

From the Minister of Finance



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Laura, a chara

NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE RESTORATION PACKAGE SETTLEMENT

Thank you for your letter of 13 February confirming the details and conditions of the £3.3bn Restoration Package Settlement.

I have serious concerns in relation to a number of areas outlined within your letter and would welcome engagement with you on this at the earliest opportunity.

Public Sector Pay

There is a clear public expectation the financial package will fully address public sector pay pressures. We welcome your agreement to the flexibility we requested to utilise the additional funding for general pressures towards the delivery of public sector pay deals. However, the reality is the current package does not meet this expectation nor provide a sustainable solution.

Sustainability Plan and Revenue Raising

Ministers are united and speak with one voice in the need to invest and reform our public services.

Making the write off of the £559 million for debt repayment conditional on the publication and implementation of a sustainability plan is not acceptable. It is our strong view that these debts exist primarily due to the underfunding of public services.

The Executive has already given a commitment to the British Government to develop a Sustainability Plan with a pre-requisite that the right level of funding is provided. The Government's timescale requiring this to be published by May 2024 is completely unrealistic. It is essential that the Executive is afforded adequate time to give proper consideration to this important matter.

The requirement that we raise £113m through locally generated revenue in the next 12 months is not consistent with a strategic Sustainability Plan. To expect this funding to be generated in such a short space of time can only serve to cause more harm to hard pressed families, households and businesses.

Our message to Westminster is simple.

The Executive should be given time and space to develop and agree a properly thought through Sustainability Plan that will put our finances on a more stabilised footing. It is critical we have the right resources to deliver effective public services for all our citizens.

We ask that the British Government act in good faith. There can be no further damage to our public services.

I look forward to your response to my urgent meeting request.

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**DR CAOIMHE ARCHIBALD MLA
MINISTER OF FINANCE**