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Sort out the problems for victims and survivors

South Belfast News

Anna Lo Alliance Party

As you have no doubt heard in the media there has been some trouble in the Assembly recently over legislation for victims and survivors. The First and Deputy First Minister have made a mess of the legislation on the Victims Commissioners issue. First, they wanted it to go through the Assembly quickly with only a limited scrutiny process. Then, the DUP and Sinn Fein fell out over constructive Alliance amendments to the legislation, and so they decided to delay dealing with the issue.

It is shocking to think that the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) can go into virtual meltdown following positive suggestions from Alliance.

Paisley and McGuinness talk about putting victims first, but actions speak louder than words. All that victims have had from them so far are delays, confusion and bickering over back-room deals.

Alliance suggested limiting the maximum number of Commissioners to four, to ensure that money is spent directly on victims and not an ever-expanding Commission. We also want to make sure that all Commission staff work for the central organisation, to ensure a united approach.

Alliance wants one of the Victims' Commissioners to act as Chief Commissioner, to lead their work and ensure that there is a single, strong and coherent voice to deliver for victims. We also think that, whilst consensus should be aimed for, where it can't be achieved decisions could be taken on a two thirds majority basis. This means that the support of three out of four Commissioners would be needed to make a decision. It is unrealistic to expect unanimity on everything and we can't have a Commission deadlocked and unable to deliver.

Sinn Fein demanded that we drop our amendments, but who are they to tell us what to do? It is our democratic right to propose amendments to legislation, a right that the electorate gave to every MLA elected last March.

During the recent 10th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement some were praising the current administration saying how stable it is, and that it was delivering for local people. But when constructive amendments from the opposition cause a crisis, you have to ask yourself how stable and effective OFMDFM really is?

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Group launch new web portal

Belfast Media Group launched its



Whatever stitch up the DUP and Sinn Fein may have cobbled together on this issue at Christmas is clearly coming apart at the seams. Alliance is not interested in that and neither are victims. We are focused on sorting out the problems which clearly exist, so that victims and survivors get the strong voice they deserve. Alliance will keep the pressure on OFMDFM until we get real progress on this issue.

new 'Belfast Hub' during an official business breakfast in the west of the city last week. The website, will work as a new business and entertainment hub for the city, providing an exciting platform for both readers and advertisers.



Property News

Has the new budget slipped a cool £1k into your pocket?

Finance minister Peter Robinson has suggested the latest budget will make the average householder £1,000 better off as a result of his "record spending plan".

