



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**Committee on Procedures  
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Mr Jim Allister MLA (TUV)  
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**28 July 2021**

**Committee Inquiry into Private Members' Bill (PMBs)**

The Northern Ireland Assembly Committee on Procedures is undertaking an inquiry into the current procedures and support for Private Members' Bills offered by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Terms of Reference for the inquiry are below; and are supported by a briefing paper from the Bill Office outlining the current procedures in the Northern Ireland Assembly and a research paper on procedures and practices in other jurisdictions.

The Terms of Reference of the review are as follows:

- (a) To examine whether the system of support currently in place for PMBs is fair, appropriate and a good use of public resources.**
  
- (b) To compare and contrast any variations and limitations of the right to table PMBs in other legislatures.**

- (c) To review whether the current arrangements are equitable or whether they could be improved by requiring a consistent level of involvement of the Bill Office as well as public consultation prior to the PMB being submitted.**
- (d) To consider whether committees, if they so choose, should be able to include the sponsor of a PMB as an ex-officio member of that committee during the appropriate stages of the passage of the PMB in order to allow the sponsor to ask questions of witnesses and thus provide necessary clarity to the committee.**
- (e) To outline whether there are any issues arising from the nature of the special circumstances of the Assembly which need to be taken into account, and, based on the above to consider whether provision should be made in Standing Orders to clarify:**
- (i) Whether there should be scheduled / dedicated plenary days for PMB business;**
  - (ii) Whether there should be mechanisms by which a proposal must pass a simple majority or other measure of support before being provided with resources to be developed further; and**
  - (iii) Whether there could be arrangements to allow Members to legislate as a group and for all their names to be attached to it**
- (f) How Assembly plenary time might be maximised and prioritised towards the end of the mandate, when the level of PMBs and Executive legislation are likely to create significant pressures on Assembly business.**

The Committee has agreed to invite you to submit views on the Committee's Terms of Reference above. The deadline for written submissions is 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021, although early submissions will be welcomed. If possible, all responses should be submitted electronically by emailing the Clerk at: [Emer.Boyle@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:Emer.Boyle@niassembly.gov.uk)

Submissions will be published by the Committee unless otherwise indicated by those submitting written evidence.

Any queries should be directed to the Clerk, Emer Boyle, using the above email address or telephone 028 9052 1678.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Is mise le meas,

Carál Ní Chuilín

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**Chairperson, Committee on Procedures**