

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

Mr Philip McGuigan
Chair
Committee for Health

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Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

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Our Ref: COR-0404-2026

Date: 12 March 2026

Dear

Thank you for your letter of 6 March 2026, regarding the revised publication timeline for the Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry Report and your request for My Department to delay scheduling Consideration Stage of the Adult Protection Bill until the Inquiry Report becomes available in June 2026.

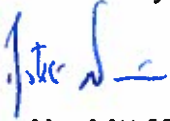
I fully understand the Committee's concerns and acknowledge the value of ensuring the Bill is aligned, as far as possible, with the recommendations emerging from this significant Inquiry. My Department recognises the importance of providing time and space to consider those recommendations carefully and, where appropriate, bring forward any legislative amendments that may strengthen the Adult Protection Bill.

In light of this, I am content to delay Consideration Stage until September 2026, however I must highlight the practical constraints and risks associated with this approach. The Assembly is scheduled to dissolve in March 2027, and the Bill must complete three remaining stages: Consideration Stage, Further Consideration Stage, and Final Stage, within the limited window available between the summer recess and dissolution. Consideration Stage must commence as soon as possible following summer recess;

any further delays would imperil our ability to complete the Bill's passage prior to dissolution of the Assembly.

I remain committed to working collaboratively with the Committee. Once the Inquiry Report is published, the Department will move at pace to prepare draft amendments if and where appropriate. I welcome the Committee's willingness to engage closely in the scrutiny of any amendments arising from this process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Nesbitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health