



M. J. Gallagher

B/f - 22/05

12 March 2001

Dear MLA

USE OF ASSEMBLY RESOURCES DURING THE GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

1. I wrote to you on 2 February 2001 setting out rules to be followed with regard to use of Assembly resources during the general election campaign. We have since learned from Westminster that their rules in this area are to be relaxed, to allow Members of Parliament some flexibility in use of resources normally provided and paid for by the Fees Office. The Assembly Commission has decided that we should follow suit. The following rules have therefore been drawn up for guidance.

Use of Allowances

2. The existing rules on allowances still apply. No mileage or subsistence payments will be paid for expenses incurred in respect of election campaigns.

Constituency Office Accommodation

3. A Member may use his/her constituency office for campaign purposes so long as it is declared to the Finance Office. In consultation with the Member, the Finance Office will agree the percentage split between election use and constituency use. The Member will be expected to meet expenses in terms of rates, rent, electricity, heating etc for that portion of the expenditure during the period which is attributable to the election campaign. Phone bills will have to be disaggregated as well. It is expected that Members will provide their own stationery for election purposes.

MLAs' staff

4. The Personnel Office will continue to pay Members' staff as normal. However, where a member of staff is engaged in the election campaign, an appropriate reimbursement must be made by the Member in respect of the time spent on election duties. The provision about unpaid leave will be treated similarly. Any pension contribution paid by the Assembly on behalf of the Member to a staff pension scheme will be reimbursed by the Member on the same agreed basis.

Financial Assistance for Political Parties

5. As stated in my earlier letter, no monies from this source may be used for election purposes.

Meeting Rooms in Parliament Buildings

6. As before, no rooms may be used for election campaigns or raising of funds.

General

7. It is recognised that the rules above are not exhaustive, and that circumstances will vary from Member to Member. For example, you may wish to pay monthly rent directly rather than through OCA. If it is your intention to use your constituency office, in however small a way, for purposes of the general election, you should complete the attached pro-forma and return it to the Finance Office as soon as possible.
8. When the election is over, we will negotiate with you a final settlement, based on the actual bills received during and after the election. You will be expected to repay the final settlement within 30 days of issue from the Finance Office.

Yours sincerely

Dennis Miller

D A T MILLAR
Director of Finance & Personnel



**NORTHERN IRELAND
ASSEMBLY**

FINANCE OFFICE

DECLARATION

I, Member of the Assembly for
.....(constituency), declare that it is my intention to
make use of my constituency office and/or my staff, currently paid from
OCA, for the purposes of conducting an election campaign either on my
own behalf or on behalf of my party.

It is further my intention to reimburse the Northern Ireland Assembly
with the costs associated with the use of my office and staff for the
campaign after it has been completed.

SignedParty.....

Date.....

- Attending a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the Assembly.
 - Undertaking research or administrative functions which relate directly to the business of the Assembly.
 - Attending meetings for the purpose of representing electors or explaining the application of policy including attending meetings for the purpose of seeking contributions.
 - Attending any ceremony or official function or national or international conference as a representative of the Assembly or with the prior approval of a committee of the Assembly.
2. These Assembly duties do not include a Member's activities that are wholly or mainly in the interests of a party, constituency or organisation.



1 February 2001

Dear MLA

USE OF ASSEMBLY RESOURCES DURING THE GENERAL ELECTION

Introduction

1. The general election to Westminster, expected to be called soon, will be the first general election to the UK Parliament since the establishment of the Assembly. During the run up to the election the business of the Assembly will continue. The Finance Office wishes to ensure that all Members and their staff are aware of the rules covering the use of Assembly resources which will continue to apply. The following guidance has therefore been prepared on the use of the Assembly's resources, facilities and staff in the run-up to polling day.

Use of Allowances

2. It is a requirement of the Members' Allowances Determination that all allowances are to be used **only** for the purpose of Members carrying out their Assembly duties. These duties could include :

- Attending a meeting of the Assembly.
- Attending a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the Assembly.
- Undertaking research or administrative functions which relate directly to the business of the Assembly.
- Attending meetings for the purpose of representing electors or explaining the application of policy including attending meetings for the purpose of seeing constituents.
- Attending any ceremony or official function or national or international conference as a representative of the Assembly or with the prior approval of a committee of the Assembly.

3. These Assembly duties do not include a Member's activities that are wholly in relation to that Member's role as a party spokesperson or representative.

4. Assembly stationery and office equipment must not be used for party purposes. Material in relation to the general election campaign must therefore not be photocopied using Assembly equipment or Assembly stationery. Pre-paid envelopes provided by the Assembly and the Assembly mail system should not be used for the issue of election material or material of a party political nature.

Constituency Office Accommodation

5. All premises, acquired as constituency offices and paid for out of Office Costs Allowance (OCA) must be used only for Assembly activities, and not for party business. Members should be aware that such premises must not be used as a base for canvassing or election campaigning, or any party activity related to elections.

6. Equipment and supplies paid for out of Office Costs Allowance must not be used, either in Parliament Buildings or in a constituency office, for the purposes of canvassing or election campaigning, or any party activity related to elections.

MLA's Staff

7. During the hours that they are employed by an MLA and paid from OCA, employees may not undertake any significant party political activity. Campaigning or assisting in the campaign during a by-election or a general election would constitute "significant party political activity". Employees may however be granted unpaid leave to undertake such activity. The Personnel Office must be informed of any arrangement for unpaid leave in order that salary deductions can be made.

Financial Assistance for Political Parties

8. The Assembly makes payment in accordance with the Financial Assistance for Political Parties Act 1999 to assist political parties represented in the Assembly with any expenses they incur in performing their Assembly duties. As this money is specifically paid in connection with parties roles in the Assembly it must not in any way be used in connection with the general election campaign.

Meeting Rooms in Parliament Buildings

9. During the period of the general election campaign, as at other times, meeting rooms in the Assembly must not be used for the purpose of election campaigning or any party activity related to elections.