

Finneran calls for FG re-think on jobs

Minister for Housing and Local Services Michael Finneran TD has challenged local Fine Gael representatives to explain why the author of their party's jobs strategy has called on the IDA to prioritise Dublin and Cork for all new foreign direct investment.

Minister Finneran has called on Fine Gael to re-think its position after frontbench spokesperson, Deputy Simon Coveney, said the IDA must review its policy of prioritising the location of foreign direct investment in the regions. Deputy Coveney, who is the main author of the Fine Gael jobs plan New Era, said that the IDA priority should be to attract foreign direct investment to Ireland's major hubs of Cork and Dublin.

Speaking on May 18th, Simon Coveney TD said, "I'm calling on the IDA to review their policy of prioritising the locating of foreign direct investment in regions outside of Cork and Dublin. Clearly now the Cork region needs to have high priority status in any IDA strategy to bring multi nationals to Ireland."

Minister Finneran said, "I am calling on Fine Gael to seriously reconsider its position on job creation and the attraction of foreign direct investment to the regions.

If this policy were to be implemented, it would be a devastating blow to Roscommon, Leitrim and the West of Ireland.

"Fianna Fáil in Government has made considerable strides in orientating enterprise policy towards a more balanced regional approach and as a result the IDA's strategy for the next decade, Horizon 2020, commits IDA to ensuring that at least 50% of its new investments are in the regions. This was a considerable achievement and statement of policy priority.

"For Fine Gael to suggest that we now undo that work and let IDA focus solely on our two big cities would be a serious backwards step for balanced regional development.

"Rural Ireland has as much of a right to the chance of securing new investment and new jobs as the people of Dublin and Cork. Are we to believe from Deputy Coveney that this is what Fine Gael is referring to what it talks about its 'jobs plan'?

"I am calling on Fine Gael representatives in Roscommon and Leitrim to distance themselves from Deputy Coveney's comments," concluded Minister Michael Finneran TD.



TOP: Bishop Christopher Jones unveils a plaque at Tusk NS last week. Also in picture are: Minister Michael Finneran, Fr. Austin McKeon, Deputy Denis Naughten, Kieran Moylan, Deputy Frank Feighan, Darragh Kelly, Joan Higgins, principal NS; Cllr. Sean Beirne and Josie Lenihan.



BOTTOM: James Brady and Aisling Conroy make a presentation to Bishop Christopher Jones at the opening and blessing of Tusk National School.

NAMA fees would save hospitals - SF

A tiny fraction of the budget set aside for consultancy fees in NAMA would make a huge difference to the likes of Ballinasloe and Roscommon Hospitals, according to Sinn Féin.

In a scathing attack on Government policy over the possible closure or downgrading of hospital services in the region, Sinn Féin councillors have highlighted that the annual budget for professional advisors to NAMA for accountants, solicitors, tax consultants etc. is €240 million. Over the lifespan of NAMA the total spend on these advisors is budgeted to exceed €2.4 billion.

Cllr. Martin Kenny has described the fees as outrageous and typical of the government's contempt for the people and its ailing health service. "The amounts of money set aside for so-called advisors is nothing short of scandalous.

"Just think of what a fraction of that money could do for the Plunkett Home or Roscommon Hospital," he stated.

He highlighted the same issue in the context of Portiuncula Hospital. "I understand that Portiuncula Hospital is being asked to reduce its costs by almost €12m a year or nearly a million a month. When you see this in the context of a €240m annual budget for NAMA consultants it makes me sick."



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