



APM News in Brief 2018 June 2018

Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, Drumcondra House, DCU All Hallows Campus, Grace Park Road, Drumcondra, Dublin D09 N920 Tel: 01 7008431

The Annual Parliament Meeting 2018 took place in the Liberty Hall Theatre & Conference Centre on Tuesday & Wednesday 15th & 16th May.

The following Officers and Executive Committee were elected to serve for the coming year

President: John Walsh
Vice-President: David McManus
Hon. Secretary: Evelyn Moran
Treasurer: Imelda Browne
Trustees: John Tierney, John J. McLoughlin

Executive Committee Members:

Padraic Browne, Margaret Cooney, Larry Duggan, Tom Flynn, Ray Flynn, Patrick Morgan, Seamus Murray, Tommy Nolan, Margaret Nordell, Manus O'Donnell, Paddy Philpott, Seamus Rodgers, Paul Walsh.

Standing Orders Report

Michael Cullen Chair of Standing Orders Committee moved the adoption of the SOC report.

Delegates attended a dinner and social evening on Tuesday night which was enjoyed by all.

APM 2018 - Motions

The following motions were passed at APM 2018:

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

❖ **Prescription Charges** We have been campaigning for some years for all prescription charges to be abolished. So again we call on the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament to ask this Government to listen to our request. While reduction of 50 cents in 2017 was a step in the right direction, now is the time to implement the total abolition of charges.

❖ **Eligibility for Medical Cards** Small increase in Social Welfare payments can result in a situation whereby some older people find that they are over the threshold for a benefit, in particular for medical cards. We propose that the Executive seek from government an agreement that the increases in such benefits should be disregarded in the assessment for medical cards.

❖ **Ambulance Service** This Conference requests the Executive to obtain from this Government an undertaking that the Ambulance Service be made fit for purpose. It is totally unacceptable that lives have been lost while waiting for an Ambulance. While in urban areas there is a better chance to avail of a fair service, in rural areas it is a bit of a lottery.

❖ **Activity Charges in Nursing Homes** This Conference instructs the Executive Committee to seek from Government a commitment to ensure that Older People who have, through no fault of their own, to live out the rest of their lives in Nursing Homes are not forced to pay for activities that they either cannot due to ill health or do not wish to participate in. Given that 80% of their Social Welfare pension is already taken from them, it is unjust that they can be deprived of the little money they have left.

Because of the collapse of the economy it is only in the last couple of budgets that Social Welfare pensions have increased. Of the latest €5 increase, 80% or €4 is taken as part of the subvention which leaves €1 out of which activity payments have to be paid. Where's the justice in that.

❖ **Hospital Parking** We propose the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament continue to monitor the government's investigation into the spiralling costs of hospital parking and no availability of passes for relatives of long stay patients in all our hospitals nationwide.

❖ **Medical Card for the Over 80's** All people aged over 80 should be entitled to the Medical Card, particularly those who live alone and we call on the Parliament to advocate with government to achieve this.

❖ **Nurse Led Community Health Services** We call on the Government to strengthen Community Health Services in order to support the ever growing ageing population on discharge from Hospital. This should be a Nurse led service with access to Physiotherapy and all other relevant care services. The future dependency of the older person can be affected positively or negatively by the help available on the initial discharge from Hospital. There must be major changes

deductions to individuals were made and to commence the process of restoration of these levies to the individuals. Further we seek the repeal of all ACTS/ Statutory Instruments or any similar or existing legislation that would allow government to ever again raid pension funds from serving and retired members.

- ❖ **Interim Pension Scheme** We call on the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament to lobby Government to introduce an interim pension scheme, to facilitate workers that are contractually bound to retire pre the now Pension age.
- ❖ **Road Map for Pensions Reform** We call on Parliament to review and respond to the Government's proposed Road Map for Pensions reform 2018 to 2023

MINISTER FOR HEALTH FOR OLDER PEOPLE

- ❖ **National Positive Ageing Strategy** Census 2016 and subsequent statistics confirm that we are all living longer. This is a democratic bounty to be lauded and cherished. Instead Older People are portrayed as a burden and a cost.

We need to start planning for full lives for all in our country. We need to implement the National Positive Ageing Strategy as a strategy for all across the lifecycles. All citizens are ageing from moment of birth.

A lot of work has been done on exercise and healthy living, however genes and inherited conditions as well as timely health interventions and good living conditions are also vitally important. We see no evidence of any overall approach across government to ensure that that all persons in this State will have a life which could be termed a Positive Ageing Experience.

We call on the Minister for State to begin a positive engagement with which all citizens can engage

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

- ❖ **Feed Back from APM Motions** We seek feedback on the motions put forward at the APM
- ❖ **Review of Irish Senior Citizens Parliament** Looking to the future when, finances, adequate personnel and time permits that the ISCP undertakes a total review of its rules, branding, image and formulate a plan to deal with all such matters with a specified timeframe from commencement to finalisation.

- ❖ **What happens to the motions that are passed at the APM?**

Answer they form part of our work programme together with our other objectives and planned programmes. Those that are relevant to **Budget 2019** together with the analysis of the Budget Questionnaires will be considered by the Executive Committee for inclusion as part our **ASKS in Budget 2019**. Please make sure to return the Budget Questionnaires to have your input. Motions involving issues or actions relevant to all aspects of Government or to individual Government Departments of Government are referred to the relevant Ministers for action. A report is produced and regularly updated on the actions and progress of the Motions.

Consultation on PENSIONS

On 28th February 2018, Government announced major changes to pensions in Ireland and reform of future State, Private and Public Service pension provision.

The document launched entitled **"The Road Map for Pensions Reform 2018-2023"**.

At the launch the Taoiseach confirmed the Government's key goals are to "create a fairer and simpler contributory pensions system where a person's pension reflects their social insurance contributions and in parallel, create a new and necessary culture of personal retirement savings in Ireland"

The **Road Map** will provide for fundamental reform of the Irish Pensions system through the following 6 strands

1. **Strand 1 – Reform of the State Pension including the Total Contribution Approach**
2. **Strand 2 – A new Automatic Enrolment Retirement Savings System**
3. **Strand 3 – Improving Governance and Regulation including EU IORPS II Directive**
4. **Strand 4 – Measures to Support Defined Benefit Scheme Sustainability**
5. **Strand 5 – Public Service Pension Reform**
6. **Strand 6 - Supporting Fuller Working Lives**

Strand 1 was to be dealt with first through a consultation in Quarter 2 of 2018 on both Total Contributions and Automatic Enrolment. The **Consultation on the Total Contributions Approach** has now been launched and the closing date for

in the delivery of care to give confidence to the older patient to return to their own home and to prevent dependency and the need for long term care.

DEPARTMENT EMPLOYMENT & SOCIAL PROTECTION

- ❖ **Optical and Dental Benefit** We call on this Parliament to make representations to the Government to provide Optical, Dental and Oral Treatment to all Old Age Pensioners
- ❖ **Dependent Spouse** We deplore the fact that the Dependents Spouses increase was only €4.50 instead of the €5 given to all other pension groups and we call for the Parliament to advocate for an across the board increase.
- ❖ **Fuel Allowance** We call on the Parliament to make representation to Government to increase the Fuel Allowance and revert back to the maximum number of weeks.
- ❖ **Reversal of Cuts on Senior Citizens** That the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament calls on Government to reverse the cuts imposed on Senior Citizens over a number of years e.g. Telephone Allowance; Death Grant; Prescription Charges, Christmas Bonus. These are but some of the charges that have created severe hardship for Older People. Therefore, serious consideration should be taken to reverse all of the cuts.
- ❖ **Cap Pensionable Age** While disagreeing with any changes being made in the present pensionable age, we call on the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament to lobby Government to cap Pensions at 68.

DEPARTMENT OF AN TAOISEACH

- ❖ **Right of Audience for Citizens in all aspects of their lives** On a daily basis we are presented with examples, within this Republic, where people are unable to vindicate their rights. They are denied access to any system of justice or redress because they do not have the deep pockets of the very wealthy and the State. We therefore ask this APM to empower the incoming Executive Committee to ask government to immediately set in train a process which will provide redress and assistance for citizens to achieve justice and access services across all aspects of their lives so that all citizens are equal and that justice is not just for the very wealthy.

In recent weeks we have seen the might of the State and its legal system used against vulnerable sick people.

We are aware that this is happening in respect of pensioners and their incomes. The time is now to stop the "Might is Right" (of those with deep pockets) and initiate and develop a process which allows access to systems and process already in place to vindicate their rights.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

- ❖ **Universal Social Charge** As the country is on the up and up we ask why we are still paying Universal Social Charges and that the ISCP advocate on this matter.
- ❖ **Property Tax** That the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament calls on the Government to allow for a waiver on Property Tax for Older People who cannot afford to pay and bearing in mind they now have additional charges imposed on them by way of Prescription Charges and increased Refuse Charges etc.
- ❖ **Pensions levy** This APM calls for the Incoming Executive Committee to seek the restoration of the financial reduction imposed by the Minister for Finance on the total value of the private pension funds during the austerity period. It was believed that this levy amounted to 4Bn Euro and represented approximately 0.7% of the combined total funds of the bodies involved and would be paid out of the surplus of the funds being managed by the administrators. In practice the Fund Managers deducted the amount of the levy from the sum allocated to pay the pensioners, as a result of which the pensioners had a reduction in their actual pensions imposed on them individually for the rest of their lives. This is unacceptable.
- ❖ **Pensions Levy** The pensions levy was imposed on all funds held for pension purposes whether pensions in payment or funds for future pensioners. Some schemes paid the levy with no recourse to either serving members or to pensioners. Many will carry the levy reduction for the rest of their lives as:
 - a) Either a reduction in a pension in payment,
 - or
 - b) A reduction in the amount of the scheme funds applicable to the individual
 We ask the incoming Executive Committee to seek a review of all schemes where

submissions and observations is 3rd September 2018. There is a survey available online at www.welfare.ie/consultations. Also hard copy can be posted to: **TCA Consultations, Dept of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Pensions Policy Unit, Arus Mhic Dhiarmada, Store Street Dublin 1**

2012 Rate Bands Issues Most of you will be aware of the fact that there were issues arising from the changes to State pensions in 2012. On 23rd January 2018 the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) published a report-

Policy Options Report on 2012 Rate Bands Issues with the State Pensions Contributory.

The report examines the issues and options in the context of the 2012 changes and the debate following BUDGET 2018. The authors state that having examined a number of options to address the issues arising and as part of a solution decided

Quotes from report as follows

- "that the most effective of the options considered is to allow those pensioners currently qualifying under the post-rate bands to opt-in early to the Total Contributions Scheme in advance of such a scheme being introduced for the population at large".
- It is proposed payments under the scheme for such pensioners will be processed from Quarter 1 of January 2019 and backdated to 30 March 2018 (i.e. same date that Budget 2018 changes took effect)
- The Total Contributions Approach will provide for significant Homemaking Credit provisions (not limited to periods from 1994 as under the current scheme) This option targets the benefit to those who had periods caring for children (or for others with a care need), without undermining the contributory nature of pensions scheme.

Key features are as follows

- Pensioners will receive a payment proportionate to their total contributions with a maximum payment of 40 year's contributions

- Home Makers / Carers credits will be available up to 20 years
- The scheme will address the anomaly whereby people with a low number of contributions paid early in life followed by a break for caring will not be disadvantaged.
- It has been referred to as the '20 +10 + 10' (20 years' caring + 10 years' credit + 10 years' contributions).

HOME CARE CONSULTATION

In 2017 there was a consultation on Home Care Provision, an area which is of vital concern to older people. One area of particular interest is the plan to put the Provision of Home Care on a Statutory Basis. Following our very well attended special meeting held on 26th September 2017 to discuss we participated in the consultation process.

A Report on the consultation is expected to be published by end of June 2018.

The main issues of concern to our members were:

- preference of homecare option if needed.
- homecare to provide nursing, personal care, physio therapy, occupational therapy and household tasks.
- preference to be able to choose who provides care i.e. HSE or Not-for-profit providers.
- option to receive direct payments and source service themselves.
- state should be principally responsible for providing homecare for older people
- overall funding for care of older people should come from general taxation.

TRAVEL PASS

It must be budget time again as someone is raising issues about the Travel Pass. Make your views known to all your local representatives on this vital issue for all older people, people with disabilities and many others.

IRISH SENIOR CITIZENS PARLIAMENT ANNUAL RAFFLE 2018

Tickets are available for our Raffle. Tickets are €2 each or a book of 3 tickets for €5. The Raffle will be held on Tuesday 23rd October 2018.

Please support the efforts of our Fundraising Committee.