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Mr Robin Newton MLA
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9 January 2017

Robin A Chara,

Over ten difficult and testing years, in the role of deputy First Minister, I have sought with all my energy and determination to serve all the people of the north and the island of Ireland by making the power-sharing government work.

Throughout that time, I have worked with successive DUP First Ministers and, while our parties are diametrically opposed ideologically and politically, I have always sought to exercise my responsibilities in good faith and to seek resolutions rather than recrimination. I have worked tirelessly to defend our peace process, to advance the reconciliation of our community and to build a better future for our young people.

At times I have stretched and challenged republicans and nationalists in my determination to reach out to our unionist neighbours. It is a source of deep personal frustration that those efforts have not always been reciprocated by unionist leaders. At times, they have been met with outright rejection.

The equality, mutual respect and all-Ireland approaches enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement have never been fully embraced by the DUP. Apart from the negative attitude to nationalism and to the Irish identity and culture, there has been a shameful disrespect towards many other sections of our community. Women, the LGBT community and ethnic minorities have all felt this prejudice. And for those who wish to live their lives through the medium of Irish, elements in the DUP have exhibited the most crude and crass bigotry.

Over this period successive British governments have undermined the process of change by refusing to honour agreements, refusing to resolve the issues of the past while imposing austerity and Brexit against the wishes and best interests of people here.

Against this backdrop the current scandal over the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) has

It is my firm view that the DUP's handling of this issue has been completely out of step with a public mood which is rightly outraged at the squandering of public money and the allegations of misconduct and corruption. The public are demanding robust action and accountability but the DUP, in particular its leader Arlene Foster, have refused to accept this.

The DUP leader has a clear conflict of interest. She was the Minister responsible for the RHI scheme at its inception. No cost controls were put in place and warnings were ignored. This has led to an enormously damaging pressure on our public finances and a crisis of confidence in the political institutions.

The Minister responsible for the RHI scheme should have no Executive role in overseeing how this will be rectified.

There are significant conflict of interest issues and I have urged Arlene Foster to stand aside without prejudice to ensure confidence in the necessary investigation and in the wider public interest. These institutions only have value if they enjoy the confidence and support of the people they were established to serve. They only have meaning if they are delivering fairly for all our people based on the principles of equality and mutual respect on which they were founded.

I have sought to maximise the potential of the institutions for forward progress in a society emerging from a bitter conflict. But the refusal of Arlene Foster to recognise the public anger or to exhibit any humility in the context of the RHI scandal is indicative of a deep seated arrogance which is inflicting enormous damage on the Executive, the Assembly and the entire body politic.

The First Minister has refused to stand aside, without prejudice, pending a preliminary report from an investigation.

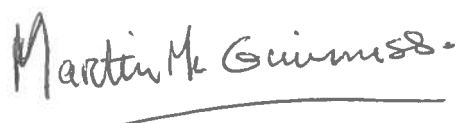
That position is not credible or tenable.

The Irish and British governments have internationally binding obligations to uphold issues of equality and parity of esteem. They need to fulfil these obligations.

Therefore, it is with deep regret and reluctance, that I am tendering my resignation as deputy First Minister with effect from 5pm on Monday, 9th January, 2017.

In the available period Sinn Fein will not nominate to the position of deputy First Minister. We now need an election to allow the people to make their own judgement on these issues democratically at the ballot box.

Yours sincerely



MARTIN McGUINNESS MLA
deputy First Minister