

(Supplementary Order Paper)

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DÁIL ÉIREANN

Dé Máirt, 15 Meán Fómhair, 2020
Tuesday, 15th September, 2020

1.30 p.m.

GNÓ COMHALTAÍ PRÍOBHÁIDEACHA
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Fógraí i dtaobh Leasuithe ar Thairiscint: Notice of Amendments to Motion

23. “That Dáil Éireann:

notes:

- that 19,636 Small Public Service Vehicles are registered with the National Transport Authority in 2020;
- the 3,059 taxis and hackneys which are wheelchair accessible, with many people relying on these daily;
- the very important service taxi drivers provide as part of the public transport system across Ireland;
- the selfless contribution that taxi drivers have made during the pandemic, with many working throughout, despite the dangers, ferrying nurses and doctors to hospitals to ensure they could continue to care for patients;
- the huge challenges faced by the drivers in the taxi industry as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic;
- the evidence given by taxi representatives to the Oireachtas Special Committee on Covid-19 Response;
- that 23 per cent of drivers in the industry are aged over 66 years and are excluded from the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment scheme;
- that 15 per cent of drivers in the industry are aged over 70 years, and while the public health advice was for these people to limit the number of close contacts they had, many were forced back to work early, due to the lack of State support;
- the taxi protest scheduled, which highlights the frustration expressed by drivers at the lack of support and assistance from the Government and the National Transport Authority during the current pandemic;
- that the recent media reports, which suggest taxis could be banned from bus lanes, have caused offence and concern in the industry at an already very challenging time; and
- the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles (Taxi Advisory

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Committee) has lost the confidence of many drivers; and

calls on the Government to:

- hold constructive engagements with taxi drivers and their representative groups to discuss the challenges faced by the industry and to listen to the constructive proposals brought forward;
- introduce a financial assistance package to help drivers to get back to work;
- introduce a temporary moratorium on the issuing of new taxi licences during the current pandemic;
- permit, for the length of the current pandemic, a two-year extension for vehicles which would normally have to be replaced as a result of the nine-year rule, provided such vehicles are safe and roadworthy;
- undertake a review of the current Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles (Taxi Advisory Committee); and
- establish a National Public Transport Forum and produce a long-term strategy for the future viability of the taxi industry here.” — *Darren O'Rourke, Chris Andrews, John Brady, Martin Browne, Pat Buckley, Matt Carthy, Sorca Clarke, Rose Conway-Walsh, Réada Cronin, Seán Crowe, David Cullinane, Pa Daly, Pearse Doherty, Paul Donnelly, Dessie Ellis, Mairéad Farrell, Kathleen Funchion, Thomas Gould, Johnny Guirke, Martin Kenny, Claire Kerrane, Pádraig Mac Lochlainn, Mary Lou McDonald, Denise Mitchell, Imelda Munster, Johnny Mythen, Eoin Ó Broin, Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire, Ruairí Ó Murchú, Louise O'Reilly, Aengus Ó Snodaigh, Maurice Quinlivan, Patricia Ryan, Brian Stanley, Pauline Tully, Mark Ward, Violet-Anne Wynne.*

Leasuithe:

Amendments:

1. (a) To insert the following after “due to the lack of State support;”:

- that while public health restrictions remain in place, particularly restrictions impacting international travel and tourism, work related travel, numbers going to concerts, theatres, festivals, entertainment and sports events, social gatherings, bars and nightclubs, there simply is not a sustainable living available for the current fleet of taxi drivers;
- that taxi drivers are now faced with an impossible dilemma of remaining on the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP), due to be reduced, and returning to work when a sustainable income is not available and where taking up work will result in the loss of the PUP payment;
- that taxi drivers, whether working or on the PUP with severely reduced incomes, continue to have on-going costs such as licence renewal fees, National Car Test (NCT) fees, car repayments, fuel and maintenance costs, and insurance - costs which one recent report estimated at above €11,000 per year;”

(b) To insert the following after “introduce a financial package to help taxi drivers get back to work”:

“, which will include:

- a step-down income subsidy allowing taxi drivers to retain a payment equivalent to the PUP and earn additional income above that amount without losing the payment until the industry recovers;
- access to grants for taxi drivers to assist with on-going work-related costs; and

— a waiver on licence renewal fees until pandemic restrictions impacting the industry cease;”

and

(c) To insert the following after “moratorium on the issuing of new taxi licences during the current pandemic;”:

“— introduce a taxi licence buy back scheme for drivers wishing to exit the industry;” — *Richard Boyd Barrett, Gino Kenny, Paul Murphy, Bríd Smith, Mick Barry.*

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

“notes:

- that 19,638 Small Public Service Vehicles (SPSV) are registered with the National Transport Authority (NTA) in 2020;
- the 3,059 taxis and hackneys which are wheelchair accessible, with many people relying on these daily;
- the very important services taxi, hackney, local area hackney, and limousine drivers provide as part of the public transport system across Ireland;
- the important contribution that SPSV drivers have made during the pandemic, with many working throughout to provide important transport services, including transport services for the Health Service Executive (HSE);
- the huge challenges faced by the drivers in the SPSV industry as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic;
- the evidence given by taxi representatives to the Oireachtas Special Committee on Covid-19 Response;
- that 15 per cent of drivers in the industry are aged over 66 years and are not covered by the Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) scheme and instead can avail of other social welfare payments such as the State Pension;
- that 9 per cent of drivers in the industry are aged 70 years and over, and that the fall in passenger demand for SPSV services occasioned by Covid-19 means that many drivers, in this cohort in particular, may decide not to return to work within the industry;
- the important role of the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles (Taxi Advisory Committee), which has played a crucial role in advising the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport and the NTA with proposals to support the SPSV industry through this uncertain time, particularly since the Minister invited proposals from the Committee to support the recovery of the SPSV industry in June 2020;
- the measures taken by the NTA immediately after the start of the pandemic, in March 2020, to assist SPSV drivers, including an extension of licence validity for licences expiring between 13th March and 12th June, 2020 and the publication of information and guidelines to assist SPSV operators;
- the further measures taken by the NTA to reduce the costs faced by SPSV operators such as waiving late licence renewal fees through to March 2021, extending vehicle age limits for SPSV licences renewed between March and December 2020, and facilitating, in conjunction with the insurance industry, the suspension of insurance for those operators who stop working temporarily;

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- the availability of the PUP, introduced in March, to self-employed SPSV operators, many of whom have availed of the payment when passenger demand for SPSV services fell significantly due to Covid-19; and
- the measures available to self-employed SPSV operators under the Government’s July Stimulus Plan, including the Covid-19 Enterprise Support Grant, the Covid-19 Business Loan Scheme, the Covid-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme, and income tax relief measures for self-employed individuals who were profitable in 2019 but loss-making in 2020 as a result of the present pandemic; and

acknowledges the Government’s commitment to:

- continue its constructive engagement and dialogue with the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles (Taxi Advisory Committee) and SPSV representative groups to understand fully the issues facing the sector and, to the extent possible, identify measures to support SPSV operators returning to work and the future sustainability of the industry beyond the present pandemic;
- fill vacancies that have arisen on the Advisory Committee on Small Public Service Vehicles and, insofar as is practicable, ensure a balanced representation of taxi, hackney and limousine drivers from both urban and rural areas;
- continue to ensure that self-employed SPSV operators are able to avail of current and forthcoming financial support measures to the greatest extent possible; and
- keep the question of age limits for SPSVs under review, noting that they have been extended for SPSVs due for renewal for the remainder of 2020.” — *An tAire Iompair, Turasóireachta agus Spóirt.*