

## **An Ceann Comhairle**

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## **The Speaker**

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**Mr Conor Murphy MLA  
Minister of Finance  
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**09 September 2021**

Conor a chara,

### **Objection to scheduling of 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage of Defamation Bill on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September**

Thank you for your letter in relation to the scheduling of the Second Stage of the Defamation Bill on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021. I am replying in my capacity as Chair of the Business Committee and in light of my wider procedural responsibilities as Speaker.

I will of course table your correspondence at the Business Committee's meeting next week but, while I appreciate the points you have made, these are not issues for the Business Committee. Your request for the Business Committee to reconvene and reschedule this item of business is not in keeping with the independence between the Executive and the Assembly and therefore such representations from Ministers to the Business Committee are not appropriate.

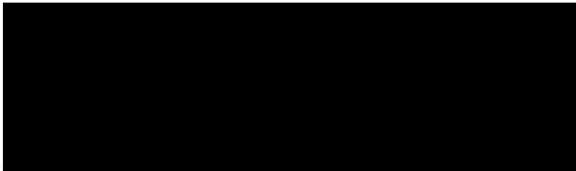
Ministers have no role in deciding the scheduling of Private Members' Bills. It is solely for the sponsor Member to request when they would like their Bill to be scheduled for debate and for the Business Committee to consider that request in the context of the other business requested at that time. In this case, the scheduling of the Bill has been conducted completely in order with normal procedures. Neither the sponsor Member or the Business Committee has any involvement in determining the engagement the relevant statutory committee conducts on a Bill.

The inclusion of the Second Stage debate on the Order Paper cannot be changed at this point. The preferable means by which you could properly pursue your concerns in relation to the scheduling of the Defamation Bill is for you to engage with the sponsor Member. It

is open to him not to move the Second Stage next week and to seek to reschedule it to a later date. Officials in your department can also engage with the Clerks in the Business Office in relation to the details of procedural options which may be available to you including for a Delaying Motion under Standing Order 16 or a Reasoned Amendment under Standing Order 32 (which would have to be tabled by 9.30am tomorrow). However, I would note that either of these options will require the support of the Assembly.

Finally, it is important for me to underline that the Second Stage of the debate gives you the opportunity to influence the decisions of the Assembly next week and on other future occasions if the Second Stage is agreed. We are entering a period when Assembly time is going to be under significant pressure to accommodate all of the Executive and Private Members' Bills which are coming forward. The Business Committee is therefore going to have little flexibility in the scheduling of business.

Is mise le meas



**ALEX MASKEY MLA**