

**Office of the First Minister
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✓ 21/4 PS/speaker
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Briefing to follow

HEAD OF ADMIN 21/4
21 APR 2000

RECEIVED

FROM: ROSALIE FLANAGAN

DATE: 21 April 2000

TO: ROBERT CRAWFORD

cc **Mr Jeffrey**
Mr Stephens
Mr McCusker
Mrs Devlin
Mrs Madden
Mr Cosgrave 21/4
Mrs Angus

**BRIEFING FOR SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH LORD
ALDERDICE**

1. Thank you for your minute of 18 April setting out a number of options for the future of the Assembly, which, you suggest, might be discussed at the meeting between the Secretary of State and Lord Alderdice due to take place in early May.
2. My understanding is that the 5 May meeting was arranged to allow the Secretary of State and Lord Alderdice to review the position of the Assembly during suspension. As things currently stand, it seems likely that the political situation will remain unresolved at that time and, accordingly, it would be premature to consider or assess particular options for the future of the Assembly. If the meeting is to go ahead on 5 May we should brief the Secretary of State, and Gerry Cosgrave should, in parallel, brief Lord Alderdice, on the basis that the current arrangements for the Assembly should remain in place pending future political developments, with a pragmatic approach being taken to dealing with Assembly staff who are unoccupied during suspension. This could be done on the basis that those staff would remain in their posts in the Assembly, but might undertake work for their parent Departments as appropriate. This would ensure that the Assembly could return to full operation immediately in the event of restoration.
3. The various options identified in your minute to me could then come into play at a later date if suspension continues and the Secretary of State wishes to take some further steps in relation to the Assembly.

4. If you are content, we will prepare briefing for the Secretary of State and Gerry Cosgrave can brief Lord Alderdice accordingly. I am happy to discuss, although I will be on leave until 2 May.

Rosalie Flanagan

ROSALIE FLANAGAN

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