

*(Supplementary Order Paper)*

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**DÁIL ÉIREANN**

*Dé Máirt, 12 Deireadh Fómhair, 2010  
Tuesday, 12th October, 2010*

2.30 p.m.

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**GNÓ COMHALTAÍ PRÍOBHÁIDEACHA  
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

*Fógra i dtaobh leasú ar Thairscint : Notice of Amendment to Motion*

75. “That Dáil Éireann, noting that:

- electricity prices increased by almost 5% from 1st October, 2010;
- there is a significant pressure from this electricity price increase on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) experiencing financial hardship and households dependent on low incomes;
- electricity disconnections have increased to an alarming level of approximately 2,500 every month;
- similarly gas disconnections have risen to 20 disconnections a day with approximately 90,000 customers experiencing debt difficulties;
- there is a changing demographic of those in fuel poverty as indicated by research that shows that approximately 60% of gas disconnections taking place are in owner occupied housing;
- €35 million in grant aid set aside for crucial insulation schemes in 2009 was handed back, unspent, to the Department of Finance;
- the cost of disconnections and reconnections as levied on the customer is prohibitive in many cases;
- the Minister for Finance stated that the revenue from the carbon tax would, in part, be used to alleviate fuel poverty yet he has failed to deliver on this promise;
- the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources has so far failed to enable the allocation of funding promised by the Electricity Regulation (Amendment) (Carbon Revenue Levy) Act 2010 to large energy users; and
- the Minister for Finance has failed to implement a vouched fuel allowance scheme, as promised in Budget 2010;

calls on the Government to:

- publish a fuel poverty strategy as a matter of urgency in view of the Programme for Government commitment that it would be ‘published by the end of 2009’;

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- adopt the Fuel Poverty and Energy Conservation Bill as published by the Labour Party in 2008;
- scrap the plan by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) to insist on the rebranding of Bord Gáis and ESB, which Bord Gáis alone, estimate will cost them €40 million, a cost to be borne by the consumer;
- direct the CER to implement a zero disconnection policy through the use of pre-payment meters and to develop an acceptable policy in relation to disconnection fees;
- implement a National Retrofit Programme as a matter of urgency, with payment plans which will ensure participation from all sections of society, not just those with disposable incomes and to ensure that all monies allocated are actually spent;
- ring-fence funds raised through the carbon tax to combat fuel poverty in line with commitments given by the Minister for Finance;
- consider extending the carbon revenue levy to SMEs;
- implement a vouched fuel allowance scheme to offset the financial pressures on low income households following the introduction of the carbon tax on 1st May, 2010, as promised by the Minister for Finance; and
- extend a National Retrofit Programme to public buildings, including schools and hospitals in order to bring unemployed construction workers into the workforce and enable apprentices to complete their apprenticeships, in line with Government commitments for 33% energy saving across the public sector by 2020.” — *Liz McManus, Eamon Gilmore, Joan Burton, Emmet Stagg, Joe Costello, Michael D. Higgins, Brendan Howlin, Ciarán Lynch, Kathleen Lynch, Brian O'Shea, Jan O'Sullivan, Willie Penrose, Ruairí Quinn, Pat Rabbitte, Seán Sherlock, Róisín Shortall, Joanna Tuffy, Mary Upton, Jack Wall.*

*Leasú*

*Amendment:*

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

“recognises that:

- Ireland faces particular challenges in terms of energy cost competitiveness, including significant dependence on volatile imported fossil fuels, particularly gas and a requirement for major investment in energy infrastructure, following two decades of under-investment;
- the implementation of Government policies, along with falling natural gas prices, has led to significant reductions in Irish electricity prices in recent years, bringing them closer to and in some cases below EU and Eurozone averages for both domestic and business consumers;
- Government policy to foster competition in energy markets is working, with multiple suppliers offering a range of products to all segments of the market and that significant discounts are available to households and businesses who simply switch their supplier;
- the Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy in place for this year accounts for the entirety of the rise in electricity prices from 1st October, 2010, that the Government has decided to cover the full cost of the levy for those households in receipt of the free electricity allowance and that a significant number of domestic and business customers could reduce their electricity bills and more than offset this cost by availing of reductions offered in the competitive electricity market or by engaging in Government supported energy efficiency programmes;
- improving energy efficiency has been widely agreed internationally as a key

mechanism to offset energy price rises, enhance security of supply and reduce greenhouse gas emissions;

- increasing the contribution of renewable energy in the Irish fuel mix is the best protection against further fossil fuel price rises;
- the Electricity Regulation (Amendment) (Carbon Revenue Levy) Act 2010 commenced on 1st July, 2010, that the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) and the Department have put in place the necessary administrative procedures and arrangements and that the CER has been administering the scheme since 1st October, 2010; and
- re-branding is a necessary part of deepening the EU internal market liberalisation process and enhancing competition in the national market, in the best interests of consumers;

commends the Government for:

- its comprehensive actions to deliver a secure, sustainable and competitive energy supply, including its commitment to increasing competition as the best means of exerting downward pressure on electricity prices in the long term, and improving the regulation of energy markets, with resultant benefits to consumers;
- its policy of enhancing security of supply and reducing our exposure to volatile international fuel prices through increased fuel diversity, with particular focus on indigenous and renewable resources;
- its continuing commitment to those most at risk of energy poverty, through the creation of a cohesive and coordinated approach to energy affordability issues overseen by the inter-Departmental/Agency Group on Affordable Energy;
- its commitment to produce a comprehensive Affordable Energy Strategy which will outline actions to protect vulnerable households with a view to ensuring that existing and future measures are targeted at households where the risk of energy poverty is greatest;
- its commitment to 340,000 fuel allowance recipients by providing over €231 million in 2009/2010 via the fuel allowance and smokeless fuel scheme as a contribution towards a person's home heating costs;
- its commitment to 380,000 Household Benefits Package recipients, which will cost in excess of €200 million in 2010;
- committing to domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency programmes including for social housing, including:
  - its continued commitment to the Warmer Homes Scheme, which has supported community-based organisations and private sector contractors to provide nearly 51,000 energy efficiency improvements in low-income households over the past nine years; This year alone will see energy efficiency expenditure near €30 million in vulnerable homes;
  - its commitment towards improving the quality of private housing for vulnerable groups through the provision of €80 million in 2010 for the operation of the housing adaptation grant schemes for older people and people with a disability; and
  - its commitment to providing incentives for domestic retrofits through the Home Energy Saving (HES) schemes, which was launched in March 2009 and since then has processed over 86,000 applications resulting in expenditure of over €48 million;

- its commitment to introducing a new national retrofit programme in 2011 on foot of the most recent consultation exercise which closed in mid-September 2010 and which aims to deliver energy efficiency upgrades to one million residential, public and commercial buildings in Ireland, involving energy supply companies, energy services providers, construction workers, energy auditors and policymakers;
- the provision of significant programme supports for all businesses, including an energy efficiency tax incentive under the Accelerated Capital Allowance scheme; Over 1,600 businesses have already availed of this programme, all of whom have identified immediate savings, typically greater than 10% of costs; Total business cost savings from the programme already total close to €60 million a year;
- the creation in June 2010 of an Energy Efficiency Fund, which supports exemplar energy efficiency projects in the public and commercial sectors; 43 projects have been approved to date which will deliver lifetime savings of over €70 million; and
- its comprehensive package of measures to mitigate energy costs for large energy users, including the taking of windfall gains from the electricity industry, the provision of rebates and the rebalancing of network charges.” — *An tAire Cumarsáide, Fuinnimh agus Acmhainní Náúrtha*.