

## An Ceann Comhairle

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## The Speaker

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**To: All Assembly Members**

**13 February 2023**

### Assembly Sitting 14 February 2023

I want to deal with a number of matters ahead of the Assembly sitting at 12 noon tomorrow.

Firstly, my letter on Friday set out the position on how secondary legislation in relation to the Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 could be taken forward. I informed Members on Friday that the Act had not yet been commenced and that the relevant draft regulations had not yet been laid. I also made clear that if a recall petition was tabled, and a notice for a sitting of the Assembly issued before the draft regulations had been laid, then it would not be possible for the draft regulations to be approved at that sitting.

The commencement order and the draft regulations have been laid today. While the draft regulations cannot be approved at tomorrow's sitting, the key issue remains that the election of a Speaker and Deputy Speakers will allow the Assembly to move on to deal with other business. If a Speaker and Deputy Speakers can be elected, a new Speaker can engage with the party whips to review the business awaiting consideration, the scrutiny it requires and schedule any further sitting as soon as is desired.

Secondly, I remind Members that the remit of the Acting Speaker tomorrow is **solely** to preside over the election of a Speaker. Members are also reminded that Points of Order should not be abused to make political points and should only be raised with the Acting Speaker if they are absolutely necessary and directly pertinent to the election of a Speaker and Deputy Speakers. All other Points of Order remain for me as the Speaker in office to deal with. Members should therefore correspond with me after the sitting in relation to any other matters.

Finally, Members will be aware that after the sitting on 7 December 2023 I had to make rulings on a number of issues around order, language and behaviour in the Chamber. The nature of the debate did not contribute positively to our situation and I wrote to all Members with a reminder of the principles of debate.

During my discussion with the party whips this morning, there was agreement that tomorrow's debate should be mindful that many people watching the sitting have a personal connection to the sensitive issues at stake. I am encouraged that party whips are engaging to manage tomorrow's business as constructively as possible. I would ask all Members to take care that their tone, language and behaviour do justice to the serious issues involved.

Yours sincerely,

**ALEX MASKEY  
SPEAKER**