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Local & National

DUP calls for victims to get cash regardless of wrangles

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Friday, April 18, 2008

By Noel McAdam

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Cash for victims groups should start being allocated, even if legislation to kick-start the four-man Commission cannot be agreed, the DUP said last night.

As top-level negotiations with Sinn Fein continued behind the scenes, a senior DUP MLA said money already allocated in the Budget should not be unduly further delayed.

Sammy Wilson said: "There is no need to make a crisis out of this Commission. We can resolve that in the longer term."

The move was seen as an attempt to increase the pressure on Sinn Fein, which has insisted the deal struck with the DUP in December on the Commission must be adhered to.

Fast-tracked legislation was brought to a halt in the Assembly last week after a fall-out by the two main Executive parties over appointing one of the four Commissioners as chief and allowing it to operate on a two-thirds majority basis.

Sinn Fein was outraged at the suggestion, which some saw as an attempt to sideline one of the four Commissioners, Patricia MacBride, whose brother was an IRA man shot dead by the SAS.

As they held a series of meetings this week, DUP and Sinn Fein sources have said they hope the legislation can be back on track in the Assembly next Tuesday.

However, Mr Wilson said: "We believe these are actually improvements to the Commission which would help it operate more smoothly.

"But the fact is with the money already allocated, you don't need a Commission or Commissioners to distribute it.

"Can we not just go ahead and administer the monies and make sure it is getting to where it is needed? This is what the victims groups tell me they want," the East Antrim MP added.

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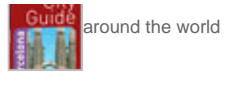


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