

Alliance

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland



Northern Ireland's cross-community party

The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

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Progress on Victims' Commissioner needed to stop confidence being undermined

10.50.00am BST (GMT +0100) Tue 25th Sep 2007

Alliance Deputy Leader, Naomi Long MLA, has said that progress is needed urgently on the appointment of a Victims' Commissioner if public confidence is not to be undermined. She was speaking as public speculation is mounting about the names of the applicants being considered for the post.

Naomi Long, who is Deputy Chair of the Committee for OFMDFM, said, "The process to appoint a Victims' Commissioner started under Direct Rule and a short-list of candidates was given to the First and

Deputy First Minister in May of this year. At a meeting of the OFMDFM Committee in the spring, they said it was their intention to announce a decision before July recess but to date no appointment has been made.

"When this was raised by my colleague Sean Neeson after recess, we were asked to be patient; however I think people have been extremely patient already.

"Either the appointment process is flawed, in which case they should say so and



Alliance Deputy Leader Naomi Long MLA

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start again, or the process is fine, but they cannot agree on an outcome. Inability to reach consensus on such an important matter does not bode well for progress on other sensitive issues.

"My main concern is that, as the delay continues, there is increasing public speculation about both the reasons for it and the identities of the applicants. Such speculation around the circumstances of the appointment has the potential to make it extremely difficult for any appointee to gain the confidence of the public.

"The Interim Victims' Commissioner did an excellent job, but her work was to a degree overshadowed by the controversy surrounding the circumstances of her appointment, which did her a great disservice. It would be a shame if her successor was to suffer from similar difficulties, given the importance of this issue."

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Published and promoted by The Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, 88 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HE.

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