

COR 417/2000



Diane Smyth

09/06/2000 12:19 PM

To: Pamela Ferguson/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP
cc: Ps Ministers/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Gerry Loughran/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Geraldine McGurk/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Pamela Ferguson/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Peter May/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Linda Johnston/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Pamela Stewart/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Valerie Parkinson/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Fiona Dynes/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Maura Quinn/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Jenny Conway/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Dara Cosgrove/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Mark Larmour/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Colin Ross/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Paul Pringle/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, Ciara Magee/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP, John McKervill/OFMDFM/DFP@DFP

Subject: COR 417/00 - PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT - PRIORITIES (X REF SUB336/00)

Please see attached. For information only.

Thank you

----- Forwarded by Diane Smyth/OFMDFM/DFP on 06/09/2000 12:29 PM -----

THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

URGENT

(CORRESPONDENCE)

Reference: COR/417/2000

Raised By: Martin McGuinness

Subject: COR 417/00 - PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT - PRIORITIES (X REF SUB336/00)

ACTION REQUIRED

Please provide advice and a draft reply for signature by the **FOR INFORMATION ONLY**.

TO BE WITH PRIVATE OFFICE NO LATER THAN 20/09/2000 - Noon

Referred To:

MR HAIRE (EPU)

Date Referred:

06/09/2000

Copied To For Information

PS/First Minister
PS/Deputy First Minister
PS/Mr Haughey
PS/Mr Nesbitt
PS/Mr Loughran
Mr McCusker
Mr May
Mr McKervill
Mr Campbell
Mr Kerr
Dr Gudgin
Mr Larkin
Mr Logue
Mr Barrington
Mr Ross
Mr Larmour
Mr Pringle
Mrs Cosgrove
Ms Magee

Diane Smyth (Private Office)

THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

Parliament Buildings Tel: 028 9052 1383

1. Following the initial discussion on 27 July, I am writing to you to provide suggestions for high level priority policy issues to be included in the Programme for Government.

2. I would make two specific proposals. The first is my belief that the Programme for Government should have as one of its objectives which reflects the reality that we now have a quite unique set of institutions set up under the Good Friday Agreement, particularly a partnership form of government as represented in the membership of the Executive Committee. We now have opportunity to make a significant and lasting difference for a community emerging from a long period of conflict and I think it is essential that we do seek to build a new society. We cannot ignore recent history, and we must recognise a community which is divided by economics, culture, belief, status and political allegiance. I think it is imperative therefore that the a key priority, if not the key priority in our Programme for Government should be the



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS

from the Minister, Martin McGuinness MP MLA

The Rt Hon David Trimble LLB BL MP MLA,
 First Minister and
 Seamus Mallon Esq MP MLA
 Deputy First Minister
 Parliament Buildings
 BELFAST
 BT4 3XX

Our Ref: S/Sep4/00

Laura

Pl. issue is
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Thanks.

AD
 05/09/00

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

1. Following our helpful discussion on 27 July, Dermot Nesbitt, in his note of 7 August asked Ministers to provide suggestions for high level priority policy issues to be included in the Programme for Government.
2. I would make two specific proposals. The first is my belief that the Programme for Government should have an overarching theme which reflects the reality that we now have a quite unique set of institutions set up under the Good Friday Agreement, particularly a partnership form of government as represented in the membership of the Executive Committee. We now have opportunity to make a significant and lasting difference for a community emerging from a long period of conflict and I think it is essential that we do seek to build a new society. We cannot ignore recent history, and we must recognise a community which is divided by economics, culture, belief, status and political allegiance. I think it is imperative therefore that the a key priority, if not the key priority in our Programme for Government should be the

securing of a real and durable peace . We should underline this by detailing our commitment to put in place effective policies, action programmes and initiatives:

- to build a prosperous, stable and inclusive society
- to encourage respect for cultural diversity
- to develop individual creativity
- to remove inequality, disadvantage, discrimination and intolerance
- to develop greater respect, understanding and protection for Human Rights
- to promote equality and social inclusion
- to build wider relationships, both on the island of Ireland and beyond.

These principles are at the heart of the Good Friday Agreement and, I believe, must underpin our Programme for Government.

3. My Second proposal is that, within that overarching principle, we must maximise our education and training skills and abilities and that objective must be given the highest possible priority. Because of holiday arrangements, I have not had opportunity to speak directly with Sean Farren on this but I am sure he would support the principle that Education and Training, from early years through to adult life is a key strategic objective and one in which the work of the Executive Committee must be seen to make a difference. Within my own Ministerial responsibilities, I firmly believe that our policies and strategies within the schools and youth service can and indeed must be a major driving force to bring about changes in attitudes, skills and knowledge as the whole community prepares itself for the new opportunities arising from peace, stability, political accommodation and economic growth. Every young person must of course attend school between the ages of 4 - 16 and so the education and youth service has a major influence in helping children and young people maximise their individual potential, and

prepare themselves as members of society and as an important resource for economic growth. We are a society coming out of conflict but we must establish ourselves as a modern, vibrant and skilled region with much to offer, particularly in an international context. I am convinced that education must be at the heart of the new administration's thinking and that our policies and our resource allocations must reflect those priorities.

4. The generic skills which are key to developing the individual and societal needs of all our young people and which must underpin our strategic approach would be:

- Personal skills
- Inter-personal skills
- Thinking skills
- Learning skills
- ICT skills
- Physical skills.

5. This is not of course the time to repeat resource bids already made to DFP and EPU. I would, however, want to highlight the importance of education and training by illustrating, briefly, 4 major and vital parts of our education work which have significant and long term implications for all our children and young people within the strategic objectives which I have outlined.

- (a) The work now being undertaken in respect of the new curriculum due to be introduced from September 2002 will include major modules in developing respect for diversity, in understanding the concepts and implications of

citizenship, and in preparing children and young people for employability. This Curriculum would of course apply across all sectors of education.

- (b) There are also clearly established links between **poor educational performance and severe socio-economic disadvantage**, particularly the more marginalised young people, who feel rejected by the formal education system and live in areas which have experienced severe conflict. There is also a high correlation between poor educational performance, deprivation and poor educational facilities with a result that an unacceptably high number of children have had a poor learning experience, in poor buildings and resulting in poor performance. I am convinced that we must address the linkage between marginalisation, deprivation and poor education performance if we are to help build a new society.
- (c) Given the incidence of severe disaffection of young people in these areas and also the specific problems of ethnic minorities, the travelling community, special education, the Irish medium and integrated sectors, it is also imperative to ensure that the formal education system and the work of the voluntary and statutory youth sectors is enhanced, particularly to address problems of motivation, morale, lack of self-belief and self-confidence. Unless we take seriously our approach to Social Inclusion we will merely compound our historical legacy of community difficulties and causes of conflict.
- (d) One of the most significant challenges, in preparing our children and young people for the new millennium, will be the use and development of **technology**. This will be an important enhanced resource for classroom teachers and will ensure that all our young people are equipped for the information based society and the knowledge based economy, and can also reap personal and economic

benefit from those skills. The development of technology will also make a major contribution to facilitating dialogue and contact between young people from different backgrounds, in a non-threatening way and help develop respect for diversity and understanding.

6. If we are to ensure that all our children and young people, throughout the community, benefit from the corporate work of the Executive Committee, then I am convinced that our Programme for Government must have education and training as a key strategic objective and that our subsequent policies and programmes are developed and resourced so that we can make a difference, particularly in the immediate future.

7. I would be happy to provide further details, as the process unfolds, so that the agreed strategic objectives are fully supported by relevant and appropriate policies and programmes.

MARTIN McGUINNESS MP MLA
Minister for Education

cc Executive Committee Members
Mr Loughran
NI Permanent Secretaries
Mr McCusker OFM/DFM
Mr Haire OFM/DFM