

(Supplementary Order Paper)

60

DÁIL ÉIREANN

*Dé Máirt, 13 Samhain, 2007
Tuesday, 13th November, 2007*

2.30 p.m.

**GNÓ COMHALTAÍ PRÍOBHÁIDEACHA
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

Fógra i dtaobh leasú ar Thairiscint : Notice of Amendment to Motion

27. “That Dáil Éireann,

calls on the Government to radically modify the new proposed childcare subvention scheme that the Government intends to become fully operational from 1st July, 2008 as this scheme:

- will impose intolerable financial pressures on many parents by increasing the expense of childcare;
- will force some parents to leave employment and become dependent on social welfare payments;
- threatens to cause the closure of many not-for-profit crèches throughout the country;
- presently renders it impossible for such crèches to recruit new staff on a permanent basis; and
- undermines the prospects of returning to the workforce or the obtaining of essential training and education by parents presently working in the home who wish to resume employment;

and further calls on the Government to extend application of the existing subvention scheme up to 31st December, 2008 to end the current uncertainty.” — *Alan Shatter, Enda Kenny, Bernard Allen, James Bannon, Seán Barrett, Pat Breen, Richard Bruton, Ulick Burke, Catherine Byrne, Joe Carey, Deirdre Clune, Paul Connaughton, Noel J. Coonan, Simon Coveney, Seymour Crawford, Michael Creed, Lucinda Creighton, Michael D'Arcy, John Deasy, Jimmy Deenihan, Andrew Doyle, Bernard J. Durkan, Damien English, Olwyn Enright, Frank Feighan, Charles Flanagan, Terence Flanagan, Tom Hayes, Brian Hayes, Phil Hogan, Paul Kehoe, Pádraic McCormack, Shane McEntee, Dinny McGinley, Joe McHugh, Olivia Mitchell, Denis Naughten, Dan Neville, Michael Noonan, Kieran O'Donnell, Fergus O'Dowd, Jim O'Keeffe, John O'Mahony, John Perry, James Reilly, Michael Ring, Tom Sheahan, P. J. Sheehan, David Stanton, Billy Timmins, Leo Varadkar.*

Leasú:

Amendment:

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

“notes:

- the success of the Equal Opportunity Childcare Programme (EOCP) in establishing a

childcare infrastructure in Ireland from a very low base, creating over 35,000 childcare places, which support not just parents in accessing employment education and/or training, but also provide many young children with the benefit of early years education;

- the role within that Programme of the Staffing Scheme, which over 8 years provided a total of €174 million in supports for the running costs of community based not-for-profit services in disadvantaged areas;
- that the Staffing Scheme was originally awarded to such groups for a limited period, in order to allow them become self-sustaining where this was possible;
- that following this period, a number of such groups in very disadvantaged areas were awarded Staffing Continuation Funding to the end of the EOCP, to allow them continue to reduce the fees charged to disadvantaged parents. A condition of this funding was the development of tiered fees, to ensure that the benefit of the grant-aid went to the disadvantaged parents it was intended for. This also ensured that community services did not unfairly compete with private services for middle and higher income parents;
- that a Value for Money Review was conducted of the EOCP in 2006/2007, which consulted with all stakeholders, including community childcare providers, private childcare providers, parents, and Government Departments. While largely positive regarding the Scheme, it called for the current method of funding to be replaced with a less ad-hoc and more transparent system, which would more effectively target funding to disadvantaged groups. The Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSS) has been developed to provide this framework;
- that the Staffing Scheme will cost over €37 million in 2007, whereas €153 million has been secured for the CCSS over the 3 year period 2008-2010 starting with €47 million in 2008; and
- in addition to this targeted support for disadvantaged parents, universal support is available to all parents towards the cost of childcare through Child Benefit and the Early Childcare Supplement, and the latter alone costs over €400 million in a full year;

welcomes:

- that on the announcement of the new scheme in July 2007, it was also announced that the current level of funding to services would continue to July 2008, to allow the collection of data which would allow costing of improvements to the subventions under the scheme, and that a series of regional seminars were held where this was outlined to community childcare providers;
- that the large majority of groups have already returned this data, and the Office of the Minister for Children has started to collate and analyse it in order to advise the Government in regard to any changes or improvements which may be introduced, as promised last July;
- the initial analysis of this data suggests that, under the new scheme, even with no subvention, the price charged to non-disadvantaged parents will be significantly below the market price of childcare, largely as a result of capital grant-aid and the not-for-profit nature of the services in question;
- a number of services, which already had a strong focus on disadvantage and had implemented the tiered fee structure, have contacted the Office of the Minister for Children to say that, having got the information required from parents, they will now have an increased level of grant-aid from July 2008, regardless of any future improvements; and
- the recent re-iteration of the Minister for Children that this analysis will be completed

early in 2008, and that enhancements based on the data will be presented to Government well in advance of next July;

endorses:

- the Government’s approach to supplementing universal supports to all parents such as Child Benefit and Early Childcare Supplement, with additional supports to parents who would not otherwise be able to afford childcare and early years education for their children; and
- the steps taken to ensure that this targeted funding benefits the most disadvantaged of children, who would not otherwise have access to such services.” — *An tAire Sláinte agus Leanaí*.