

Subject: Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill

I have read this Bill and would like to support its broad principles. In particular I fully support the tightening up of rules and guidance on special advisers - Clause 1 and Clause 4. These seem very sensible considering the report into the RHI affair which showed the seemingly unchecked behaviour of special advisers was out of control.

It seems to me quite wrong that the Executive Office are allowed up to 8 special advisers. This is not just a waste of public money but I see it also as a slight to the civil service whose job it is to support, advise and generally service the two holders in the executive office. Why does the First Minister need 4 SPADS and why does the Deputy First Minister need 4 SPADS. I would support the number proposed in the Bill.

Here I draw attention to the guidance for special advisers in the U.K. government which I would hope are established in the Northern Ireland government

@ they cannot line manage regular civil servants

@ nor may officials' advice be transmitted to Ministers via Special Advisers.

@ SpAds may not formally represent the Government or their Minister, not commit the Government in any way.

This Bill covers a number of areas where it would appear that the NI Assembly has not had in operation the appropriate checks to ensure that the position of special advisers is not abused. These I support and I would hope that the Assembly has taken note of the loss of confidence in its workings arising out of the RHI report and that the Bill can be progressed speedily.