

# THE ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Chief Electoral Officer: Douglas Bain CBE TD Advocate

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**WEDNESDAY 16 JANUARY 2008**

## **ELECTORAL OFFICE POINTS THE WAY ON THE REGISTRATION PROCESS**

The Chief Electoral Officer Douglas Bain today met with The Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The aim of the meeting was to brief the Committee on the electoral registration process in Northern Ireland. The process here is widely recognised as being by far the best in the United Kingdom. During the briefing the Chief Electoral Officer shared with the Committee the best good practice and experience gained in recent years which now makes the Northern Ireland registration arrangements the most modern in these islands. This information will inform the Joint Committee as it develops its report on electoral registration in the Republic of Ireland.

Welcoming the members of the Committee Douglas Bain, the Chief Electoral Officer said –

**“I am delighted to welcome the Joint Committee to Belfast and to share with them the significant changes that have been made to the electoral registration process in Northern Ireland. As a result of these changes registrations have increased significantly in the past year and our register is by far the most accurate in the UK. I am sure it will not be a one way process. As the Chief Electoral Officer I am always on the look out for new and better ways of doing things to make the registration process even easier for the public whilst still ensuring that it remains free from abuse.”**

Responding, Sean Fleming TD, Chairman of the Committee said –

**“We are delighted that the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland has agreed to meet with our delegation and share with us some of its expert knowledge in relation to compiling and maintaining the voters’ register.**

**This has been a major problem south of the border and we are looking forward to learning from the experience of the Electoral Office here.”**

### Notes to Editors

1. The Joint Committee has members drawn from both Chambers of the Oireachtas. Those present were Sean Fleming TD (FF), Ciaran Lynch TD (LAB), Michael Fitzpatrick TD (FF), Senator Paudi Coffey (FG), Christy O’Sullivan TD (FF), James Bannon TD (FG) and Senator Camillus Glynn (FF).
2. The Committee is compiling a report on the future of electoral registration in the Republic of Ireland which it is intended to publish over the coming weeks.
3. Electoral registration has been a matter of concern in the Republic in recent times.
4. The Northern Ireland registration arrangements are the most modern in these islands and have been identified as a suitable model in both the Committee on Standards in Public Life Report on the Electoral Commission and the Gould report on the Scottish elections in 2007.
5. Major differences between Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions include –
  - ◆ Individual rather than household registration
  - ◆ Annual canvass replaced by continuous registration
  - ◆ Robust counter fraud measures
  - ◆ An independent Chief Electoral Officer overseeing the processes.
6. The Northern Ireland electoral register published in December 2007 showed an increase of nearly 51,000 in the number of people registered compared with 2006. That register was, without doubt, the most accurate in the United Kingdom.