

# The Speaker



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

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**Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA**  
**Principal Deputy Speaker**  
**Rm 38**  
**Parliament Blds**

**3 October 2014**

Dear Mitchel,

Firstly, I would like to thank you for your support in exercising my procedural functions over the last few weeks and reducing the burdens on me during my ill health. I am also very appreciative of the many good wishes which have been sent to me from Members, staff and the wider public.

I am writing to you in a procedural capacity on an issue which you will have to announce to the House on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2014. Over recent months there has been much media speculation about my retirement. I had hoped to deal with it earlier last month if circumstances had been different. Indeed, if circumstances were different, I would have preferred now to show the proper courtesy to the House by making an announcement to the Chamber myself and I had been hoping my health would have improved enough to facilitate that. However, with further treatment and potential procedures ahead of me, it is now clear that it is unrealistic that I would be able to return to exercising the functions of Speaker in the immediate future.

I am honoured to have been Speaker and, despite many difficult times, I am grateful for the many opportunities that the House has given me. However, after seven years in the Chair and sixteen as a Member, I have had as good an innings as anyone could wish. Following discussion with my wife and family, it is clear that my focus needs to be on my return to health to allow me to pursue other challenges in the future. It is therefore wiser to provide certainty for me and the Assembly by proceeding with my original intentions to retire. I therefore notify you and the House that I intend to step down as a Member and therefore as Speaker with effect from noon on Monday 13th October 2014.

On a procedural note, it will obviously now be for the Business Committee to decide on the scheduling of an election for my successor. However, in preparing for my retirement, it was clear that there are gaps in Standing Orders around how a Speaker resigns and how an election is handled when an outgoing Speaker is in office during a mandate. As I am not returning to the House and with my retirement as a Member commencing before business starts that week, these issues do not arise but the Committee on Procedures may wish to review the existing provisions to ensure the House is better able to deal with such circumstances in future.

I am grateful for the support I have received in the Chair and I am deeply disappointed that I am not in a position to come back to the House to express my thanks to all those

who are owed it. I do not want to prolong this letter but I intend to write again before my official date of retirement to put my appreciation on the record.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Hay". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letter being a large, looped 'W'.

**WILLIAM HAY MLA**