Sinn Féin

MONEY IN YOUR POCKET

SINN FÉIN PROPOSALS ELECTION 2020

JANUARY 2020

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TACKLING THE INSURANCE RIP-OFF AND REFORMING THE SECTOR

Insurance costs are squeezing incomes and crippling businesses. Across the state, businesses and childcare providers face the threat of closure because of a broken insurance market. Motorists, for whom insurance is a legal requirement, are facing extortionate premiums that are hitting their pay packets. The insurance industry must be challenged and the sector fundamentally reformed.

A recent Central Bank report found that, despite the cost of claims reducing by 2% in the past decade, the average motor premium has gone up by 42%.

For years, the insurance industry has pursued an aggressive campaign to portray sky-high premiums as the result of bogus claims and fraud. Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil have served the industry by peddling their spin.

Sinn Féin have been instrumental in holding the insurance industry to account for ripping off consumers to serve their own profits. Our Consumer Insurance Contracts Bill became law at the end of 2019, increasing protections for consumers and shifting the balance of power in their favour. We also won the agreement of the Central Bank to investigate dual pricing by the insurance industry.

Fine Gael have failed to protect consumers and to tackle the pricing practices of insurance companies. We will drive radical reform of the insurance market, banning unfair pricing practices, increasing consumer protections and intervening in a broken insurance market.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- **Establishing a stand-alone Garda Insurance Fraud Unit made up of a dedicated team of detectives, garda staff and financial investigators. This unit will be funded with reserves built up by the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB).**
- **Introducing legislation to ban unfair pricing in the insurance market. Insurance companies are using big data to target loyal customers and vulnerable groups with artificially high premiums. We will end price discrimination in the insurance market.**
- **Enforcing all parts of our Consumer Insurance Contracts Bill, which became law at the end of 2019. This legislation increases transparency and shifts the balance of power away from insurance companies and in favour of consumers in their insurance contracts.**
- **Putting €230 million back in the pockets of policyholders by abolishing levies paid on non-life insurance policies, reducing premiums for consumers by 5%. We will ensure that our reforms of the insurance market are followed by lower insurance costs for consumers.**
- **Increasing transparency in the market by forcing companies to show how they set their prices to the Central Bank and extending the National Information Claims Database to public and employer liability.**
- **Delivering certainty around the cost of claims by funding the Judicial Council as it establishes personal injury guidelines for the courts and by strengthening the role of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board.**
- **Intervening in a broken insurance market and providing stability to our small business and community/voluntary sector. Our policy proposal to transform childcare into a public service will guarantee insurance cover for childcare providers under Irish Public Bodies, just like our schools and hospitals.**

GIVING WORKERS AND FAMILIES A BREAK THROUGH FAIR TAXATION

Public services and affordable housing are the building blocks of a fair society.

Badly run and poorly funded public services are failing too many families and communities. Workers and families are feeling the strain of unaffordable costs. With the high cost of living, many are unable to look ahead or plan for the future.

The provision of housing, universal access to healthcare, and investment in our communities must be funded through a taxation system that is fair, sustainable, and just. How we tax should reflect the society we want to build.

We will ensure that all workers will receive a tax cut, while only the top 3% of individual earners will see any increase in their net income tax and guarantee no increase in VAT which hits those on low and middle incomes hardest.

Sinn Féin will give workers a break by making our tax system work for them, and put money back in their pockets in the face of rising costs. We will protect our public finances and increase funding for our frontline public services by broadening the tax base and making sure those who benefit most from our economy pay their fair share.

SINN FÉIN'S PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- **Making all income below €30,000 exempt from USC, benefitting all workers. This will mean no USC is paid on the first €30,000 you earn.**
- **Abolishing the Local Property Tax (LPT), replacing it with direct Exchequer funding for local authorities. The LPT hits low and middle incomes and, for many, acts as a tax on debt as they struggle with negative equity or high mortgage interest payments.**
- **Increasing the Earned Income Credit for the Self-Employed to €1,650, a promise Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil failed to keep. Together with making the first €30,000 earned exempt from USC, we will lift the tax burden on self-employed workers on modest incomes.**

OLDER PEOPLE AND THEIR PENSIONS

Sinn Féin believes that everyone has the right to grow old in Ireland with dignity, security, and equality. The reality for many of our older citizens, under Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil they now face additional taxes and charges, they cannot rely on the health service, and they struggle daily to heat their homes and meet their bills.

At the heart of pensions should be fairness and equality for all. Under Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, this has been missing and as a result, serious problems have emerged for people at retirement.

In 2011, the Labour Party and Fine Gael government introduced the legislation to increase the pension age – it increased to 66 in 2014 and will rise to 67 in 2021 and 68 in 2028. Fianna Fáil supported this legislation and voted for it at report stage. Sinn Féin opposed it.

Prior to that, Fianna Fáil and the Green Party in government in 2010 proposed the pension age increases. They included it in their Memorandum of Understanding with the Troika. Fianna Fáil also had it in their National Recovery Plan 2011 when they said that they would introduce legislation to give effect to the increases.

These pension age increases would mean Ireland having the fastest and furthest rising pension age in the EU. In fact, only two other EU countries plan to increase their pension age to 68 years – the Czech Republic after 2054 and the U.K sometime between 2044-2046.

In 2016, Sinn Féin brought forward a Dáil motion calling for the immediate reinstatement of the State Pension Transition for those who retire at 65. However, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael failed to back this motion, and instead voted against it.

We now have the farcical situation where a person who retires at 65 years, when they are typically contractually obliged to retire, cannot access their State Pension. Instead, they are forced onto a jobseeker's payment for the year.

Sinn Féin have consistently called on the Government to re-instate the State Pension (Transition) for 65-year olds and suspend the planned further increases to the State Pension age.

The impact of putting people on the dole instead of receiving their State Pension is a loss of €45.30 a week for a single person - €2,340 a year and a loss of €76 a week for a couple - €3,952 a year. (The State Pension is €248.30 whereas jobseeker's payment is €203 per week).

Sinn Féin also brought forward a Bill in the Dáil to end mandatory retirement where workers wish to remain at work beyond 65 years. In Government, we would progress this Bill and make it law.

SINN FÉIN'S PRIORITIES INCLUDE:

- **Protect the Free Travel Pass and increase the State pension rate by €20 over the term of a government.**
- **End mandatory retirement to allow workers who are able to and wish to remain at work beyond 65 years to do so if they so choose.**
- **Stop the planned pension age increase to 67 and reintroduce the State Pension for 65 year olds who choose to retire.**

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