



# Northern Ireland Assembly

# Assembly Chamber



- The **Northern Ireland Assembly** is the devolved legislature of Northern Ireland. It has power to legislate in a wide range of areas that are not explicitly reserved to the Parliament of the United Kingdom, and to appoint the Northern Ireland Executive. It sits at Parliament Buildings at Stormont in Belfast.

# Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast



- The Assembly is a unicameral, democratically elected body comprising 108 members who are known as Members of the Legislative Assembly, or MLAs. Members are elected under the single transferable vote form of proportional representation.

# The modern Assembly and suspensions

- The modern Northern Ireland Assembly was first elected on 25 June 1998 and first met on 1 July 1998. However, it only existed in "shadow" form until 2 December 1999 when full powers were devolved to the Assembly. Since then the Assembly has operated only intermittently and has been suspended on four occasions:
  - 11 February – 30 May 2000
  - 10 August 2001 (24 hour)
  - 22 September 2001 (24 hour)
  - 14 October 2002 – 7 May 2007
- Attempts to secure its operation on a permanent basis have been frustrated by disagreements between the two main unionist parties (the Democratic Unionist Party and the Ulster Unionist Party).



The Assembly is chaired by the Speaker and three Deputy Speakers, of whom one is appointed Principal Deputy Speaker. Lord Alderdice served as the first Speaker of the Assembly from July 1998, but retired in March 2004. The position has been filled since 8 May 2007 by William Hay. In the Assembly, the Speaker and ten other members constitute a quorum.

The Assembly Commission is the body corporate of the Assembly. It ensures that the Assembly has the property, staff and services it needs to carry out its work.



The Assembly has 12 statutory committees, each of which is charged with scrutinising the activities of a particular ministerial department. It also has 6 permanent standing committees and can establish temporary ad hoc committees.

The following are the current statutory and standing committees of the Assembly:

### Statutory (departmental) committees

Agriculture and Rural Development Committee  
Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee  
Education Committee  
Employment and Learning Committee  
Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee  
Environment Committee  
Finance and Personnel Committee  
Health, Social Services and Public Safety Committee  
Justice Committee  
Regional Development Committee  
Social Development Committee  
Committee for the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister

### Standing committees

Assembly and Executive Review Committee  
Audit Committee  
Business Committee  
Procedures Committee  
Public Accounts Committee  
Standards and Privileges Committee



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