

# A Manifesto for Business A Manifesto for Growth



## 5. Enhancing Human Capital

**Map demographic and population growth trends and plan investment in education services accordingly.** Ensure targeted capital investment in primary and secondary schools and adjust pupil teacher ratios accordingly.

**Lengthen the primary school day by one hour.** This will assist in maintaining standards of education while also covering the expanded ICT and science curriculum at primary level.

**Make our third level institutions internationally competitive by providing independent funding streams.** Reintroduce third level fees; establish an equitable student loan system; properly fund students from diverse and underrepresented learning backgrounds.

**Incentivise students undertaking key subjects required by our economy.** These subjects can be periodically determined by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

**Increase provisions for our long-term commitment to enterprise-led training initiatives from the National Training Fund.** For example, Skillnets.

**Support employees investing in part-time training.** Provide additional tax credits while ensuring that our third level system is incentivised via provision of the same level of capitation grant for night as for day students.

**Aid access to affordable childcare.** Childcare supports from employers should not be liable for benefit in kind payments, such a move will increase access to the workforce and retain skills in the labour market.

## 6. Providing Better Government

**Significantly expand e-government services.** This will facilitate efficient processing of business and citizen needs and underpin the development of a knowledge driven society.

**Establish a redundancy option for public servants.** Where functions have been superseded by workplace changes, staff should be facilitated to re-enter the labour market elsewhere.

**Assess real productivity gains.** Implement a system to assess and reward public service productivity.

**Publish a statement of national liabilities such as pensions in the National Accounts.** This will provide greater clarity on future tax payer liabilities.

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Irish General Election 2007

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## Irish General Election 2007

In election 2007, the core issues must be sustaining the ongoing development of our economy, our competitiveness, and our infrastructure.

It is only by maintaining our growing economy that we will be able to pay for and deliver broader social services.

This manifesto details the core aims that the Irish Chamber network of 60 affiliated chambers, representing more than 13,000 businesses, believes are necessary requirements for future growth.

## 1. Maintaining a Competitive Business Environment

**Maintain the 12.5pc corporate tax rate.** The current corporate tax rate has been a major factor in our recent economic success. It must be rigorously defended.

**Retain the 20pc capital gains tax.** We must reward risk. Those who take it should not be excessively penalised.

**Adjust tax levels and thresholds to ensure equity while also adequately funding government services.** Specifically ensure that 1/3 pay no tax, 1/3 pay the standard rate of tax and 1/3 pay the top rate of tax.

**Codify all regulations for business.** Only allow them to be updated on two set days per year.

**Simplify all Employment and Health and Safety legislation.** Commit to consolidating all Employment and Health and Safety legislation into a simplified single act, using the Taxes Consolidation Act of 1997 as a template.

**Synchronise changes in the National Minimum Wage with future national wage agreements.** Amend the National Minimum Wage Act to ensure that future adjustments are synchronised with national wage agreements.

**Reform the Companies Act of 1990 to review existing provisions with respect to reckless trading.** We need this change to ensure that solvent companies do not go into premature liquidation.

**Support an export culture among Irish SMEs.** Set a target to double the number of first time exporters and broaden the range of markets accessed by existing exporters.

**Further expand the scope and ceiling of the Business Expansion Scheme.** The BES has played an important role in the development of many Irish businesses, the funding ceiling should be raised to €10 million.

## 2. Building our Regions

**Create an independent revenue stream of at least €3 billion for local authorities.** Local authorities must be adequately remunerated for the services that they provide to domestic consumers.

**Undertake a comprehensive review of the current public service decentralisation programme.** Abandon any moves that do not yield a financial saving.

**Develop a globally competitive regional infrastructure.** Implement the National Development Plan on time and on budget.

**Support the development of an All-Island economy.** Harness the potential of our sole Trans-European Transport Network (Larne–Rosslare) building on the successes of existing cross border gateways/partnerships (Dundalk–Newry and Derry–Letterkenny).

## 3. Delivering Virtual and Physical Infrastructure

**Deliver a future-proofed next-generation national broadband network.** Ensure that a minimum of 25MB symmetric broadband capability is available to every home and business in the country by 2012.

**Increase competition in the public transport market.** Make subsidies available to all transport providers and open at least 35% of routes to competition.

**Develop a fully integrated public transport service.** This must include integrated ticketing and interconnection between modes of transport.

**Complete the unbundling of the three state airports.** This was committed to in the State Airports Act 2004.

## 4. Addressing Energy and Environmental Challenges

**Support the provision of additional East-West energy interconnectors without delay.** This will help deal with security of energy supply issues and overcome the difficulties associated with the small size of our domestic market.

**Break up ESB power generation.** This will facilitate a more competitive energy market.

**Promote security of supply of natural gas.** Maintain a fiscal regime which encourages exploration and exploitation of indigenous reserves.

**Promote alternative energy via extension of the BES into this thematic area.** This will diversify our generating portfolio.

**Ensure that companies that abide by the planning process are given the protection of the law in carrying out their operations.** This issue specifically affects Shell in Mayo, wind energy companies and thermal treatment facilities.

**Meter all premises for water consumption.** This will enable us to ascertain the true cost of provision of this service.

**Implement the polluter pays principle in all thematic areas above a reasonable consumption threshold.** This should include water and waste.

**Develop thermal treatment capacity as a necessary component of Irish waste management policy.** Reward communities that are facilitating plants in their areas via additional capital investments in social infrastructure.