

2.10 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Social Security regarding contingency arrangements for households who fail to submit their application form for Income Support by 28th January 2008:

Will the Minister outline what contingency arrangements exist, if any, for the payment of monies to households who do not submit their application form for income support by 28th January 2008?

Senator P.F. Routier (The Minister for Social Security):

Anyone who wants to claim income support does need to make an application otherwise my department will not be able to make a payment. The department is ready today and every working day to help anyone who wants to make their application. I thank the Deputy for this question because it gives me the opportunity to, yet again, publicise the need for people who wish to receive income support payments when their existing benefits finish in just under 2 weeks' time. In the answer to the written question this morning, Members will see that the vast bulk of applications have been received and the department have rated the majority of these claims. While mentioning the work the department have been carrying out, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the staff who have been working so hard during the lead-up to the start date. Many were working on this last Saturday and Sunday to ensure that claimants are informed of their benefit rate and that the payment can be made on the due date. I would urge anyone who is still intending making a claim to do so as soon as possible if they need a prompt payment. The department has sent 2 reminder letters to existing benefit recipients and will be following-up with reminder phone calls during the next week or so. I would urge anyone who intends claiming income support when their existing benefit ceases to contact the department as soon as possible. The later they leave it the more difficult it will be for the department to rate their claim in time for the switchover.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I would like an answer to the question, how long if somebody is not receiving income support will they have to wait to get money from the Minister's department? What plans have they made?

Senator P.F. Routier:

When somebody comes into the department their application will be dealt with as promptly as it can be. We cannot do it any sooner. As soon they come in, we will be able to deal with their application.

2.10.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

To further illustrate, would an individual who comes into your department - as happens in many welfare departments - with no food in the cupboards, 2 kids to feed and no income, no money in the purse, will they be able to receive money as an emergency one-off payment?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Of course.

2.10.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

In the light of the trend of applications that have arisen already or been submitted, would the Minister confirm whether or not his programme is likely to be on budget? Is he getting more applications or more requests for money than he thought or is he getting fewer for example?

Senator P.F. Routier:

It is probably a bit early to say the outcome of that yet. I will be in a far stronger position to give a true reflection of that towards the end of the month.