

An Ceann Comhairle

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The Speaker

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To: All Assembly Members

25 July 2022

Dear Member

Leader of the Opposition

I wrote to all Members on 27 May 2022 to confirm that the SDLP was a qualifying party for the purposes of forming an Opposition and I want to provide an update.

I regret that Members may already be aware of these matters through the media before I had the opportunity to confirm the position and formally notify Members in line with the normal parliamentary courtesies.

The SDLP declined to nominate to fill the vacancy in the office of Minister for Infrastructure that arose when Nichola Mallon was not returned as a Member at the election. The SDLP will also not be entitled under the d'Hondt allocation to nominate a Minister to the new Executive which is formed on the basis of the results of the May 2022 Assembly election.

Consequently, the SDLP was able to choose to be recognised as the Opposition on the basis that its party's members comprised 8% or more of the total number of members of the Assembly at the end of the day on which the Assembly first met (i.e. Friday 13 May 2022).

I wish to notify Members that the SDLP has now informed me that it has chosen to be recognised as the Opposition in the Assembly. As required by Standing Order 45A(2), the Nominating Officer of the SDLP has nominated Matthew O'Toole MLA as the Leader of the Opposition.

Matthew O'Toole MLA now holds the position of Leader of the Opposition. However, I think it is important to manage public expectations that the role of Leader of the Opposition will be extremely limited until a Speaker is elected and full, formal Assembly business resumes.

I should also clarify that if, subsequently, any future qualifying party indicates that it wishes to form part of the Opposition, and it is larger than the SDLP, it will then be that party which is required to nominate the Leader of the Opposition.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alex Maskey". The signature is written in a light brown or grey ink and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

ALEX MASKEY
SPEAKER