



Northern Ireland Office
Parliament Buildings
Belfast BT4 3ST

Lord Alderdice
Initial Presiding Officer
New Northern Ireland Assembly

29 June 1998

Dear John,

The New Northern Ireland Assembly has been established, in the words of the Northern Ireland (Elections) Act 1998, "for the purpose of taking part in preparations to give effect to the Agreement reached in the multi-party on Northern Ireland set out in Command Paper 3883". This reflects paragraph 35, page 9 of the Agreement which states that, "The Assembly will meet first for the purpose of organisation, without legislative or executive powers, to resolve its Standing Orders and working practices and make preparations for the effective functioning of the Assembly, the British Irish Council and North/South Ministerial Council and associated implementation bodies".

By virtue of Section 1(2) of the Northern Ireland (Elections) Act 1998 I may "refer" to the Assembly

- specific matters arising from the Belfast Agreement, and
- such other matters as I think fit.

During its shadow phase the Assembly and those holding office in the Assembly will have a very important role to play in preparing to implement the various provisions of the Belfast Agreement. In that context there are a number of specific matters arising from the Agreement which I hereby refer to the Assembly.



First, the implementation of the agreement requires the Assembly to organise itself and put in place the basic structures of the Assembly, as set out in the Agreement, through

- the election of a First Minister - designate and Deputy First Minister - designate, which I trust the Assembly will achieve at its first meeting.
- reaching agreement on the number of Ministerial posts and the distribution of executive responsibilities between those posts. This may be primarily matter for the First Minister - designate and Deputy First Minister - designate, in consultation with the other parties in the Assembly; but will ultimately need to be notified to the Assembly
- securing the nomination of shadow Ministers to those Ministerial posts, through the operation of the D'Hondt procedure
- establishing related Committees, nominating Chairs and Deputy Chairs to those Committees - again through the operation of the D'Hondt procedure - and appointing members to those Committees on a broadly proportional basis.

Second, other preparations to implement the Agreement include those required to establish the British Irish Council and North/South Ministerial Council and associated implementation bodies. This will require action from the Assembly or members holding office in the Assembly including:



- participation by representatives of the Northern Ireland transitional (or shadow) administration in inaugural meetings of the shadow British Irish Council and the shadow North/South Ministerial Council and in regular and frequent meetings of those bodies
- working with the Irish Government in the shadow North/South Ministerial Council, in consultation with HMG, to complete a work programme on the lines set out in paragraphs 8 & 9 of page 12 of the Agreement, with a view to identifying and agreeing areas for co-operation and agreed implementation arrangements by 31 October 1998.

Third, the Assembly will need to "resolve" its Standing Orders and working practices, to apply after powers have been transferred. Agreement on Standing Orders will of course require cross community support in the Assembly.

Fourth, there is the question of establishing the "consultative Civic Forum", as set out in paragraph 34, on page 9 of the Agreement. This specifies that "the First Minister and Deputy First Minister will by agreement provide administrative support for the Civic Forum and establish guidelines for the selection of representatives to the Civic Forum". During the Assembly's shadow phase I am anxious to consult the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (and the Assembly more widely) so that arrangements can be put in hand to secure the earliest appropriate establishment of the Civic Forum.



In referring these four matters to the Assembly under Section 1 (2) of the Northern Ireland (Elections) Act 1998, I reserve the right to refer these or other related matters to the Assembly in different or more detailed terms; and to refer a range of other matters, whether or not they arise specifically from the Agreement reached in the multi-party talks.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mowlam".

MARJORIE MOWLAM