



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

---

**COMMITTEE  
FOR EMPLOYMENT  
AND LEARNING**

---

**OFFICIAL REPORT  
(Hansard)**

---

**Student Loans (Amendment) Bill:  
Consideration of Committee Report**

3 November 2010

**NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY**

---

**COMMITTEE  
FOR EMPLOYMENT  
AND LEARNING**

---

**Student Loans (Amendment) Bill:  
Consideration of Committee Report**

---

3 November 2010

**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mrs Dolores Kelly (Chairperson)  
Mr Jonathan Bell (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Sydney Anderson  
Rev Dr Robert Coulter  
Mr Chris Lyttle  
Mr David McClarty  
Mrs Claire McGill  
Mr Pat Ramsey  
Ms Sue Ramsey

**The Chairperson (Mrs D Kelly):**

We move to consideration of the Committee's report on the Student Loans (Amendment) Bill. Members have a copy of the Bill, the explanatory and financial memorandum, and a delegated powers memorandum. No issues were raised about the Bill by any of the respondents to the Department's consultation or the Committee's public notice or in the briefings that the students' representatives gave to the Committee. No issues were raised by members during the informal or formal clause-by-clause scrutiny of the Bill. Each section of the report has to be approved, and members must audibly agree to it.

**The Committee Clerk:**

The completed report on the Student Loans (Amendment) Bill is not as long as other Bill reports because it is not a long Bill. It contains only two clauses. As the Chair set out, no objections arose in the Department's consultation. The Committee also took out a public notice, and there were no objections. There was a single response from the NUS-USI, which tallied with the response that it had already given the Department.

It is essentially a technical Bill that, as members have heard previously, closes a loophole whereby student loans will not be allowed to be placed into an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA). Currently, they cannot be placed into bankruptcy proceedings, and the Bill will close that other gap. Our legal adviser spoke to the Committee and talked about how, once people realised that the option of an IVA was available, they might, in increasing numbers, use it as a vehicle to dissipate their debts because an IVA is much lower profile than bankruptcy and is generally seen as a more attractive option. Essentially, the Bill will stop that option being taken before the numbers using it become excessive. There have been only around 50 instances of student loans being put into an IVA.

**The Chairperson:**

Members, are you content for us to proceed to approval of the report?

*Members indicated assent.*

**The Chairperson:**

Members, are you content to agree the executive summary of the report?

*Members indicated assent.*

**The Chairperson:**

Members, are you content to agree to the introduction section of the Bill report?

*Members indicated assent.*

**The Chairperson:**

Members, are you content to agree to the consideration section of the Bill report?

*Members indicated assent.*

**The Chairperson:**

Members, are you content to agree to the clause-by-clause scrutiny of the Bill section of the Bill report?

*Members indicated assent.*

**The Chairperson:**

Members, are you content with the Bill report in its entirety and content that the report be ordered to be printed?

*Members indicated assent.*

**The Chairperson:**

The report will now be printed and distributed.

**The Committee Clerk:**

The closing date for the extension of Committee Stage was 11 November, so this brings us in nicely on time. This afternoon, we will send the Bill report to be printed, and printing has been taking place as we have been collecting evidence. We anticipate that it will take about a week to print the report. We have effectively now closed Committee Stage, and it was done on time.

**The Chairperson:**

Well done; we are happy with that.