

(Supplementary Order Paper)

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DÁIL ÉIREANN

*Dé Máirt, 25 Feabhra, 2014
Tuesday, 25th February, 2014*

2 p.m.

**GNÓ COMHALTAÍ PRÍOBHÁIDEACHA
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

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

135. “That Dáil Éireann:

recognises:

- that the post office network is a unique social, cultural and financial institution that is essential to our local communities and the country as a whole;
- the vital contribution the post office network makes to the Irish economy;
- the fact that the post office network employs over 3,000 people throughout Ireland;
- that the post office network is the backbone of both rural and urban communities;
- that, as they stand, the Department of Social Protection’s plans for the electronic transfer of social welfare payments poses a serious threat to the future of the post office network;
- that without the income derived from the Department of Social Protection and the National Treasury Management Agency’s contracts, the post office network will be destabilised in terms of its viability; and
- that it will directly cause a reduction in cash payments at post offices which will ultimately lead to many closures and job losses throughout the country;

acknowledges:

- the specific commitment in the Programme for Government to ensure the sustainability of the post office network;
- the party wide acknowledgement of all elected representatives that the network provides a vital national strategic asset;
- that the key to the continued sustainability of the post office network is that An Post be equipped, through the provision of a full banking infrastructure operated by An Post, that will enable the network to facilitate the Department of Social Protection strategy to move to e-payments; and
- that the 18 per cent of Irish people that are unbanked and the 23 per cent that are not online rely solely on the post office network’s services; and

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calls on the Government to:

- produce a comprehensive action plan, setting out the measures to deliver on their strategy, and commit to complete the action plan within three months of the date of this motion;
- instruct each Government Department to implement, through the post office network, the business identified in the Grant Thornton and Joint Committee on Transport and Communications reports to underpin the sustainability of the post office network;
- commit that all tenders involving over the counter transactions will be decided on the basis of both social and economic policy;
- commit to implementing a new banking service that will be available through the post office network and operated by An Post;
- commit to a once-off capital investment fund for the further modernisation of the post office network to enable the widespread provision of banking facilities in rural and disadvantaged areas; and
- commit to reporting on the progress made on the implementation of the plan within six months of its publication.” — *Seamus Healy, Maureen O'Sullivan, Catherine Murphy, Mick Wallace, John Halligan, Richard Boyd Barrett, Thomas Pringle, Joan Collins, Finian McGrath, Tom Fleming, Luke 'Ming' Flanagan, Clare Daly, Joe Higgins, Stephen S. Donnelly.*

Leasú:

Amendment:

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

“recognises:

- that the post office network is:
 - a unique social, cultural and financial institution that is essential to our local communities and the country as a whole; and
 - the largest retail network in Ireland (with 1,147 outlets nationwide) and employs over 3,000 people;
- the role of postmasters in delivering an important economic service to their communities; and
- the commitment in the Programme for Government to ensure the sustainability of the post office network and the party wide acknowledgement that the network provides a vital national strategic asset;

acknowledges:

- the continued and irreversible decline in the volume of mail (a 25 per cent reduction over the past five years);
- that the post office network is subject to competition law and the public service is subject to public procurement law;
- the challenges being experienced by the post office network especially in rural areas, given the changing face of the retail sector with the advancement of e-commerce and the digital economy;
- the suitability of the post office network for over-the-counter transactional business;
- the importance of such over-the-counter services in facilitating cash management by lower income households;
- the success of the post offices in winning significant new business volumes in recent

years, most particularly in the financial services and payment areas;

- the role of An Post, as a commercial State company, to provide a nationwide retail network of economically sustainable post offices and the operational responsibility of the company in this regard; and
- the input of the reports commissioned by the Irish Postmasters' Union as well as the Report of the Joint Committee on Transport and Communications on promoting opportunities regarding the future sustainability of the network;

endorses a whole-of-government consideration, encompassing central and local government and the wider public service, of the nature and extent of services that can be provided to the public using the post office network as a 'front office of government'; and

encourages all public sector stakeholders to achieve the objective of securing opportunities for new business and maintaining the post office network at the heart of national and local community life.” — *An tAire Cumarsáide, Fuinnimh agus Acmhainní Nádurtha*.