



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**Committee on Procedures  
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The Speaker  
Office of the Speaker  
Room 39 Parliament Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3XX

31 March 2021

Dear Alex,

**PROXY VOTING**

You will be aware of the Committee's ongoing review into proxy voting which considers instances when proxy voting could be retained on a more permanent basis, and how this might be reflected in Standing Orders.

Since the former Chairperson last wrote to you in September 2020, the Committee has consulted with Parties and Independent Members and sought their views on proxy voting and the instances in which it could be retained more permanently.

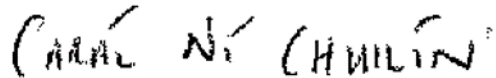
Following the consultation and further consideration by the Committee, there was consensus amongst Members that any proposal to introduce proxy voting on a permanent basis should include parental leave and long-term illness. Any proposal to include parental leave and long-term illness is not likely to be descriptive of the instances and therefore guidance may be required in relation to the instances provided for parental leave and long-term illness. The Committee will provide you with its views on these particular instances in due course.

At its meeting on 17 February 2021 and during its consideration of a draft motion to amend the temporary provision in Standing Order 112(8) regarding the 9.30am deadline to nominate a proxy vote, a number of Members discussed examples of "unforeseen circumstances" which could potentially affect a Member and their ability to nominate a proxy on any given day. For example, a family emergency or adverse weather conditions. The Committee was reminded that Standing Order 112(8) is a temporary provision and that the Committee is already considering introducing proxy voting on a permanent basis under the review.

Subsequently at its meeting on 24 March 2021, the Committee further discussed this issue and is considering whether to potentially extend the scope of the previously agreed policy position to include "unforeseen circumstances" in its review. The Committee agreed that it would be constructive to consult with the Speaker, the Business Committee and the Party Whips with regard to the inclusion of "unforeseen circumstances", in order to ascertain if there would be broader support for this proposal.

Therefore, I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with your views on whether you would support the inclusion of “unforeseen circumstances” in the scope of the review. I have copied the Clerk to the Business Committee into this correspondence as I would also be grateful if you could seek the views of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Carál Ní Chuilín in black ink.

**Carál Ní Chuilín MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee on Procedures.**

**Cc: Alex McGarel, Clerk to the Business Committee.**