KEEP THE LANGUAGE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE INDEPENDENT

Background:
The Minister of State for the Gaeltacht announced the commencement of a review of the Official Languages Act 2003 on the 3rd of November 2011.

On the 17th of November, however, the Government announced that it is their intention to close the Office of the Language Commissioner as a statutory independent office and to merge its functions with the Ombudsman Office as part of their public service reform plan.

Why is this the wrong decision?

1. The Minister of State for the Gaeltacht admitted in the Dáil on the 24th of November that there is a risk that this decision will actually cost the state money. With the exchequers finances in such a dire state there should be no additional expense incurred, therefore, that can be avoided.
2. It was not taken into account when the decision was made that the current Language Commissioner has a contract to function independently until 2016. The decision of the Government cannot therefore be implemented in 2012 without the risk of opening the State up to legal action in the future.
3. The Language Commissioner has been widely recognised as a highly efficient and dynamic commissioner who has been praised not only for his work in defending citizens rights but also for being a proactive advocate of best language practice. A recent example of this would be the highly attractive module on general language rights that his office recently developed for use in Transition year in our second level schools.
4. The decision with regard to the Office of the Language Commissioner, which is central to the implementation of the Official Languages Act 2003, was taken without taking into account the process of the public consultation. The public have until the 31st of January 2012 to make submissions to the Department of the Gaeltacht. There should be no changes made until the consultation is completed and the wishes of the public included.
5. An Bord Snip Nua when they looked at the office identified no efficiencies to be made and made no recommendation to alter the status of the Office of the Language Commissioner as an independent office. The Minister of State for the Gaeltacht has also been unable to identify any efficiencies and there are unlikely to be any as the Office of the Commissioner functions entirely through Irish and the Ombudsman Office through English.
6. All political parties and the Irish language and Gaeltacht organisations have backed the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2012 – 2030. We acknowledge that funding will be a problem in the short term but why undermine the strategy and the goodwill behind it with this decision that has been acknowledged as having no saving to make to the exchequer.

What are we looking for?
We believe that the Government should look at the economic arguments coupled with the wishes and the belief of the Irish language community both within and outside of the Gaeltacht that the Office of the Language Commissioner should be supported, that it has our trust and that it has been a very effective service since been set up in 2004.

Reversing that decision is therefore the logical and correct thing to do and should be done without delay.

What are we asking you to do please?
We are seeking your support to impress upon the Minister of Expenditure and Public Reform, the Minister for Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht and the Minister of State for the Gaeltacht that this decision should be reversed immediately instead of delaying and causing more damage to the effectiveness of the Office of the Language Commissioner.

Supported by:

An Foras Pátrúnachta
An Spailpín Fánach
Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn
Aontas Phobal na Gaeilge
Comhaltas Uladh
Comharchumann Dhúiche Sheoigheach
Comhluadar.
Comhlucht Forbartha na nDéise
Conradh na Gaeilge
Craobh Mhuineacháin
Craobh na gCeithre Chúirteanna
Cumann Cearta Sibhialta Ghaeltacht Chorca Dhuibhne
Cumann na nOifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge (Earnáil Phoiblí)
Fóram Gaeilge Chiarraí
Gaeilge Átha Luain
Gaeilge Locha Riach
Gaelphobal Cheantar an tSratha Báin
Gaelscoileanna Teo.
Glór na nGael.
Guth na Gaeltachta
Ógras
Oireachtas na Gaeilge
Pléaráca
Seachtain na Gaeilge
Spleodar

COINNIGH OIFIG AN CHOIMISINÉARA TEANGA NEAMHSPLEÁCH

Cúlra:
D'fhógair Aire Stáit na Gaeltachta go raibh tús á chur le hathbhreithniú ar Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003 ar an 03 Samhain 2011.

D'fhógair an Rialtas ar an 17 Samhain 2011 áfach, go bhfuil sé i gceist acu Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga a dhúnadh mar oifig reachtúil neamhspleách, agus a cuid feidhmeanna ar fad a chur isteach faoi Oifig an Ombudsman mar chuid dá phlean athchóirithe don earnáil poiblí.

Cén fáth go bhfuil an cinneadh seo mícheart?

1. D'admhaigh Aire Stáit na Gaeltachta sa Dáil ar an 24 Samhain go bhfuil an baol ann go gcosnóidh an cinneadh seo airgead ar an Stát. Leis an státchiste i gcruachás faoi láthair níor chóir aon chostas breise, mar sin, a chur air gur féidir a sheachaint.
2. Níor tógadh san áireamh nuair a rinneadh an cinneadh go bhfuil conradh ag an gCoimisinéir Teanga le bheith mar choimisinéir neamhspleách go dtí 2016. Ní féidir, mar sin, cinneadh an Rialtais a chur i bhfeidhm i 2012 gan baol ann go mbeidh an Stát oscailte do chásanna dlí amach anseo.
3. Aithnítear go forleathan an Coimisinéir Teanga mar choimisinéir thar a bheith éifeachtach agus dinimiciúil atá molta ní hamháin dá chuid oibre le cearta saoránaigh a chosaint ach chomh maith mar dhuine réamhghníomhach i gcur chun cinn an dea-chleachtais teanga. Mar shampla, le déanaí d'fhorbair a oifig modúl ar chearta teanga go ginearálta le húsáid san idirbhliain in ár scoileanna dara leibhéal.
4. Tógadh an cinneadh faoi Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga, atá croí-lárnach i gcur i bhfeidhm Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla 2003, gan an próiseas comhairliúcháin poiblí a thógáil san áireamh. Tá go dtí 31 Eanáir 2012 ag an bpobal aighneachtaí a chur chuig Roinn na Gaeltachta. Níor chóir aon athrú a dhéanamh go dtí go bhfuil an t-athbhreithniú curtha i gcrích agus mianta an phobail tógtha san áireamh.
5. Níor aithin an Bord Snip Nua aon éifeachtúlacht le déanamh nuair a rinneadh measúnú ar Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga agus níor mhol an tuairisc aon athrú i stádas na hoifige mar oifig neamhspleách. Níl Aire Stáit na Gaeltachta tar éis aon éifeachtúlacht a aithint chomh maith agus ní dócha go mbeidh aon ann nuair a thógtar san áireamh go bhfeidhmíonn Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga go hiomlán trí Ghaeilge agus Oifig an Ombudsman trí Bhéarla.
6. Tá gach páirtí polaitiúil agus na heagraíochtaí Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta tar éis tacaíocht a léiriú don *Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010 – 2030*. Aithnímid go mbeidh fadhbanna le maoiniú sa ghearrthéarma ach céard is fiú an bonn agus an dea-thoil a bhaint den straitéis leis an gcinneadh seo atá aitheanta nach ndéanfaidh aon choigilt don státchiste.

Céard atá uainn?
Creidimid gur chóir don Rialtas na hargóintí geilleagrach chomh maith le mianta agus tuairim láidir phobal na Gaeilge, laistigh agus lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht, a thógáil san áireamh agus gur chóir tacaíocht a chur ar fail d'Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga Tá muinín an phobail ag an oifig agus tá seirbhís an-éifeachtach curtha ar fáil ó bunaíodh é i 2004.

Is é, mar sin, an rud loighciúil agus ceart le déanamh ná an cinneadh a athrú láithreach.

Céard atáimid ag iarraidh ortsa a dhéanamh le do thoil?
Ba mhaith linn bhur dtacaíocht le brú a chur ar an Aire Caiteachas Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe, ar an Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta agus ar Aire Stáit na Gaeltachta leis an gcinneadh a athrú go práinneach in ionad moill a chur leis agus níos mó damáiste a dhéanamh d'éifeacht Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga.

Le tacaíocht ó:

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