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SPEAKER'S OFFICE



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Our Ref: COR/458/09

3 September 2009

*Mr Speaker,*

#### RESPONSES BY MINISTERS TO POINTS RAISED IN ASSEMBLY DEBATES

You wrote to us on 22 June 2009 about the observance of the convention whereby Ministers provide further written information to Members in response to points raised in Assembly debates, and proposing a timeframe for future responses.

We would wish to assure you that Ministers are fully aware of their obligations to be accountable at all times to the Assembly for the activities within their responsibilities and recognise the need to respond fully and promptly on all issues raised by Members. We have confirmed with all Departments that they have arrangements in place to ensure compliance with Ministerial undertakings given at Plenary. We consider therefore that the apparent lapse in procedure raised by Mr Attwood, regrettable though this is, should not be taken as either evidence of a lack of awareness of Ministerial obligations or as evidence of general failure in regard to the provision of full and timely responses.

You have proposed a protocol whereby Ministers should respond to a Member within a deadline of 10 working days. We believe that this would reflect current practice and, following consultation with Executive colleagues, we can confirm that Ministers are content to accept this procedural arrangement and will make every effort to comply with it.

We hope you find our comments and assurances helpful.

Yours sincerely

  
RT HON PETER D ROBINSON MP MLA  
First Minister

  
MARTIN McGUINNESS MP MLA  
deputy First Minister

APPROVED BY THE MINISTERS  
AND SIGNED IN THEIR ABSENCE