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Mr Gerry Kelly MLA
Chairperson
Committee on Procedures
Room 33, Parliament Buildings
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Our Ref: COR/684/14

16 March 2015

Dear Gerry,

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES: REVIEW OF PUBLIC PETITIONS PROCEDURES IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

The Clerk to the Committee on Procedures wrote to OFMDFM on 23 October 2014 to invite comments which might inform the Committee's current *Review of Public Petitions Procedures in the Northern Ireland Assembly*.

We have consulted with all Executive Ministers and the attached submission, which has been informed by the Terms of Reference established for the review, reflects the consensus of Ministers' views. This response represents Ministers' initial views and they should be grateful to have a further opportunity to review and comment upon any proposed changes to public petitions procedures, which may emerge as part of the review process, prior to any revision to the current system being undertaken.

We hope that these initial thoughts will be helpful to the Committee in its consideration of this issue, and will welcome the opportunity to engage further with the Committee at a later stage.

JONATHAN BELL MLA
Junior Minister

JENNIFER McCANN MLA
Junior Minister

COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES: REVIEW OF PUBLIC PETITIONS
PROCEDURES IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

**WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURES FROM
JUNIOR MINISTERS**

This submission to the Committee on Procedures' *Review of Public Petitions Procedures in the Northern Ireland Assembly* has been informed by the Terms of Reference established for the review by the Committee. It reflects the initial views of Executive Ministers on this subject and has been provided in anticipation of a further round of consultation concerning possible proposals for amendments to current procedures being undertaken at a later stage.

Current Assembly procedures and processes relating to public petitions

Ministers have indicated that they are content with the Assembly's existing procedures and processes for dealing with Public Petitions.

Views on public petitions processes including e-petitions

A number of Ministers have advised that while they would welcome the introduction of a system e-petitions, they would wish to have the opportunity to review the form such a system might take (including appropriate controls and numerical thresholds) before they might be able to make comment upon it.

Consider options for enhancement of public petitions procedures

A number of Ministers have advised that they would support the introduction of measures to enhance public petitions procedures, including the introduction of a tracking mechanism to ensure suitable follow up to such petitions, but would wish to have the opportunity to review and comment upon such measures prior to their introduction. There is a general lack of support from Ministers for proposals to establish a stand-alone committee to examine public petitions.

**JUNIOR MINISTERS
OFMDFM
MARCH 2015**