


# Assembly and Executive Reform Bill

## STAKEHOLDER DETAILS

Stakeholder Name	Telephone Number		
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Stakeholder Address	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
Constituency office 76 Abbey Street Bangor, BT20 4JB  	Registered Political Party	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify)/ Member of the Public		
<b>Background information on our role as a stakeholder</b>			
<p><i>Please see below my initial response to the Assembly and Executive Reform Bill. As I am still considering aspects of the bill, some of my views may change in advance of the bill returning to the Assembly.</i></p> <p><i>As a MLA of a party outside of the Executive, I strongly support the implementation of a formal opposition. More means and a better place in the Northern Irish Assembly must be given to parties of the Opposition. Moreover, as a cross community MLA, I commend the removal of the community designation and petition of concern. The votes of all the MLAs must count in the same way because we are in a democratic system. It is fundamental today to normalise the political system in Northern Ireland. Besides I am in favour of a reform of the Executive to provide better outcomes to the people of Northern Ireland.</i></p>			

# Stakeholder Response to the Bill – Clause-by-Clause

## Purpose

**Clause 1:** The general purpose of the bill is supported. It is necessary to truly reform the institutions of Northern Ireland which are dysfunctional today. The dearth of legislation from the Executive and the Departments shows the necessity of an evolution. It is time to refresh the structure of the Good Friday Agreement and to provide better governance to Northern Ireland.

## Assembly Opposition

**Clause 2:** The formation of a formal Opposition is supported. It is necessary to strengthen the mechanism by which ministers and the Executive are held to account.

**Clause 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7:** I am content with these proposals.

Clause 3: Timing of formation of the Opposition.

Clause 4: Membership of the Opposition.

Clause 5: Dissolution of the Opposition.

Clause 6: Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Clause 7: Topical questions from Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Clause 8:** Enhanced speaking rights for the Opposition are welcomed. A formal opposition must have rights to challenge the Executive's proposals, to speak and to propose motions.

**Clause 9, 10, 11 and 12** are also welcomed because that would improve the democratic life in Northern Ireland. More means must be given to the Opposition parties.

Clause 9: Opposition rights to chair Public Accounts Committee.

Clause 10: Membership of Business Committee for the Opposition.

Clause 11: Financial assistance for Opposition parties.

Clause 12: Salary for office holders of the Opposition.

## Assembly and Executive Reform Motion

**Clause 13:** It would be great to consider the organisation of a referendum in order to involve the people of Northern Ireland in the reform process of the Northern Irish institutions. They agreed the Good Friday Agreement and this Agreement should not be changed without the people's consent. Moreover, a referendum on the Assembly and Executive Reform Bill would enable to restore the credibility of the Northern Irish institutions.

**Clause 14 and 15:** I am content with these proposals.

Clause 14: Tabling of Assembly and Executive Reform Motion.

Clause 15: Reports by the AERC.

## Technical groups within the Opposition

**Clause 16 and 17:** I am content with these proposals.

Clause 16: Formation of technical groups within the Opposition.

Clause 17: Membership of Business Committee for technical groups.

## Topical Questions

**Clause 18:** First topical question to Minister from chairperson of statutory committee. The clause 18 is contended.

## Budget Committee

**Clause 19:** Establishment of Budget Committee: I am content with this clause.

## Office of the First Ministers

**Clause 20:** Renaming of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

The renaming of the OFMDFM to the office of joint first minister is helpful since it reflects better the reality. The name “First Ministers” represents in a better way the respective roles of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

## Northern Ireland departments

**Clause 21:** Departments to be a single legal entity.

It is necessary that the government acts as one single entity. The provision of services by the government must be improved and become more efficient. That is why collective responsibility for the Government is really needed today. There must be joined up working, for example in children’s services which is why I brought forward the Children’s Services Co-operation bill.

## General

**Clause 22, 23 and 24:** I am content with these clauses.

Clause 22: Interpretation

Clause 23: Commencement

Clause 24: Short Title

## Schedule: Content of Assembly and Executive Reform Motion

(matters which the Assembly could or might request the Westminster Parliament to legislate on in the event of Assembly agreement).

**Scope of Assembly and Executive Reform Motion:** I am content with this proposal.

**Replacement of cross community support with weighted majority voting:** Strong support to the removal of community designation and petitions of concern. It is really important to end the sectarian nature of Northern Ireland politics (community designation required on election for each MLA). Moreover it is essential to take in account the vote of all MLAs through a weight majority voting. The votes of the constituents of cross-community MLAs are worth no less than those of any other MLA. Moreover, this would help to ensure that legislation or proposals could not be vetoed by a single party and therefore ensure that the Assembly can effect change more efficiently and progress is less likely to be frustrated.

**Speaker:** I am content with this proposal.

**First Minister and deputy First Ministers renamed as First Ministers:** I am content with this proposal. (See clause 20.)

### Collective Ministerial responsibility

Obliging Ministers to exercise collective responsibility for their actions is essential. One minister must no more take another Minister to court. The disagreements in the Government should be resolved and moved on from at the Executive Table. A collective responsibility is needed.

Moreover, the absence of mechanism to complain about a Minister must be underlined as it is a big issue. **A mechanism for investigating breaches of Ministerial Code is needed to increase the accountability of Ministers.** The transparency of the political process in general will be improved if an investigation mechanism regarding ministerial accountability will be provided by the bill.

**Threshold for nomination of Minister:** I am content with this proposal.

**Nomination of Ministers and Chairpersons of Statutory Committees:** I am content with this proposal.

**Leaving the Opposition and re-joining the Executive:** I am content with this proposal.

**Programme for government:** The implementation of a programme for government is essential. But it would be **useful if the Programme would have to be agreed before the allocation of ministers.** That would help to make the government's work more coherent and more efficient.

**Function of statutory committees:** I am content with this proposal.

**Simple majority for budget approval:** I am content with this proposal.

**Proposals** (in addition of the bill as it was introduced).

## Additional suggestions

- **Renaming of the Executive:** The Executive is renamed as the Northern Ireland Government.
- **Ending of the election of the Minister of Justice by a cross-community vote:** The appointment of the Minister is carried out either by the D'Hondt method.