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Office of Mary Lou McDonald TD

Peter Weir MLA

Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Room 276

Parliament Buildings

Ballymiscaw

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Tuesday, 21 September 2021

Re: Review of Opposition Entitlements

Peter, a chara,

Thank you for your letter in relation to the review on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Statement of Entitlements for an official opposition that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee is taking forward.

New Decade, New Approach states that the review should recommend increased allowances for opposition parties and should explore the creation of additional funding for the offices of the leaders of opposition parties

Sinn Féin support this recommendation. Any decisions in this regard must also be affordable and provide value for money.

They must also take full account of our unique power-sharing arrangements that derive from the Good Friday Agreement and which provide parties with sufficient support the opportunity to hold Ministerial office.

In most democratic assemblies government office is not available to parties with smaller political mandates. It is therefore my view that parties should be encouraged to take up this opportunity and to play a full part in the power-sharing arrangements.

If parties choose not to take up this option on behalf of those who have voted for them and instead choose to absent themselves from political office then, of course, they should be funded appropriately in relation to their oppositional role.



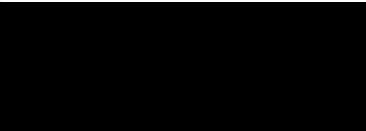
However, it is critically important that in the interests of the most efficient operation of the political institutions, and in terms of providing the most effective representation for their electorate, parties should not be financially attracted to opposition.

The level of the support available to opposition parties should not disadvantage other parties who choose to provide responsible leadership in the Executive. The level of any financial increase needs to take this into account and, critically, needs to be affordable. In that context the proposed increases may need to be revised.

Many thanks to you and the committee for your work, and to Trevor for undertaking the review.

I hope that this response is helpful to your deliberations.

Is mise, le meas,



Mary Lou McDonald TD

Uachtarán Shinn Féin