

Responsible leadership and the right choices for our country

A message from
An Taoiseach Brian Cowen TD

I am grateful for this timely opportunity to set out some of Fianna Fáil's priorities for the period ahead. We are now entering into a challenging phase in our country's development and, as always, Fianna Fáil will seek to provide responsible leadership and make the right choices for our country.

We have to contend with an increasingly difficult domestic and international economic environment as well as the outcome of the recent referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. These are just some of the many important items on our agenda. Our party will face these challenges in a constructive and patriotic manner.

On the day I was elected Leader of Fianna Fáil I quoted the inspirational words of my great predecessor, Seán Lemass. He said: *"Personally, I believe that national progress of any kind depends on an upsurge of patriotism - a revival of patriotism if you will, directed towards constructive purposes. Patriotism, as I understand it, is a combination of love of country, pride in its history, traditions and culture, and a determination to add to its prestige and achievements."*

"The strength of our economy across many sectors is truly impressive by any standard."



past dreamt of. I hope, and believe, we have yet to see the best of what Ireland can be.

Being ambitious for our country does not blind us to the realities that we must contend with and, at times, overcome. In 2008, a difficult economic landscape prevails and Ireland is feeling the impact of the global slowdown and here it is worth stressing the word "global". Listening to some commentators, one would be forgiven for thinking that the economic slowdown is an exclusively Irish problem.

The facts are simple. Ireland is one of the world's most open economies and we cannot expect to be immune from

international trends. There are major external factors – lower growth in our major trading partners, the credit crunch brought on by international financial market turbulence and higher global commodity prices – which are beyond our control. But these factors are temporary. Our economy is built on solid foundations and resilient enough to contend with these factors and accelerate when their impact fades.

A sound economy is the bedrock of social progress. It is an absolute prerequisite for all our ambitions – in health, enterprise, welfare or education. That is why Fianna Fáil in government will continue to be proactive in countering the current economic turbulence.

As a republican party, Fianna Fáil has a historic obligation to keep driving this country forward and to endeavour to build the Ireland that so many patriots of the

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We accept a number of difficult policy choices lie ahead.

Our Party knows that we must be realistic in our approach. We do face a major challenge but it must be viewed in proportion. The strength of our economy across many sectors is truly impressive by any standard. Export performance, productivity and innovation rates, the deepening of future potential through strategic commitments to research and development and a smart and well-educated workforce remain a winning combination even in difficult economic conditions.

As we prioritise, we need to show care and common sense to steer us through a temporary period of challenge and enable us to resume quickly a substantial growth rate in line with our strong economic potential and thus resume prudent but significant increases in desirable public spending. That means prioritising those areas of spending which contribute most to our capacity to weather the storm and equally keeping our focus on those who are most vulnerable and most dependent on public spending programmes.

I believe that the eminently sensible people of this country will recognise and support that combination of competitiveness and fairness which current conditions require.

Just as we must contend with fiscal uncertainties, the reality, as we pointed out during the recent referendum campaign, is that we now face increased uncertainty in terms of our relations with Europe. Clearly, the outcome of the referendum was a disappointment to everyone in our Party but the people have made their choice and we accept and respect that decision.

As a nation, we do need to use the time ahead wisely and reflect on the broad question of our position in Europe and our relationship with the European Union. There are issues which deserve consideration in the weeks and months ahead. Our Party in Government will be to the forefront of this process and we will seek to address specific concerns which have been voiced and which clearly underpin the mobilisation of those who voted against the Treaty. It is important that we recognise the insecurities and fears, as well as the issues which were explicitly raised during the campaign.

Fianna Fáil is also determined to show responsible leadership in the critical area of environmental sustainability. Nobody should underestimate the enormity of the task we



At the Ógra Youth Conference 2008 in Tullamore

“The facts are simple. Ireland is one of the world's most open economies and we cannot expect to be immune from international trends.”

face and it is clear from ongoing negotiations on EU energy and climate change proposals, that Ireland will face very challenging greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for 2020.

Irrespective of trends in oil prices, climate change will require policy measures to bring us towards a low-carbon future and it is vital that Government now works constructively on this agenda.

Peace on this island is our generation's greatest achievement. All of us in our party are immensely proud of the contribution made by Albert Reynolds and Bertie Ahern towards healing the wounds of the past.

I see it as one of my principal tasks to continue to build deeper relationships, to foster mutual respect and to remove the scourge of sectarianism from our island. In the period ahead, consolidating the peace through economic development and mutual understanding will be a core objective for Fianna Fáil.

In conclusion, I want to express my gratitude for all the goodwill and kindness that has been extended to me since my election as Leader of Fianna Fáil. I have the deepest affection and respect for the Irish people. I am so proud to serve them. I will do my very best to justify the great confidence that has been entrusted in me.

local elections 2009 call for nominations

A letter from An Tánaiste Mary Coughlan
TD to all members and supporters

A chara,

I am writing to you as a member of Fianna Fáil in my role as Cathaoirleach of the National Constituencies Committee to inform you that the nomination process for Local Elections 2009 has been launched in your electoral area.

This is your opportunity to engage in the important work of candidate identification.

Successful nominations are the end result of a structured and well thought out process which begins with an individual's decision to present themselves for consideration by Fianna Fáil.

In the Party locally, or in your community, you may be aware of respected individuals, who if approached, would be willing to contest the local elections in 2009 on behalf of Fianna Fáil.

The Committee is open to the identification of such individuals (both currently within, or outside of, the Party) by Fianna Fáil members and the submission of the member's views as to why the person suggested would be the best choice for Fianna Fáil in that locality.

Members should bear in mind the need for prospective nominees to have the ability to draw from a wide support base, thereby adding to the stature and reputation of Fianna Fáil. Careful consideration should also be given to an area's geographic and demographic profile.



All submissions, which will be handled in strict confidence, should be forwarded to Seán Dorgan, General Secretary, Fianna Fáil, 65-66 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2 by Friday, September 5th, 2008.

Working together, we will ensure that Fianna Fáil implements the best possible strategy to ensure our success in next year's elections.

Mary Coughlan

Is mise le meas
Mary Coughlan TD, An Tánaiste
Cathaoirleach, National Constituencies Committee



Ministers agree deal to keep dangerous drivers off roads in Ireland and Britain

A deal to keep disqualified drivers off the roads was confirmed by Irish, British and Northern Ireland Ministers at a meeting in Belfast. The agreement - the first practical step of its kind in Europe - means that Irish drivers disqualified for an offence in the UK will no longer escape that punishment when they return home. Likewise, any disqualification earned by UK drivers while in the Ireland will be recognised and enforced when they return to the UK. Noel Dempsey TD,

Minister for Transport, said: "This deal on the mutual recognition of disqualified drivers across all three jurisdictions is good news for road users. All three Governments are working hard to save lives on our roads and this deal will be a very welcome addition to that work. Now disqualified drivers will be kept off the roads in Ireland and the UK and that makes real road safety sense. I look forward to continuing cooperation of this kind with my colleagues in the UK."

The agreement is the first to be drawn up under the terms of the 1998 European Convention on driving disqualifications and should see mutual recognition of disqualifications between the three administrations in place by Spring 2009. The feasibility of mutual recognition of penalty points between the UK and Ireland has also been investigated and the three administrations are now committed to working towards penalty point recognition in the future. This will require primary legislation.

Your support

Fundraising initiatives such as the Superdraw and the National Collection are extremely important for our Party. It is only through such methods that funds can be raised to fight elections and referendums; without your support it would not be possible to mount such campaigns. We thank you for your support this year and encourage you to continue to support such initiatives.

Our guiding principles are:

- We will safeguard future competitiveness in an increasingly volatile and globalised world.
- We will nurture an environment that continues to be conducive to investment, trade and employment growth through greater productivity and innovation.
- We will prioritise looking after people on the margins and assist those feeling the impact of rising food and energy prices more acutely than most.
- We will maximise the opportunities for workers, particularly those in vulnerable sectors, through training and re-skilling.

At the Cabinet Table...

Mary Coughlan



Tánaiste Mary Coughlan has served more than half her life in Dáil Éireann. Politics aside, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has two children, Cathal (11) and Maeve (8) and is married to David Charlton. She follows a keen fitness regime which includes running and cycling. The Tánaiste is also an avid GAA follower and can often be spotted supporting her club, St Nauls or her native Donegal.

Micheál Martin



Micheál was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs by An Taoiseach, Brian Cowen in May. He has previously served as Ministers for Education, Health as well as Enterprise Trade and Employment. He is also a former Lord Mayor of his native Cork. A keen Cork GAA and Nemo Rangers supporter Micheál is married to Mary and they have two sons and two daughters.

Brian Lenihan



After just 11 months as a senior Minister, Brian Lenihan has been appointed as Minister for Finance. A first class honours law graduate of Trinity College, and Cambridge University, he is a fund of information on the history of Fianna Fáil. He is a classical music buff and likes hill walking. Brian is married to Patricia Ryan and has a daughter and a son.

Martin Cullen



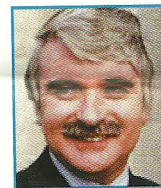
Arts, Sport and Tourism is Martin Cullen's fourth cabinet portfolio having previously served as Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Minister for Transport and Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. A former Senator, Martin Cullen's early business career was in marketing in Ireland and later abroad. The Minister loves theatre, is an avid sports fan and was a keen footballer in his twenties. Martin Cullen was also Mayor of Waterford in 1993/94 - a position previously held by his father and grandfather.

Noel Dempsey



Noel Dempsey was first elected to Dáil Éireann in 1987. He was appointed Government Chief Whip in 1991 and was Minister for the Environment and Local Government from 1997 to 2002, Minister for Education and Science from 2002 to 2004, Minister of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources 2004 to 2007 and he is currently the Minister for Transport. Outside of politics; Trim, the GAA and golf are his main obsessions.

Willie O'Dea



Willie O'Dea's name has been synonymous with Limerick since his first election to the Dáil in February 1982. Formerly a barrister and accountant, Willie has lectured at U.C.D., T.C.D. and the University of Limerick. His assiduous constituency work rate was recognised with 19,082 votes in 2007. Born in Limerick, married to Geraldine Kennedy, Willie has a keen interest in sports, particularly rugby, and still finds time to write a regular column for the Sunday Independent.

Dermot Ahern



Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform Dermot Ahern TD likes making waves - particularly on a Saturday morning after a long week in the office. More often than not you will catch him checking tides and wind directions at weekends so he can get away from the pressures of the job. A keen windsurfer since a teenager, two hours surfing Dundalk Bay is his idea of heaven. He believes both the Government and the party will continue to have a fair wind behind them.

FOR YOUR DIARY:

23rd – 25th September
2008 National Ploughing
Championships 2008,
Co. Kilkenny

05th December 2008
Annual Cairde Fáil
Taoiseach's Dinner

Email: Natalie@fiannafail.ie
or Kathleen@fiannafail.ie

If you have received The Nation twice or in error, please email thenation@fiannafail.ie or write to Fianna Fáil Headquarters, 65-66 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2.

An Taoiseach

Taoiseach Brian Cowen has been a TD since 1984. He comes from a family steeped in politics. Brian Cowen's grandfather, Christopher Cowen, was a Fianna Fáil Councillor and Brian's father, Ber, was first elected to the Dáil in 1969. Brian's younger brother, Barry, is currently Chairman of Offaly County Council. Brian has two daughters, Sinéad and Maedhbh, and is married to Mary Molloy. The Taoiseach is a keen sports follower. He is Club President of Clara G.A.A. Club. Brian formerly played Gaelic Football and Hurling for Clara at all levels. Brian also played minor and U21 football for Offaly.



Éamon Ó Cuív



Although from an academic background, Minister Éamon Ó Cuív understands the importance of political theory and structures. What gives him most satisfaction in politics is

the ability to improve the everyday lives of people. The attraction of his present remit as Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is that it has allowed him to use his lifetime experience to develop innovative programmes that have a significant impact on people's lives, such as the RAPID Leverage Fund, the Rural Social Scheme and the CLAR Programme.

Mary Hanafin



The Hanafin name is as synonymous with Fianna Fáil and politics as hurling is with her native Tipperary. Born in Thurles, her father (Des) and brother (John) were both

elected as Senators. Representing Dún Laoghaire since 1997, Mary's teaching career culminated in her appointment as Minister for Education and Science with spells along the way as Chief Whip and Minister for Children. A consistent poll topper for the party in General Elections, the current Minister for Social and Family Affairs is taking a 'busman's holiday' this year to attend the US Democratic Convention in Denver, Colorado.

Brendan Smith



When not defending the interests of our farmers and fishermen, Brendan Smith likes to unwind by watching GAA matches and tries to get to as many as he can in his native County and

elsewhere following the Cavan County Teams. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who has represented Cavan/Monaghan in Dáil Éireann since 1992, also likes the outdoor life and is particularly fond of walking.

Batt O'Keeffe



With more than 20 years in the Oireachtas, politics aside, the Minister for Education and Science, Batt O'Keeffe, TD, is a family man. Married to Mary Murphy they have four children, Mark,

Elaine, Hilda and Patrice. An avid GAA follower, holder of 3 Munster medals with Cork at under 21, junior and senior levels, he was on the St Brendan's college team, the only Corkman on a Kerry team and as an encouragement to Cork football they made him captain. He loves a good book, can be spotted walking briskly in Ballincollig or West Cork and loves to swim.

Pat Carey



Government Chief Whip Pat Carey has responsibility of ensuring that the mandate we have received from the Irish people is progressed steadily through the

Oireachtas. In addition to his duties as Chief Whip, he has been assigned the area of Active Citizenship and civic engagement in general. He recognises the real need to strengthen communities.

Barry Andrews



Barry Andrews was first elected as a TD for Dún Laoghaire in 2002. He was re-elected in May 2007 and appointed as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in May of this year. He is

particularly well suited to his current role given that he still harbours his childhood dream of captaining West Ham United to a Premiership title. (West Ham's chances of winning a Premiership are more unlikely than the prospect of Minister Andrews trotting out at Upton Park!)

organisation update

Mary Coughlan appointed Deputy Leader of Fianna Fáil

An Taoiseach Brian Cowen TD has appointed Tánaiste Mary Coughlan as Deputy Leader of Fianna Fáil and chairperson of the Fianna Fáil National Constituencies Committee.

The National Constituencies Committee has responsibility to implement a comprehensive candidate strategy for the 2009 Local Elections.

Nominations Open for Local Elections 2009

The National Constituencies Committee has launched the nomination process for next year's local election campaign. Every qualified Cumann, Comhairle Ceantair (CDC in Dublin) and Ógra CC is eligible to nominate one person. The nomination period will last until September 5th 2008. Nomination forms have been sent to all cumann secretaries and every unit is asked to convene a meeting before September to decide whom they wish to nominate.

Renewed emphasis on Town Council Representation

A special Party Commission chaired by Minister Noel Dempsey TD has been established to oversee Fianna Fáil strategy for the Town and Borough Council elections.

Currently Fianna Fáil holds just 32% of the seats on Town and Borough Councils across the country.

This has serious implications for maintaining Fianna Fáil as an active force in urban areas. These Councils provide a good opportunity for young candidates to gain experience. It is also important that we address gender imbalance amongst Fianna Fáil Public Representatives and encourage more women to stand for election.



An Taoiseach Brian Cowen TD and members of the Ard Comhairle after a recent meeting.

Local Elections Consultative Process Ongoing

We encourage all members to help Fianna Fáil improve its representation on County, City and Town Councils throughout Ireland next summer. We must not only retain our existing seats but also increase on this number. The 2009 local elections are an important challenge and a great opportunity for our Party.

Preparation is the key to achieving success and a consultation process has been underway in all constituencies since the start of this year. Meetings were held in every Comhairle Dáilcheantair and all Comhairlí Ceantair were requested to discuss election strategy and submit a report to headquarters. These reports should comment on existing councillors, any likely gaps in the panel and identify any potential new Party candidates in each LEA

Local Electoral Boundary Changes cause Comhairlí Ceantair to reorganise

At its June meeting, the Ard Chomhairle decided to return to the principle of one Chomhairle Ceantair per Local Electoral Area.

Since the formation of Fianna Fáil, one of the key roles of a Comhairle Ceantair has been to plan and fight the local elections.

Over time, the role of the Comhairle Ceantair has become unclear and confused. In many constituencies there is more than one Comhairle

Ceantair per Local Electoral Area (LEA). The result in such cases is that there is no central local control or planning.

In Dublin a ward / LEA structure has been decided upon to organise and fight the election campaign next year.

National Organiser Retires

National Organiser Sean Sherwin has announced his retirement from Fianna Fáil Headquarters. After 23 years of service, his sage counsel and unrivalled knowledge of Fianna Fáil organisation is respected by all.

Thankfully his experience won't be lost to Fianna Fáil as he has kindly agreed to continue working with the Party on a part-time basis.

Ógra Fianna Fáil Flourishes By Dara Calleary TD Cathaoirleach Ógra Fianna Fáil

I am delighted and honoured to have been appointed as Ógra Chair. Ógra Fianna Fáil remains the strongest political youth group in Ireland with a membership of some 5,000 people. We are encouraging more young members to put their names forward for selection in the 2009 local elections.

If you or someone you know is interested or seeking advice please contact me.

Over the coming months Ógra will be campaigning heavily to raise awareness for the issue of youth mental health. Policy proposals will be put to government ministers

and an awareness campaign will be organised across the country. Ógra is what you make of it. It's a massive opportunity to get involved in politics, to shape policy and make life long friends. If you want to get involved or activate Ógra in your area contact any member of the National Youth Committee, myself or Headquarters.

Membership and Recruitment Update

We are putting in place new mechanisms to communicate even more effectively with our members. Over the coming months you will be hearing more regularly from us as some new member initiatives are launched. Interest in Fianna Fáil is continually growing; nearly a thousand people have applied to join the Party since Brian Cowen became leader and Taoiseach and a new recruitment campaign will be launched shortly to build on this success.

Contact Fianna Fáil

We value your views and insight. Please send submissions to Fianna Fáil Headquarters in writing or email to info@fiannafail.ie as soon as possible. If you would like to be considered as a candidate or if you can recommend a potential new candidate please contact the Party's Regional Organisers. Please send news and photos of any Fianna Fáil events to The Editor, The Nation, Fianna Fáil Headquarters or email thenation@fiannafail.ie

Farewell to two outstanding statesmen

Brennan 'a peaceful, confident republican'

Séamus Brennan has made a massive contribution to our country. For almost thirty-five years, he was at the frontline of Irish politics and in that entire period he served our nation and the Fianna Fáil Party with great distinction. Séamus Brennan will be remembered as a brilliant political strategist, a dedicated constituency TD, a reforming Minister and a very popular colleague. He will be hugely missed.

Séamus Brennan had deep roots in our party organisation. His father had been a prominent Fianna Fáil activist and Director of Elections in Galway. As a young man, Séamus became active in Fianna Fáil as a student. He first came to national prominence when Jack Lynch appointed him General Secretary of Fianna Fáil in the mid 1970s. Séamus was our party's youngest ever General Secretary.

He brought great enthusiasm to the role as well as unrivalled

organisational skills. Séamus's efforts in revitalising the Fianna Fáil organisation alongside his genius for electoral politics played a significant part in ensuring a landslide victory for Fianna Fáil in the General Election of 1977.

Séamus was appointed to Seanad Éireann by Jack Lynch in 1977. In 1981, Séamus successfully contested his first General Election. He was elected to Dail Éireann in nine successive General Elections by the people of Dublin South, frequently topping the poll. Séamus's great commitment to his constituents and to public service made him a formidable vote-gatherer and a great asset to our party.

He first served as Minister of State for Trade in 1987 before being appointed Minister for Tourism and Transport by Charles Haughey in 1989.

In a long and distinguished Ministerial career, Séamus also held portfolios as Minister for Education, Minister for Communications, Minister for Transport and Minister for

Social & Family Affairs. He also served with distinction as Government Chief Whip from 1997-2002 and he played a significant role in ensuring that administration completed a full term.

At the core of Séamus's political philosophy was his belief that a strong economy geared towards maximising employment was the best means by which wider social objectives could be achieved. As a Minister, his achievements were numerous, some of which immediately come to mind.

He established the Forum on Small Business, he negotiated significant welfare increase for the most vulnerable in our society, he published a Green Paper on Education which placed special emphasis on giving priority to disadvantaged students, and he brought forward many new initiatives in air passenger services.

Séamus Brennan was a man of great courtesy.

He faced his illness with great dignity and fortitude. He never complained and continued to



work for his constituents in spite of his declining health.

Our deepest sympathies go to Séamus's family especially his wife Ann, his children Shay, Dáire, Aoife, Breffni, Sine and Éanna, Séamus's wider family and large circle of friends.

"Braon de dhrúcht na bhflaitheas
Agus deoch de thobar na nGrás,
Go mbronna Dia ar d'anam",
a Shéamais.

**Séamus Brennan TD:
16 February 1948 –
9 July 2008**

*Extracts from the Statement
by An Taoiseach Brian Cowen
TD, on the death of Mr Séamus
Brennan, TD.*

Hillery 'an exceptional figure in Irish life'

Paddy Hillery was born in West Clare in the town of Milltown Malbay in 1923. The son of a local doctor, he qualified in medicine and returned to his native town where he followed in his father's footsteps.

He entered politics at the age of 28 when he successfully stood for Fianna Fáil in the 1951 general election with Éamon de Valera. He sculpted his political career quietly but no less effectively for that. Each impression that he carved was rooted in meeting in full, his obligations to all his fellow citizens. He was an exceptional figure in Irish life.

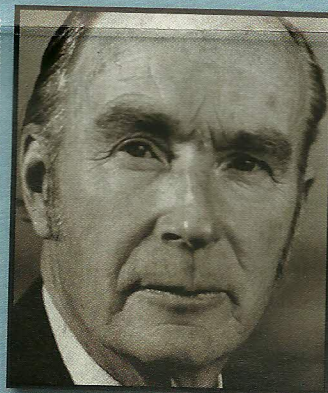
Over his 39 years of unbroken service to his country he was a TD, a reforming government minister, Ireland's first European Commissioner and he served

two terms as Uachtarán na hÉireann. Throughout, his passion was singular - Ireland. His resolve was simple - to advance the cause of its people.

Ireland and this party, Fianna Fáil, owe him a huge debt for the manner in which he stood four square behind the leadership, behind the Constitution, and what it represented for a still young Republic.

As well as being to the forefront in defending our constitutional republicanism, Paddy Hillery brought us into the emerging European Union of nation states. As minister he negotiated our entry into the then European Economic Community. Later, as our first European commissioner he was, again, a reformer.

Service too was the hallmark of his two terms as President



of Ireland. His time in Áras an Uachtaráin was calm and dignified. It was also effective and engaging.

Paddy Hillery retired from public life in 1990. His exit from public life in many ways reflected his entry - no unnecessary fanfare, pomp or ceremony. In leaving public office, he was, in a way, re-

turned to his family - a family that sacrificed much in order that we could benefit. He was part of a generation of Irish politicians who sowed the seeds of our current prosperity. To honour Paddy Hillery's political legacy, we should use his life of service and of dedication, to challenge all of us in the conduct of ours.

Our deepest sympathies go to Paddy Hillery's family especially his wife Maeve, his son John and his wider family. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.

**Dr Patrick Hillery:
2 May 1923 – 12 April 2008**

*Extracts from the oration
delivered by An Taoiseach Brian
Cowen TD, on the death of Dr
Patrick Hillery.*

The Fianna Fáil Insurance Package

We are delighted to announce the Fianna Fáil Insurance Package, starting with the delivery of Fianna Fáil Home Insurance.



Only available to our members, this package of specially negotiated insurance products will be available through our preferred providers, BHP Insurance.

Fianna Fáil Home is now available to members through BHP Insurance.

We would encourage you all to compare your existing home insurance against the enhanced product and competitive premium available through the scheme.

So, should you need a home insurance quote, don't wait, lo-call BHP Insurances now on

1890 20 20 30

Super Draw Winners



Winner of the Ford Focus, Michael Joyce, receives the keys to his new car in Wexford. Also pictured are (from left to right) Ray Furlong, Willie Kavanagh, Eileen Higgins, John Browne T.D., Sean Connick T.D., Adrian Murphy, Michael Joyce, Cllr. Bernard Crosbie, Cllr. Martin Murphy, Cllr. Jimmy Curtis, and Paddy Chawke.



1st Place winner, Mrs. Zara Brady, receives her brand new BMW from former Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D. Also pictured is Dr. Fergus Brady.



Top ticket seller, Councillor Martin Connaughton (centre), from Athleague, Co. Roscommon, receives a presentation from former Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern T.D., at the Draw on Wednesday, April 9th. Also pictured is Minister of State, Michael Finneran T.D.

Savings planned to weather current economic storm

Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan has announced plans to save €440 million this year and committed the Government to saving a further €1 billion in 2009. The Minister ruled out large-scale borrowing to ride out the present downturn.

Mr Lenihan said that our careful stewardship of the economy over the last eleven years has positioned us well to weather the current global economic storm. Our remarkable economic progress has not been reversed overnight, but

sensible actions are needed to prepare us for the financial situation facing us in 2009 while protecting the most vulnerable.

This year's savings will come from a range of sensible measures including a scaling back of decentralisation and the cancellation of special pay increases for Ministers, senior civil servants and judges. A big element of the savings next year will come from a reduction in the public service payroll bill by 3% across all departments, with the exception of health and

education. Savings will also come from a significant reduction in expenditure on consultancies, advertising and public relations by departments and agencies.

"These measures are designed to minimise the effects on users of services in the areas of health, education and social welfare. They seek to protect the vulnerable. But they are the minimum we need to get back on track as soon as possible," he said.

Apply now for Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Hanafin, T.D. called on all parents to spread costs over the summer months and apply now for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance to help to ease financial pressures.

Over €46 million has been allocated to support parents with the cost of school clothing and footwear, which this year will benefit some 190,000 primary and post primary pupils,

an increase of over €6 million or 15% since last year.

The payments for back to school costs are funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. Eligible parents receive €200 for each child aged between 2 and 11 years and €305 for each child aged between 12 and 22 years. Parents can apply to their local HSE office for funding under the scheme from now right until the end of September.

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance helps people who are in receipt of certain Social Welfare and Health Service Executive (HSE) payments with the cost of children's school clothing and footwear. It is also available to people on low incomes who are getting Family Income Supplement or who are taking part in approved employment schemes or training courses.