



## Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

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Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London, SW1A 2AA

24 January 2018

*Dear Prime Minister,*

On 22 January, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee visited Brussels to inform our work into the land border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. We met informally with a number of stakeholders to discuss the inquiry and the progress made so far.

It became clear to us that Northern Ireland is at a disadvantage in the Brexit process due to the ongoing absence of NI Executive Ministers. Scottish and Welsh Ministers are able to represent the interests of their devolved nations in Brussels whenever necessary. This is a particular irony given the central importance of Northern Ireland in the Brexit process. We understand that the previous Secretary of State for Northern Ireland travelled to Brussels when possible but this cannot be a long-term solution. Ministers for the other devolved legislatures will be putting their case on a regular basis in Brussels and the Secretary of State's time is limited.

It is not satisfactory to leave NI officials to manage without a Ministerial presence. Officials do not have the same level of access and influence as Ministers and cannot be expected to deliver the same results.

The best solution is for NI Executive Ministers to be the voice of Northern Ireland in Brexit. If that cannot happen then urgent action will be necessary to ensure that voice is heard. We would be interested in your proposals but are of the view that whatever the outcome of the talks that resume today, a minister is needed immediately who will be prepared to spend a significant amount of time in Brussels performing the role specifically for Northern Ireland that Scottish and Welsh Ministers do for their nations.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*Andrew Minister.*