5th October 2016

**Varadkar Divide & Conquer Strategy Unfair to Carers – MEP**

The divide and conquer strategy of Minister for Social Protection Leo Varadkar which aims to create tension between state pension receivers and carers in the upcoming budget emphasised the valuable role of the independent political voice in government.

This assertion by Independent MEP Marian Harkin related to a newspaper report that Minister Varadkar had warned that too much focus on a €5 pension hike could result in the disabled, carers and other vulnerable sections of society missing out.

The Independent MEP who is founder and Co-chair of the European Parliament’s Carers Interest Group welcomed the pressure exercised on behalf of carers by the Independent Alliance in government pointing out that the country’s 200,000 family carers save the state over €4 billion each year.

“Minister Varadkar’s refusal to acknowledge that carers of the elderly and of people with disabilities have a special entitlement to state support, as a result of their unceasing unpaid work, does him no credit and his endless list of the deserving from the Budget is but an unworthy and ungrateful refusal to acknowledge the huge debt the state owes to 200,000 dedicated family carers”, Independent MEP Marian Harkin said.

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