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On Monday 14 January at DFP question time in the Assembly, I provided an answer in response to your question on the flag protest. In my answer I stated that the Hardship relief scheme in existence had been used in the past during the foot-and-mouth disease, the volcanic ash cloud and other periods of long-term sporadic civil unrest. However I understand that this has not been the case.

Therefore I would like to clarify and advise you that the answer which I provided to the Assembly should have read *"My Department has little or no authority to deal with the issue. I have looked at a number of things. The hardship rate relief scheme is in existence, but it requires firm evidence of consequential trading loss over a sustained period before we can lend help to those who are in financial distress. In the past, it was there for such things as foot-and-mouth disease, the volcanic ash cloud and other periods of long-term, not sporadic civil unrest. There could be rateable revaluations, but that requires an appeal; it would not bring immediate respite to the businesses"*

I have placed copies of this amendment in the Assembly library and provided a copy of this letter to each Member for their information. I would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused by my answer.

Yours sincerely



SAMMY WILSON MP MLA