

The Speaker



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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To: All Whips and Party Representatives

19 December 2019

Dear Whip and Party Representatives,

It had been my intention once the General Election had concluded to write to party whips in relation to the next deadline for Ministerial appointments.

As you are aware, under the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019, the deadline for Ministers to be appointed and an Executive to be formed is 13 January 2020. Whether or not that deadline can be met is a matter entirely for parties and the political negotiations.

Regardless of any political speculation, it is my responsibility to ensure that arrangements are in place for a plenary sitting to facilitate the appointment of an Executive by 13 January 2020, if required. However, in line with my letter of 11 July 2017 (copied to whips) in relation to the calling of further sittings, my intention would be only to proceed with the steps to formally summon Members to such a sitting if parties approach me to indicate that all of the necessary business can be transacted successfully.

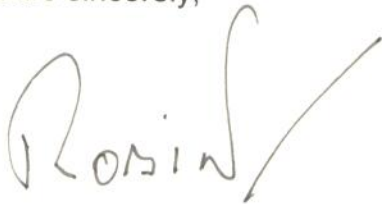
Following the sitting of 21st October, all parties may agree that it would not be particularly helpful to the interests of the Assembly to meet if it is not possible to elect a Speaker and deputy Speakers to enable further business to proceed. Having said that, it of course remains the case that if 30 signatures were submitted seeking a recall of the Assembly, I would have no discretion and would have to summon the Assembly to meet.

You will know that I am not seeking re-election as Speaker, and remain in office only until my successor is elected as the first item of Assembly business, in line with the Northern Ireland Act 1998. However, it may be helpful at this stage to indicate that Standing Order 4(8) requires that the next attempt to elect a Speaker is chaired by the oldest Member present (as 'Acting Speaker'). This procedural requirement does not, however affect my statutory and other duties in my capacity as the outgoing Speaker, which are set out in law and remain unchanged. It therefore remains my responsibility to summon the Assembly to meet and to ensure the arrangements are in place, including liaising with Whips, issuing the Order Paper and ensuring sufficient notice is given to all Members.

As negotiations resume, I would also remind you that Assembly officials are available to provide advice to parties and Members on procedural and other Assembly issues as they may require.

Finally, I hope all Members will get an opportunity for respite with family and friends over the festive period.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "ROBIN" in a cursive style, followed by a long, sweeping diagonal stroke.

ROBIN NEWTON MBE MLA