



Minister of State

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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LONDON
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The Standing Orders Committee
The New Northern Ireland Assembly
Block B,
Castle Buildings
Stormont

9 July 1998

Dear Member,

I should like to begin by welcoming the appointment of this Committee and expressing the hope that we can all work closely together in the weeks ahead to ensure that the Assembly's Standing Orders are fair, effective and acceptable to all members of the Assembly.

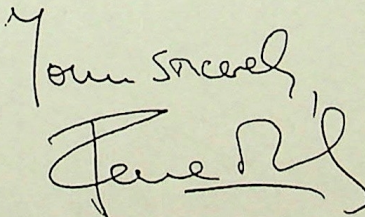
Obviously, in the longer term, your Committee or a successor to it will need to provide detailed recommendations which will enable the Assembly to resolve, on a cross-community basis, the Standing Orders and working practices which will apply after devolution.

During the shadow period, Assembly Standing Orders will of course be (in the terms of paragraph 10 of the schedule to the Northern Ireland (Elections) Act 1998) those "determined by the Secretary of State from time to time and notified to the Presiding Officer". The Secretary of State is naturally anxious to take full account of the views of members of the Assembly, as advised by the Standing Orders Committee, in adjusting or developing the Standing Orders as necessary or appropriate.



It is in any event clear, as the Secretary of State said in her letter to Lord Alderdice appointing him as the initial presiding officer of the Assembly, that additional Standing Orders will need to be drawn up to enable the Assembly to proceed, for example, to the appointment - by the d'Hondt procedure - of a Shadow Executive Committee and the establishment of related Assembly Committees. The Secretary of State is keen to ensure that she is in a position to determine such additional Standing Orders as soon as that point is reached; and would wish to take account of the Assembly's views in doing so. I trust that it will therefore be possible for us to work constructively with the Committee over the coming weeks, on the basis of a draft of the necessary additional Standing Orders which I intend to circulate shortly. The outcome of any such exchanges could then be reflected in the Committee's report to the Assembly on 14 September and in the Government's developing thinking on the nature and content of whatever additional Standing Orders are necessary.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Presiding Officer.

Yours sincerely,


PAUL MURPHY MP
Minister of State