Cost Of Living

Supporting Families, Reforming Taxation and Supporting Businesses

INDEPENDENT IRELAND

Cost of Living

The cost-of-living crisis is caused by two things: economic factors outside the Government's control, such as inflation; and factors within the Government's control, such as taxation. When pressed on how it will handle this crisis, the Government frequently points to things outside its control to absolve itself from responsibility.

The Government has ignored those factors within its control, because taking appropriate action can cause a short-term drop in popularity, even if it results in the country's long-term success. Independent Ireland is more interested in long-term success than popularity, and proposes we:

Reducing Taxes, Rewarding Hard Work, Cutting Energy Costs

- Abolish USC & PRSI contributions for pension-aged people who continue to work;
- Increase tax relief for those contributing to private pensions;
- Freeze all "green taxes" – review the effectiveness of the stated purpose and adjust accordingly. If they are not serving their stated purpose of reducing carbon impact, they are simply taxes, not green taxes;
- Reduce middle-class taxes by ensuring no one earning less than €50,000 per annum is affected by the highest marginal rate of taxation;
- Reduce VAT to nine percent for and tourism and hospitality, excluding accommodation;
- Equalise VAT at nine percent for restaurants and pubs to prevent two-tier taxation;
- Reform outdated VAT thresholds to promote and protect small business;
- Reduce taxation on overtime to fill staffing shortages and reward hard work;

Reducing Costs, Supporting Communities, and Controlling Government Spending

- Financially support community employment schemes (e.g. CSP, RSS, CE, TUS, HSC etc.);
- Expand prescription drug payment scheme;
- Expand public transport commuter scheme;
- Increase funding for early childcare to reduce childcare costs;
- Review and reform spending in NGO sector to reduce government waste; reward NGOs that provide valuable services and value for money and cut funding to those that do not;

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Improved Services and Support for Communities

- Enable An Post to deliver a full suite of banking services in rural Ireland by creating a new commercial bank in conjunction with credit unions;
- Restore employment opportunities and enhance investment in areas where jobs have been lost in Bord na Móna and ESB;
  - Create a new strategic investment zone for Just Transition Areas to accelerate planning and improve employment opportunities in those areas
- Introduce measures to facilitate community groups of standing with access to up-front funding;
  - The huge personal commitment of volunteers to community development programmes must be recognised. Matching funding and bridging funding are substantial barriers for voluntary groups who wish to draw down grant aid;

Helping Students and Young People

- Encourage skilled Irish workers to return to Ireland from abroad (builders, teachers, doctors, nurses, et al.) by providing tax relief for five years to returnees via the Special Assignee Relief Program (SARP);
- Reduce fees for repeat mandatory state requirements, such as driver theory tests, driving tests, and driving licenses;
- Amend means tests for educational grants for third-level education to take pressure off the middle class, who are disproportionately burdened by education costs;
- Create a low-interest, government-backed student loan scheme available to all secondary school graduates;

Supporting Front Line Workers
- Subsidise the rental of state-owned accommodation for front-line workers (nurses, junior doctors, teachers, gardaí, members of defence forces and fire brigade, etc.) on low wages for a period of up to five years following entry to service;
  - Extended to Gardaí who are relocated for up to 24 months following relocation;
- Introduce "locality pay" for civil and public servants, to attract skilled civil servants in higher-cost urban settings.