



Minister of State

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Professor Monica McWilliams
Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
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14 January 1999

Dear Monica,

RE-STRUCTURING OF NORTHERN IRELAND DEPARTMENTS

The statement issued by the First and deputy First Ministers (designate) on 18 December included proposals for the structures of the NI departments. These proposals will be discussed by the Assembly on 18 January 1999.

An Order in Council will be required to establish the new departments and re-name existing ones. Officials have been working on a draft Departments (Northern Ireland) Order which would take this forward and which would also consolidate the existing law dealing with the administration of public services in Northern Ireland by government departments, much of it dating back to 1921. (A Transfer of Functions Order will also be needed to re-distribute statutory functions between departments and work is being taken forward on this in order that the restructuring of departments be completed prior to devolution).

Under normal Order in Council procedures a Proposal for a draft Order is published for public consultation with a 6 week period allowed for comment. However, as the departmental structures set out in the draft Departments (NI) Order will be debated by the Assembly, I propose to omit publication so that, when the structures are agreed by the Assembly, the draft Order can be enacted as quickly as possible. In light of this I would like to offer you the



opportunity to consider a working draft of the Order, entirely *without prejudice*, of course, to the debate in the Assembly

I would appreciate any comments you might have by 22 January.

THE RT HON PAUL MURPHY MP
Minister of State

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