

CCBS – LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

21/10/2016 - 28/10/2016



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Tuesday 25 October 2016

Ministerial Statements

Summary: Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Health) give a statement setting out her ambition for a world-class health and social care system, Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together..

Mr Maskey thanked the Minister of Health for her important statement and asked where does she think there is any further potential to deliver specialised services on an all-island basis?

Mrs O'Neill: There are definitely areas where we can build on that. Some of the collaboration that already exists, particularly in children's cardiac services and radiotherapy for cancer patients, shows that we have been able to develop really innovative services for the population on the island. That benefits not only patients but staff because they are allowed to specialise in the areas that they wish. There are so many more opportunities — for example, transplantation of organs and rare diseases. We have also developed a programme of work with the Department of Health in the South to identify other areas of mutual benefit. I set out in a statement areas where I think that we could collaborate more — for example, mental health and perinatal mental health in particular. There is no service on this island to support women with mental illness in pregnancy. I would certainly be very proud if we were able to deliver such a service, and I think that we could do it collaboratively across the island. That would allow us to develop it a lot more quickly than perhaps we could do individually. Recently, I have had conversations on dual diagnosis and young people and adolescents with mental health and addiction problems, and I think that, again, we do not have any service Tuesday 25 October 2016 13 right across the island. If we include transplantation, those are just three areas where there is scope. A scoping study is ongoing, which I look forward to receiving. I want to take forward measures that allow us to develop a first-class service for the population.

Source: <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-25-10-2016.pdf>



Tuesday 25 October 2016

Micheál Martin asked the Taoiseach the detail of the unit he has set up in his Department to coordinate the response to the Brexit referendum.

Enda Kenny: A Second Secretary General has been appointed to lead a new integrated division within the Department of the Taoiseach with responsibility for supporting the Taoiseach in his work on EU, Northern Ireland, British-Irish and International affairs.

The appointment is part of a series of actions announced by the Taoiseach following the referendum. This includes strengthening the EU policy role of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as the strengthening of other key Departments, agencies and overseas missions.

This will be complemented by existing structures. They include the Cabinet Committee on EU Affairs and the EU Senior Officials Group which supports it; and a consultative group of external stakeholders and representative organisations.

The Cabinet Committee on Brexit has met twice to date, on 8 September and on 19 October, for in depth discussion of the issues arising from the UK decision to leave the European Union. The Cabinet Committee will continue to meet on a regular basis to deal with Brexit related issues.

The invitations to the conference on 2nd November launching the All Island Civic Dialogue issued last week. Invitations have been extended to a broad range of civic society groups, trade unions, business groups, non-governmental organisations and representatives from political parties. The event will also be live-streamed on the internet. Further information will be sent to attendees over the coming days.

<https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-10-25a.114&s=all-island#g117.r>

Thursday 27 October 2016

Written Questions

Bernard Durkan asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he continues to interact with his colleagues in Northern Ireland and in the UK in the context of making the necessary preparations to safeguard the interest of the agrifood industry here in the aftermath of Brexit; if he has identified specific issues deemed to be fundamental in this regard; if he expects to make progress on any such issues in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Michael Creed: The UK remains by far Ireland's most important trading partner as far as the agrifood sector is concerned, with a trade surplus of €1.3 billion last year. There are also significant levels of trade in agri-sector products between North and South. In 2015, we exported almost €750 million of agrifood sector products to the North, of which beef represented €133 million; live animals represented €99.8 million; beverages came to €89 million; cereals and cereal preparation, €84.4 million; dairy products, €68.5 million; fruit and vegetables, €53.3 million; and forestry, €48.7 million. By contrast, we imported almost €569 million worth of agri-products from the North for the same period, of which dairy produce came to €171 million; animal foodstuffs, €90.7 million; cereal and cereal preparation, €71 million; fruit and vegetables, €43.9 million; poultry, €35.8 million; and forestry, €22.7 million.

It is of course vital, therefore, that we maintain the very closest contact with our counterparts in Northern Ireland and in the UK, at both political and official levels, and this work is well under way. A number of meetings have taken place to date, with further meetings anticipated in the coming months.

From a North-South perspective, at the North-South Ministerial Council plenary meeting held in Dublin Castle in early July, I agreed with my Northern counterpart, Michelle McIlveen, that officials from both jurisdictions would meet as soon as possible to work through some of the potential issues involved. The first meeting of officials took place on 22 July 2016. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine followed this up with the preparation of an "audit" of Brexit implications from a North-South perspective.

A further meeting between my Department's Secretary General and the Permanent Secretary of Northern Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs took place in Dublin on 4 October. It was agreed at that meeting that officials from both jurisdictions would co-operate closely on areas of specific concern, including the potential agrifood implications of a hard or soft Border, trade and tariff issues and animal health and fisheries. Brexit was also discussed at yesterday's North-South Ministerial Council agriculture sectoral meeting in Armagh.

As regards UK contacts, my Department's Secretary General has had a number of meetings with his UK counterpart. Both parties agreed to monitor the situation closely over the coming months. In the meantime, I have made arrangements to meet my UK counterpart, Andrea Leadsom, in London on 1 December.

<https://www.kildarestreet.com/debates/?id=2016-10-27a.312&s=north-south#g315>