

Bill No.9

Proposer: Mr Robert Neill

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Your Grace, I have the pleasure of presenting to you this second clergy pensions Bill.

This Bill, which is proposed by the Representative Body, relates to the current clergy defined contribution pension schemes, of which we have two, a clergy defined contribution pension scheme for Northern Ireland and a defined contribution pension scheme for the Republic of Ireland. For both pension schemes, members of the clergy contribute 9% of their relevant Minimum Approved Stipend and their parish or dioceses contributes 8%.

The Representative Body has initiated a review of the expected pensions payable from these clergy defined contribution pension schemes.

We may wish to recommend an increase in the parish or diocesan contribution in order to achieve a better outcome for the clergy dependent on this DC scheme. As Chapter XIV is currently drafted, that is not possible, so the Bill provides flexibility to increase the rate of contribution, subject to the existing minimum of 8%.

Where it is recommended that the contribution to these pension schemes be increased, then the Representative Body may recommend to Standing Committee, acting on behalf of General Synod, an increase in the parish or diocesan contribution above the 8% contribution rate for such period as approved by Standing Committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant commitment of parishes and dioceses to the future welfare of retired clergy, and to acknowledge the pressure of raising the funds to support parish ministry. We, in the Representative Body, are aware of these pressures. Any changes to pension contribution rates will be considered in light of the cost of both levies and pension contributions to both Direct Benefit and Direct Contribution schemes. We will seek to ensure that the total cost as a percentage of MAS does not increase but may even reduce in the short term.

At this stage of the review of pension benefits it is not possible to provide an indication of any required increases in parish or diocesan contributions, but this Bill provides a mechanism for pension contribution increases with the protection that any increases will be subject to the recommendation of the Representative Body and the approval of Standing Committee acting on behalf of General Synod.

I propose that the Bill be given a Second Reading.