the wonderful things. I will only say that I really appreciate them and hope to get to say it to them individually because I am moved by the things they said. The only generous or proper response I can give to their wonderful and lovely remarks is that rather than thanking them individually in a long, rambling speech, the best way to honour them is by giving an all-round, all day, every day commitment to doing the job well. That is how I will try to honour the lovely remarks from all of them. I appreciate and will get to speak individually with people. I am overwhelmed by it and it is almost like a pageant or something they had arranged. I did not arrange any of it. I thank them very much. It is deeply appreciated. I will not go through names in case I make a mistake.

At this juncture, I wish to acknowledge my wife, Mary, and sons, Alexius, Eoghan and Daire. They are watching this remotely at the moment out in Effra Road in the house of a friend of mine, Luke Smith, who is a friend of Senator Wilson's also. They are remotely watching because they are observing House protocols. We will try to celebrate in the evening. The advice of the administration services here was that they should not attend. They appreciate that good advice and they are observing it. I thank them for the years of love, support and affirmation. We all thrive on affirmation.

I acknowledge and thank Mary Keogan, a cousin of Senator Sharon Keogan, who fronts my Cavan office, and Mary O'Connor, who is very well known to the Members of this House, who fronts my office in Leinster House. They are both loyal and efficient and committed to public service.

I acknowledge the competent, fair chairing of Seanad proceedings by my immediate predecessors, Senator Buttimer and former Senator Paul Coghlan. I look forward to working closely with the Cathaoirleach. I know that he shares, and has already displayed, a commitment to fair play for all. I will try at all times to be fair and to ensure that the mandate of every Senator in this House is properly respected. I assure the House that I will be available to every Member and will be only delighted to take their ideas on board. I know that they are here because of

a desire to provide public service and enhance the lives of others. There is no Senator in this Chamber who is not motivated by high ideals and it is my job, and that of the Cathaoirleach, which he does admirably, to ensure that every Senator gets access and opportunity for full, free and fair expression.

Over the years, the Seanad has been a catalyst for social change and new thinking. Nobody will begrudge a special mention of the father of the House, Senator Norris, in this regard. We have initiated new legislation and scrutinised and amended legislation before us. Alongside the Cathaoirleach, Senator Daly, I will work to extend our possibilities, be that in the realm of select committees, invitations to guests or our interaction with Northern Ireland and Europe.

The arrangements for guarding the Seanad and its establishment were not the subject of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and so it was a matter for the Oireachtas and the Government of the day to set the provisions subject only to the referendum required. In September 1922, after the deaths of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, the then President of the Executive Council, W.T. Cosgrave, set out those provisions to the Dáil and outlined the Government's commitment to the creation of an Upper Chamber and the limits that would exist to that Chamber. Obviously, the Seanad created in 1922 was overtaken in 1937 with the enactment of Bunreacht na hÉireann and its adoption by referendum. In referencing previous Seanaid and the foundation of the Seanad on two occasions I think it appropriate to quote the words of Thomas Westropp Bennett, the last Chairman of the 1922 Seanad, who said of the old Seanad in Leinster House on 19 May 1936:

We have finished our labours, and nothing remains to be done but to ring down the curtain. I think we may congratulate ourselves on having done the State some service. We emerge in light, conscious that we did our duty, and conscious that, in our every act, we tried to build and strengthen this infant State.

I am sure that all of us here today, and Senators in their offices, would like to be able to say the same of our work in this House during this session when it ends. It is my job, in co-operation with, and working alongside, the Cathaoirleach, Senator Daly, to ensure that that is our epitaph.

In its original manifestation, Members of the Seanad originally had to be at least 35 years old. I say that conscious that we now have many young Members, who are particular friends of mine and who had particularly gracious things to say about me earlier. I also recognise that it is tremendously important that we have young Members of the extraordinary calibre that was displayed earlier. This allows the House to be more representative of the population as a whole. Our young Members are our greatest jewels.

Although the office of Leas-Chathaoirleach is not referred to Articles 18 and 19 of the Constitution, which deal with the Seanad, it is alluded to in Article 14, which sets out the provisions relating to the Presidential Commission. I am aware that some of my predecessors as Leas-Chathaoirleach have been called upon, with the Ceann Comhairle and Chief Justice, in this regard.

In conclusion, this is a special day for me. Growing up on a small farm in Cavan, I would never have thought that I would one day become Leas-Chathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann. I mention that not only to underline my gratitude but to tell young people that, in this great Republic, they can be anything they want to be. All of us in this Chamber will work every day to

remove any remaining obstacles to that. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Teach.

An Cathaoirleach: Senator Buttimer has indicated that he would like to contribute.

Senator Jerry Buttimer: I dtús báire, déanaim fíorchomhghairdeas le mo chara, an Leas-Chathaoirleach nua, an Seanadóir Seosamh Ó Raghallaigh. I congratulate the Senator on his elevation. I hope his tenure is longer than mine. I wish him every success and pledge to him my full co-operation. We have had the pleasure of contesting two Seanad elections on the same panel and never once was there a cross word or any incursion from either of us. The Senator is a person whom many of us hold in high regard. His 35 years of dedication as a public representative today culminates in his election as Leas-Chathaoirleach. I congratulate the Senator's wife, Mary, and his three sons. I pledge him my full support and wish him every success. Déanaim comhghairdeas leis arís.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Buttimer for his contribution and for his service to this House. I thank all Members for their contributions in respect of Senator Joe O'Reilly. It is a great day for the Senator and his family. We are all disappointed that they cannot be here with us today to celebrate the Senator's great contribution to public life and public service. Senator Joe O'Reilly spoke about his family. His father was a scribe and a man of great learning. The Senator referred to hearing his mother's words from the afterlife. It is great that he can hear them now because I am sure they are truly honoured that he has become Leas-Chathaoirleach of this Seanad.

In my research into the Senator, I found that he had a great fondness for a teacher in the school in Carrickallen, Mrs. Smith, who gave him the love of learning he has brought all the way through to share with us here today. The Senator has 35 years of experience, including serving as a Vice-President of the Council of Europe twice. He will bring that vast experience and knowledge to the role he is to fulfil for us. We are delighted to have him.

In his fitting contribution, Senator Wilson spoke about Senator Joe O'Reilly's service on Cavan County Council, on which he served as chairman. Senator Wilson's uncle was, of course, on the famous 1947 team that beat Kerry in the all-Ireland final at the Polo Grounds in New York. I would say that as a day for Cavan this is up there with beating Kerry in the all-Ireland final. I look forward to working with Senator O'Reilly and to his advice and the wisdom of his 35-year contribution to public service. If we, as Members of the House, give half as much as Joe has given over the years we will be doing very well.

Sitting suspended at 12.50 p.m. and resumed at 1.15 p.m.

Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Bill 2019: Report and Final Stages

Bill recommitted in respect of all amendments.

An Cathaoirleach: For the information of Members, please note that the House, by agreeing to the motion to recommit, allows a Committee Stage style discussion on the amendments only. That is, Members may speak more than once on each amendment.

18 September 2020

Government amendment No. 1 arises out of recommittal proceedings. Amendments Nos. 1 to 6, inclusive, 13 to 18, inclusive, 22 to 26, inclusive, 29 and 30 are related and may be discussed together by agreement. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Government amendment No. 1:

In page 14, line 33, to delete “speciality to which the qualification relates is a speciality” and substitute “specialty to which the qualification relates is a specialty”.

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Mary Butler): In line with a signal given on Committee Stage that it might be necessary to introduce correcting amendments on Report Stage, a number of amendments to make typographical changes to sections relating to the Dentists Act, the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, the Pharmacy Act and the Medical Practitioners Act are required. These amendments can be explained under three headings. First, the correcting of a minor drafting error that relates to the internal numbering of section 71A of the Medical Practitioners Act. Second, the correcting of the spelling of “speciality”. In amendments proposed to the Medical Practitioners Act and the Dentists Act, the Bill spells it “specialty” with an additional “i”, making it “speciality”. Given that there are other references in both Acts to “specialty”, it is necessary to correct these drafting errors to ensure consistency. Third, amendments are required consequential on the Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Act 2020, which was enacted in March. That Act added sections to the ends of the four Acts in question. These additional sections necessitate the renumbering of certain sections in the Bill.

Senator Ivana Bacik: I welcome the Minister of State and congratulate her on her new role. This is the first time Members of this House have had the pleasure of addressing her since her appointment.

I have no issue with these technical amendments. Indeed, the Bill is largely technical in nature. I appreciate that the Minister of State has accepted an amendment I tabled on Committee Stage in late 2019, which seems like another era, to give recognition to the category of pharmaceutical assistants. That amendment is to section 53. There are other technical amendments to some of the provisions contained in Part 4 and relating to the Pharmacy Act. The Minister of State’s amendments Nos. 15 to 18, inclusive, are to that Part. I am grateful that she did not in any way change my amendment, which thus stands and recognises properly for the first time this small group of professionals. My mother, Rina Bacik, is a pharmaceutical assistant, so I am declaring a personal interest. Colleagues who were in the previous Seanad will recall that, when we debated this Bill last November, a group of pharmaceutical assistants were in the Gallery watching. They are keenly following this debate and are anxious to see the provision commenced as soon as possible. They are delighted that it will pass and that their grouping will be recognised. They number only 300 or so. The last person to qualify as a pharmaceutical assistant did so in 1986. They have been working in a professional capacity alongside pharmacists. I am pleased to see that they will get their due recognition and I hope to see this provision commenced as soon as possible after the Bill is passed.

An Cathaoirleach: I am delighted that the Senator is in the House to ensure that her mother’s work is formally recognised in this legislation. I thank her for the amendment that she tabled in the previous Seanad.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: The Minister of State is welcome. Sinn Féin does not op-

pose the technical amendments as outlined. We have an amendment of our own, of which the Minister of State will be aware. I was not party to the debate on previous Stages, so I will look to the Cathaoirleach to keep me right in terms of when my amendment is coming up so that I might speak to it.

In the broadest sense possible, this is important legislation for all of the reasons that Senator Bacik outlined and more. We are seeking to approach our amendment in a collaborative and positive way with the best of intentions. It is an important one to make on behalf of the lobby that it impacts and I will speak to it when it arises. I wish the Minister of State well.

An Cathaoirleach: To be clear, just as the Senator is seeking guidance from me, I will seek it from the Clerk. Amendments Nos. 29 and 30 are related. I believe the Senator's amendment is No. 29.

Senator Ivana Bacik: My colleague's amendment No. 7 will create a new section 29.

An Cathaoirleach: I thank Senator Bacik.

Deputy Mary Butler: I thank Senators for their kind words. To address Senator Bacik's points, I worked closely with pharmaceutical assistants in Waterford. I am very aware of what the Senator is speaking about. I recognise that in years to come, many of these pharmaceutical assistants will retire, as the last one came into this profession in 1986. One of the first questions I asked my officials this morning was where we were on this situation. Many pharmacies have found circumstances challenging in the past six months and pharmaceutical assistants play a huge role there, especially in rural pharmacies where only one pharmacist might be on duty. They could not operate without pharmaceutical assistants, so I am delighted that the Minister accepted Senator Bacik's amendment. I will speak to him about enforcing it as soon as possible.

Senator Ivana Bacik: I thank the Minister of State for her generous and kind words. It is always lovely to see someone with a Waterford connection in this Chamber, as I have one myself. I am grateful to her for passing that message on to the Minister. Committee Stage of this Bill was held on 18 December 2019, which is when we debated and agreed the amendment. I will not take up the time of the House any further but I wish to express my gratitude to the Minister and Minister of State. I thank the Minister in particular for sending me a letter last week to let me know that this amendment would stand. It is a good day for the Seanad and for pharmaceutical assistants.

Deputy Mary Butler: Absolutely.

An Cathaoirleach: It is also a good day for Senator Bacik's mother. I congratulate her.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 2:

In page 14, line 39, to delete "speciality" and substitute "specialty".

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 3:

In page 16, line 17, to delete "speciality" and substitute "specialty".

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 4:

In page 29, line 29, to delete “section 68” and substitute “section 69”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 5:

In page 29, line 31, to delete “69. (1) The” and substitute “70. (1) The”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 6:

In page 30, line 31, to delete “70. (1) Where” and substitute “71. (1) Where”.

Amendment agreed to.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: I move amendment No. 7:

In page 32, between lines 28 and 29, to insert the following:

“Amendment of section 36 of Act of 2005

29. Section 36 of the Act of 2005 is amended, in subsection (1), by the substitution of the following paragraph for paragraph (a):

“(a) within one year after the board’s establishment day, or within one year of the enactment of this Act if the registration board was established prior to the enactment of this Act, establish a register of members of that profession.”.”.

This amendment is self-explanatory in what it seeks to do by making that addition to the Act. With the indulgence of the Cathaoirleach, I will give a brief background to my proposed amendment. Counselling and psychotherapy, CP, is a relatively new profession in this State. It grew in response to long-standing severe deficits in mental health services and the need for an effective and accessible alternative to the medical model of treatment. It is now developed and well-respected. It embraces a wide variety of issues, including addiction, depression, anxiety states, family problems, rape crisis, bereavement, PTSD, children and adolescent mental health, etc. Four-year training courses to master’s level in psychotherapy are now available, as well as three and four-year courses to BA level in counselling in some universities and ITs. The profession is currently self-regulated, with clearly defined accreditation criteria and procedures with two main professional bodies. There are 6,000 practitioners in the State.

Following extensive deliberations, study and lengthy public consultation, statutory registration for CP was specifically approved by the Dáil in 2019 under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005. This was widely considered appropriate for the protection of the public and the development of the profession in the interests of the community. A registration board for CP was recruited by the regulator CORU and established in 2019. During this process, the Government position was that it was pushing through with this registration quickly and decisively as an enlightened policy.

Counselling and psychotherapy has been accorded a key role under the newly-announced

Government mental health policy, *Sharing the Vision*, which has all-party support. For example, recommendation No. 16 of *Sharing the Vision* states:

Access to a range of counselling supports and talk therapies in the community/primary care should be available on the basis of identified need so that all individuals, across the lifespan, with a mild-to-moderate mental health difficulty can receive prompt access to accessible care through their GP/Primary Care Centre. Counselling supports and talk therapies must be delivered by appropriately qualified and accredited professionals.

It is clear that the sector requires some further development and accreditation regulations to fulfil its mental health policy role.

There are two registers, as announced by the Minister for Health, under the newly-established registration board, for both counselling and psychotherapy. The registration requirement for counselling is expected to be level 8, via a bachelor's degree, while for psychotherapy, at least level 9, a master's degree. The existing professional bodies, such as the Irish Council for Psychotherapy, the Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy and the Irish Association of Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy, would lose all accreditation powers in respect of both individuals and courses under the new arrangements. CORU announced suddenly, in meetings with counselling and psychotherapy professional bodies in July 2019, that all this progress was to be stopped and that statutory registration would not happen for at least five years.

This is an area of deep frustration and disappointment for that sector. While I appreciate that it is a sector within the broadest remit of the Department, and that various medical and health-care services need to be provided, it is crucial that we support it in its work and that it have the opportunity to be registered and accredited in a way that does not raise the bar beyond the reach of many existing professionals.

The wording of the amendment is clear. I wished only to provide some context and I hope Senators will be prepared to support the amendment on that basis.

Deputy Mary Butler: The amendment relates to section 36 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, which requires registration boards to establish a register of members of that profession as soon as is practicable after the registration board's establishment. The effect of the amendment would be to require registers to open within a year of the establishment of a board or, where boards have been established, within a year of the enactment of the Bill, even where the work necessary to open the register safely is not complete.

Registration boards are established under Part 3 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, to perform functions assigned to them under the Act. The objective of the registration board of a designated profession is to protect the public by fostering high standards of professional conduct and professional registration of education, training and competence among registrants of that profession. As part of that work, the Act sets out a range of duties the board must undertake, some of which are required before the register can open. By way of example, the board must set standards of proficiency necessary for the profession and the education standards required for registration of that profession. Course providers must then apply to have the course they provide recognised as courses that meet those standards and thereby the threshold for entry to the profession. These courses must be reviewed and assessed to ensure they meet the threshold.

The work required to approve training programmes for entry to the profession is significantly easier for a board overseeing the registration of one profession, in particular one that is long established, such as speech and language therapy. In the case of a board responsible for the registration of two professions, or professions with multiple entry pathways, or where multiple course providers are applying for recognition, such as in the case of social care workers, it is clear the work is much more complex and is likely to take longer. We must not forget that the purpose of regulation is protection of the public by ensuring that registrants of a profession have met the standards set to practise that profession. Where those standards are not set, or are set but it is not clear whether the educational courses provided meet those standards, this poses a clear risk to patient and user safety.

A suite of by-laws also has to be made by the board before a register is opened. The board makes by-laws in respect of the following: applications for registration on the register of that profession; qualifications approved for the purposes of registration, as attesting to the standard of proficiency required for registration; the conditions for registration in a division of a register of that profession; and where applicable, police or Garda clearance, health declarations, conduct declarations, and return-to-practise requirements if an applicant has not practised for more than two years. The board must also review international qualifications as it becomes the competent authority, under EU legislation, to allow international applicants to apply for registration. Accordingly, mindful of the work of each board to ensure the registers are opened safely, it would be utterly counterproductive and dangerous to impose a statutory date by which these registers would open without any consideration of whether the work necessary to open them is safely completed. Therefore, I must oppose the amendment.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: I thank the Minister of State for her comprehensive response. In many ways, we are on the same page in what we are seeking to do. I take her point that this needs to be handled professionally and that we need to ensure the fullest rigour regarding public health and safety and people's well-being, but we are now at a point where we have to act to achieve that. With this amendment, we could add impetus to bring about the necessary change at a critical time when so many people need to avail of a variety of services. In no way did I seek to undermine public safety and the well-being of people availing of any of the services. From engagement with the sector, I am sure it is geared up and wants to proceed, with the Department and Government, in the most collaborative, effective, efficient and safe way possible. Therefore, we need to enable those concerned to get on with that. I will be pressing the amendment to a vote.

Deputy Mary Butler: Twelve registration boards have been established to date, and eight of these have opened registers incorporating ten professions. The remaining four boards are working towards the opening of the registers for an additional five professions. I fully appreciate that some practitioners and service users may be frustrated that it is taking longer than expected for some registers to open. It should be appreciated, however, that when applying a statutory regulation to a profession, there is only one opportunity to have the register opened correctly. This takes time and must be done in consultation with the relevant professions.

Entry onto a professional register provides a significant signal to members of the public that the individual in question has reached important standards of training, expertise, conduct and competence. Patients can have confidence in someone's professional standing on the basis that his or her qualifications have been independently verified. Limiting the period available to assess educational programmes to less than a year radically undermines this confidence and introduces an enduring patient-safety risk. I do not doubt the good intentions of the Senators in

proposing this amendment but, for the reasons I stated, having consulted the regulator and being mindful of the implications for patient safety associated with a mandatory one-year requirement, I cannot support the amendment.

Amendment put:

The Committee divided: Tá, 15; Níl, 26.	
Tá	Níl
Bacik, Ivana.	Blaney, Niall.
Black, Frances.	Buttimer, Jerry.
Boyhan, Victor.	Byrne, Malcolm.
Boylan, Lynn.	Carrigy, Micheál.
Craughwell, Gerard P.	Cassells, Shane.
Hoey, Annie.	Chambers, Lisa.
Keogan, Sharon.	Clifford-Lee, Lorraine.
McCallion, Elisha.	Conway, Martin.
Moynihan, Rebecca.	Crowe, Ollie.
Norris, David.	Cummins, John.
Ó Donnghaile, Niall.	Currie, Emer.
Ruane, Lynn.	Doherty, Regina.
Sherlock, Marie.	Dolan, Aisling.
Wall, Mark.	Dooley, Timmy.
Warfield, Fintan.	Fitzpatrick, Mary.
	Gallagher, Robbie.
	Kyne, Seán.
	Lombard, Tim.
	Martin, Vincent P.
	McGahon, John.
	McGreehan, Erin.
	Murphy, Eugene.
	O'Loughlin, Fiona.
	O'Reilly, Pauline.
	Seery Kearney, Mary.
	Wilson, Diarmuid.

Tellers: Tá, Senators Elisha McCallion and Niall Ó Donnghaile; Níl, Senators Robbie Gallagher and Seán Kyne.

Amendment declared lost.

An Cathaoirleach: Amendment No. 8 is a Government amendment arising out of recom-mital proceedings. Amendments Nos. 8 to 12, inclusive, are related. Amendments Nos. 8 to 11, inclusive, are consequential on amendment No. 12. Therefore, amendments Nos. 8 to 12, inclusive, may be discussed together, by agreement. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Government amendment No. 8:

In page 33, line 4, to delete “following subsection” and substitute “following subsections”.

Deputy Mary Butler: These amendments are primarily consequent on an amendment made on Committee Stage in the Dáil. In 2017, the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 was amended to provide that persons who were awarded certain specified qualifications after 1 January 2013 could apply for registration to the Physiotherapists Registration Board. It provided a two-year grandparenting window during which appropriately qualified persons, including persons awarded the qualification before 1 January 2013, could seek registration under this provision. This grandparenting clause required applicants to have practice in the State for a minimum period prior to application. This two-year window ran from 20 December 2017 until 31 December 2019.

Legal advice subsequently determined that the 1 January 2013 qualification date requirement introduced under the 2017 Act was legally problematic as it rendered ineligible for registration persons who had received the very same qualification before 1 January 2013 and who also were not able to apply for registration under the grandparenting clause. This applies to a small number of qualified professionals who may have returned to the State after practising in another jurisdiction or who may have spent a number of years out of practise. It was, therefore, necessary to amend this provision and provide a window during which these people could also apply for registration. Accordingly, an amendment was introduced on Committee Stage in the Dáil that removed the reference to qualifications awarded after 1 January 2013 and extended the registration window for applicants from 31 December 2019 to 31 December 2021. However, as currently drafted, extending the registration window from 31 December 2019 to 31 December 2021 is dependent on the Bill being enacted before the end of 2019. As we all know this did not happen and the registration window closed on 31 December 2019.

If the Bill is enacted, as currently drafted, it will incorrectly imply that the registration window remains open. Accordingly, the amendment proposed here is a corrective measure. It addresses the fact that there is now a period where a cohort of applicants are unable to apply for registration with the Physiotherapists Registration Board, CORU. It allows applications, which were received by CORU prior to 31 December 2019 but where no decision has been reached by the board in relation to them, to be considered as valid applications thereby removing the need for an applicant to submit a second application. Furthermore, it extends the window of registration for qualifying applicants from the date of the commencement of the Bill until 30 June 2022, which I trust will provide a sufficiently adequate time for these applicants to avail of these registration provisions.

The amendment also clarifies that any applications received during the current period when the application window was closed, between 31 December 2019 and the commencement of the section, are not to be considered by the registration board though it is open to an applicant to reapply when the application window reopens.

Finally, the amendment provides that applicants who seek registration under the provision will be required to comply with return-to-practise by-laws in the same way that other applicants for registration, on the Physiotherapists Registration Board, are required.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 9:

In page 33, line 7, to delete “applies” and substitute “subject to subsection (2FA), applies”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 10:

In page 33, line 9, to delete “31 December 2021” and substitute “30 June 2022”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 11:

In page 33, line 14, to delete “section 31(1)(fa)(i)” and substitute “section 31(1)(fa)”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 12:

In page 33, line 22, to delete “that Institute.” and substitute the following:

“that Institute.

(2FA) (a) Paragraph (b) applies to a person who has made an application—

(i) referred to in subsection (2F)(a), as in force before the relevant commencement, on or before 31 December 2019, and

(ii) which has not, before the relevant commencement, been determined by the Physiotherapists Registration Board.

(b) The Physiotherapists Registration Board may, on or after the relevant commencement, determine the application without the person having to make a further application referred to in subsection (2F)(a).

(c) Paragraph (d) applies to a person who has made an application referred to in subsection (2F)(a), as in force before the relevant commencement, on or after 1 January 2020 but before the relevant commencement.

(d) The Physiotherapists Registration Board may not, on or after the relevant commencement, determine that application but without prejudice to the person’s right to make a further application referred to in subsection (2F)(a).

(e) In this subsection, ‘relevant commencement’ means the commencement of *section 29(b) of the Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Act 2020*.”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 13:

In page 43, line 24, to delete “section 97” and substitute “section 98”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 14:

In page 43, line 27, to delete “98. (1) In” and substitute “99. (1) In”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 15:

In page 45, line 20, to delete “99. (1) Subject” and substitute “100. (1) Subject”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 16:

In page 61, line 18, to delete “section 76” and substitute “section 77”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 17:

In page 61, line 21, to delete “77. (1) In” and substitute “78. (1) In”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 18:

In page 63, line 29, to delete “78. (1) The” and substitute “79. (1) The”.

Amendment agreed to.

An Cathaoirleach: Amendments Nos. 19 to 21, inclusive, and Nos. 31 to 33, inclusive, are related and may be discussed together by agreement. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Government amendment No. 19:

In page 71, to delete lines 29 to 36 and substitute the following:

““(3A) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (2)(g), rules made under that subsection may provide that—

(a) the chairperson of the Preliminary Proceedings Committee, or such other member of that Committee who is authorised by the rules to do so, may establish, in accordance with the rules, a subcommittee referred to in subsection (2)(g)(i), or

(b) the chairperson of the Fitness to Practise Committee, or such other member of that Committee who is authorised by the rules to do so, may establish, in accordance with the rules, a subcommittee referred to in subsection (2)(g)(ii).”.”.

Deputy Mary Butler: I propose to take amendments Nos. 19 to 21, inclusive, and amendments Nos. 31 to 33, inclusive, together.

The Bill as passed by the Dáil amended the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 and the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011 to provide that subcommittees of the preliminary proceedings committee, PPC, and the fitness to practise committee, FTPC, are established pursuant to rules. These subcommittees can perform any of the functions of the respective committee as if they are the

committee. This was aimed at better utilising the time of both the PPC and FTPC and facilitating the more expeditious processing of complaints.

The amendments brought forward today provide additional clarity on the procedures for the establishment of these subcommittees. Specifically, they provide that the chairperson or such other committee member as may be designated by rules can establish a subcommittee of the respective committee. As drafted, the provision could be interpreted as meaning the entire committee is required to establish a subcommittee. These amendments remove any risk of ambiguity or uncertainty around the mechanism for establishing subcommittees and I ask Senators to support them.

2 o'clock

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 20:

In page 72, lines 15 to 17, to delete all words from and including “where” in line 15 down to and including “subcommittee” where it firstly occurs in line 17 and substitute the following:

“where a subcommittee of the Preliminary Proceedings Committee is established pursuant to rules made under section 11”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 21:

In page 72, lines 23 to 25, to delete all words from and including “where” in line 23 down to and including “subcommittee” where it firstly occurs in line 25 and substitute the following:

“where a subcommittee of the Fitness to Practise Committee is established pursuant to rules made under section 11”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 22:

In page 88, line 29, to delete “speciality” and substitute “specialty”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 23:

In page 88, line 31, to delete “speciality” and substitute “specialty”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 24:

In page 91, line 12, to delete “speciality” and substitute “specialty”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 25:

18 September 2020

In page 92, lines 18 and 19, to delete “speciality other than the speciality” and substitute “specialty other than the specialty”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 26:

In page 111, to delete lines 11 and 12 and substitute the following:

“(b) in subsection (1)—

(i) by the substitution of “Subject to subsection (2), in the case” for “In the case”, and

(ii) by the substitution of “section 70(b)(ii)” for “section 70(b)”, and”.

Amendment agreed to.

An Cathaoirleach: Amendments Nos. 27, 28 and 34 are related and may be discussed together, by agreement. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Government amendment No. 27:

In page 115, to delete line 10 and substitute the following:

“(ii) in paragraph (a)(i)—

(I) by the insertion of “where appropriate,” before “approve, approve subject to conditions”, and

(II) in clause (I), by the deletion of “basic”,.”.

Deputy Mary Butler: These amendments, which are technical in nature, do not arise from proceedings on Committee Stage. Sections 88 and 89 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007 set out the duties of the Irish Medical Council relating to education and training for medical qualifications. They require the Irish Medical Council to approve programmes of training and the bodies that deliver the training. However, although the Act is explicit that the council may refuse to approve a body as a body that may deliver undergraduate or postgraduate training programmes, the Act does not explicitly provide for the council to refuse to approve an individual training programme.

A similar matter arises in section 85 of the Nurses and Midwives Act with respect to the training of nurses and midwives. This is problematic for both regulators in that whereas they can attach conditions to a programme, they do not have the express power to refuse to approve a training programme that does not meet the required standard.

Both the Irish Medical Council and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland have identified this as a weakness in the respective Acts and, accordingly, these amendments give both regulators the express power to refuse to approve training programmes.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 28:

In page 115, between lines 18 and 19, to insert the following:

“Amendment of section 89 of Act of 2007

135. Section 89 of the Act of 2007 is amended, in subsection (3): by the substitution of the following paragraph for paragraph (b):

“(b) refuse to approve—

(i) a programme of specialist training in relation to that medical specialty, or

(ii) a body as a body which may grant evidence of the satisfactory completion of specialist training in relation to that medical specialty.”.”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 29:

In page 119, line 30, to delete “section 109” and substitute “section 111”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 30:

In page 119, line 31, to delete “**110.** (1) Where” and substitute “**112.** (1) Where.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 31:

In page 122, to delete lines 31 to 37 and substitute the following:

“ “(3A) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (2)(h), rules made under that subsection may provide that—

(a) the chairperson of the Preliminary Proceedings Committee, or such other member of that Committee who is authorised by the rules to do so, may establish, in accordance with the rules, a subcommittee referred to in subsection (2)(h)(i), or

(b) the chairperson of the Fitness to Practise Committee, or such other member of that Committee who is authorised by the rules to do so, may establish, in accordance with the rules, a subcommittee referred to in subsection (2)(h)(ii).”.”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 32:

In page 123, lines 16 to 18, to delete all words from and including “where” in line 16 down to and including “subcommittee” where it firstly occurs in line 18 and substitute the following:

“where a subcommittee of the Preliminary Proceedings Committee is established pursuant to rules made under section 13”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 33:

In page 123, lines 23 to 25, to delete all words from and including “where” in line 23 down to and including “subcommittee” where it firstly occurs in line 25 and substitute the following:

“where a subcommittee of the Fitness to Practise Committee is established pursuant to rules made under section 13”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 34:

In page 142, between lines 32 and 33, to insert the following:

“Amendment of section 85 of Act of 2011

178. Section 85 of the Act of 2011 is amended, in subsection (2)(a)(i), by the insertion of “where appropriate,” before “approve, approve subject to conditions”.

Amendment agreed to.

Government amendment No. 35:

In page 146, to delete lines 8 to 33, and in page 147, to delete lines 1 to 6.

Deputy Mary Butler: The Bill amends the Health Act 2004 to give the Minister for Health the power to designate the HSE as the competent authority to compare the equivalents of non-Irish qualifications to the qualifications it sets for certain health professions. These are professions which are not regulated on a statutory basis but are regulated for the purposes of EU Directive No. 2005/36/EC, the professional qualifications directive, for which the Minister is currently the competent authority. On Committee Stage in the Seanad, concerns were raised on behalf of the Environmental Health Association of Ireland regarding the HSE’s role as the competent authority for environmental health officers, EHOs, one of the professions for which it will assume that role if so designated. The then Minister for Health undertook to further review the situation before the Bill returned to the Seanad. I understand the Environmental Health Association of Ireland believes there would be a conflict of interest if the HSE acted as both employer and deciding body in regard to the recognition of qualifications. The association is also concerned about the appropriateness of the HSE acting as competent authority for EHOs when it is not their exclusive employer. Many EHOs are employed outside the health sector, for example, by local authorities.

As the then Minister for Health informed the House, the Department received advice from the Office of the Attorney General on how to prevent any potential conflict of interest arising in respect of the HSE undertaking the dual role of employer and competent authority. However, I acknowledge the legitimacy of the other concerns raised by the Environmental Health Association of Ireland, which will need to be reviewed and fully considered by officials. Until such time as they can be fully considered, the Minister is satisfied that it is appropriate and safe for the *status quo* to remain. It is therefore proposed to remove this provision.

Amendment agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

An Cathaoirleach: When is it proposed to take next Stage?

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: Now.

An Cathaoirleach: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Bill received for final consideration.

An Cathaoirleach: When is it proposed to take next Stage?

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: Now.

An Cathaoirleach: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Question proposed: "That the Bill do now pass."

An Cathaoirleach: I thank the Minister of State and congratulate her on her appointment. I know she will do a fantastic job. I thank her for coming to the House today and speaking on behalf of the Minister for Health.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: I would like to say a couple of words. It is great that this Bill has been passed. I would like to thank Opposition Members for their contributions, their suggestions and their amendments to the Bill as it passed through these Houses. I thank the Minister of State, Deputy Mary Butler, for her attendance here today. It is a difficult time for all of us but we know that everybody in the Department of Health is under particular pressure, so we appreciate the Minister of State's work.

Senator Ivana Bacik: I wish to join others in thanking the Minister of State for getting this Bill through at such a difficult time for all of us, particularly for those in the Department of Health and front-line healthcare workers. Although it is largely technical it is good to see this Bill passed. I am particularly pleased for pharmaceutical assistants to have the recognition that section 53 will provide.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: I wish to congratulate the Minister of State and wish the legislation well as it passes its next steps. I wish to echo the words of thanks and commendation for all those working in the Department, particularly those working on the front line of our healthcare services. It is a challenging time, but I know this Chamber stands ready to assist in all efforts to help the Department and all those working on the front line.

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Mary Butler): I wish to thank all the Senators here today for helping to progress this Bill. This Bill has been in train for quite a long time and I especially wish to thank the officials from the Department for all the work they have done on it. The purpose of this Bill is to improve the registration and fitness to practise processes of the health professional regulatory bodies and to amend the five health regulatory Acts to give further effect to the EU professional qualifications directive. This modernised directive provides mechanisms for the recognition of professional qualifications and the conveyance of disciplinary information within the European Union.

As we all know, we are in the midst of a pandemic. It is a very difficult time for all front-line staff, all the people in our country and especially all the families that have lost loved ones so this Bill is timely. As I said to Senator Bacik earlier, I will speak to the Minister on the part she is interested in and we will get it moved on as quickly as possible.

18 September 2020

It is my first time in this Chamber since the new Seanad was convened and I congratulate the Cathaoirleach on his election. I also congratulate Senator Joe O'Reilly on being elected Leas-Chathaoirleach of the Seanad today and I congratulate all new Members of this House. It is great to see the Dáil and the Seanad up and running and we can now get through the legislative work, which is so important. Gabhaim buíochas leis na Seanadóirí.

Question put and agreed to.

The Seanad adjourned at 2.10 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 23 September 2020.