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## SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE COMMISSION ON PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

On behalf of the Scottish Government, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the work of the Commission on Parliamentary Reform. I note that the three key areas of focus for the Commissioner are:

- to look at how the Scottish Parliament engages with the people of Scotland;
- the identity of the Parliament, as separate from the Scottish Government; and
- whether the Parliament has the right 'checks and balances' in place to ensure effective parliamentary business.

The Government's starting point is that it fully supports the principle of periodically reviewing the Scottish Parliament's working practices and procedures to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The Scottish Government will, of course, be ready to work with whatever reforms the Parliament ultimately decides to pursue.

I have been following the Commission's evidence-taking sessions and noting with interest the various views emerging, particularly from the perspective of how these might impact on the delivery of Government business. Whatever conclusions are ultimately reached, I would wish to emphasise the importance of ensuring that the Parliament's procedures remain flexible and proportionate enough to accommodate the varied range of business which comes before it. In taking forward its work, the Government would recommend that the Commission takes into account recent reviews of the parliamentary processes, and particularly those undertaken by last session's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

Scottish Government Ministers are often called to appear before the committees of the UK Parliament and endeavour to do so whenever possible.

There is a need for the Parliament to continually adapt its processes and procedures as the constitutional settlement continues to develop, including implementation of the Scotland Act 2016. The current joint working group that is considering how the Budget process needs to be revised to reflect the increased tax-raising powers available to Government, offers an example of Parliament recognising that need.

The Government notes with interest the final strand of the Commission's remit, to define the identity of the Parliament as distinct to the Scottish Government. The Government believes it is important that members of the public have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the different institutions of government which exist in Scotland. The Government would be supportive of the Parliament building upon its already strong Internet and social media presence to improve public understanding of what it does and the Government would be happy to consider whether there opportunities for joint-working which could be explored.

Finally, I note the constructive engagement there has been between the Commission's Secretariat and Scottish Government officials. I have asked my officials to continue this active dialogue in order to share some further technical procedural issues that the Commission may wish to consider.

I look forward to continuing to engage with you as your work progresses and look forward to attending the session you have planned for Party Business Managers.

Yours sincerely,



**Joe FitzPatrick MSP**  
**Minister for Parliamentary Business**