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Dear Peter

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE – ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL PROVISIONS BILL

As you will be aware the consideration and scrutiny of the AFP Bill by both the Finance Committee and the Audit Committee is underway. On this there have been two recent developments, which I wish to inform the Finance Committee about, these being:

- Proposed amendment to Clause 11 (Doctorate in Educational, Child & Adolescent Psychology)
- Proposed amendment: Removal of Clause 20 (The Appointment of an External Auditor for the NI Audit Office)

Firstly, for Clause 11, on 10 October 2025, Minister Givan wrote to the Finance Minister stating that his Department wishes to expand this clause to include the power to introduce a new Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Bursary Scheme. This is specifically aimed at increasing applications and enrolments in subjects that were experiencing the most acute teacher shortages.

Following consideration Minister O'Dowd has agreed to this request and work is now ongoing with the Office of Legislative Council to prepare an amended Clause 11. Once this work is completed, I will write to the Finance Committee providing the newly amended Clause. On this the Department will also update supporting materials such as the Explanatory and Financial Memorandum accordingly and provide these to the Finance Committee at the appropriate juncture.

The Finance Minister has also considered the correspondence between the Audit Committee and the Finance Committee regarding Clause 20. As you will be aware this correspondence provides a range of alternative options to Clause 20. The Finance Minister agrees with the Audit Committee's position, namely that Option 5 may be the most appropriate at this time. As such it is proposed that an amendment

to the Bill is brought forward removing Clause 20, with responsibility for the appointment of the external auditor remaining with the Department of Finance.

I trust the Finance Committee will be supportive of these developments and the Department would like to extend its gratitude to the Finance Committee for its work in scrutinising the AFP Bill.

Yours sincerely

GERARD WILLIS
DEPARTMENTAL ASSEMBLY LIAISON OFFICER