

How laws are made in the Northern Ireland Assembly

KEY:

N: Narrator

M: Male Speaker

F: Female Speaker

N: We all need rules, or laws, to keep order in society and improve people's lives. Most laws for Northern Ireland are made by the Northern Ireland Assembly. A proposal for a new law is called a Bill. Most Bills are brought to the Assembly by the Ministers in charge of government departments. Before a Bill can begin its journey through the Assembly, it must be checked by the Speaker to ensure that everything is in order.

M: Speaker: The next item of business on the order paper is the first stage of the Budget Bill. I call on the Minister for Finance...

N: Stage one of the law making process is a brief announcement in the Assembly Chamber that the Bill has been introduced.

M: MLA: I beg to introduce the Budget (No.2) Bill Northern Ireland 2016.

N: MLAs get a copy of the Bill the next day, to study before the second stage when they debate and vote on the main aims of the Bill.

M: I beg to move that the second stage of the Budget (No.2) Bill 2016 be agreed.

N: Do we need this law? Is it a good idea? If a majority vote 'Yes', the Bill moves onto Committee Stage. A Committee of MLAs studies the Bill line by line.

F: MLA: It's worth considering further, so...

N: And hears the views of the experts and the public. A report is produced for the whole Assembly, which may suggest changes to the Bill, called Amendments. (MUSIC)

M: Speaker: The next item of business is the Consideration Stage of the Budget (No.2) Bill.

N: Back in the Chamber for Consideration Stage, MLAs debate and vote on every part of the Bill, including any changes proposed by the Committee or other MLAs. Further Consideration Stage is the last chance to change the Bill. MLAs debate and vote on any further proposals for Amendments.

M: MLA: I believe that I present to the House a budget which will meet our needs...

N: At Final Stage, the whole Bill as amended, is discussed one final time and the Assembly votes on whether or not it should become law. ... those in favour say 'Aye'. (AYE) Contrary 'No'? (LOUDER NO) If the majority of MLAs vote 'Yes', the Bill is passed.

M: Speaker: Budget (No. 2) Bill has passed. Thank you. (PEN SCRATCHING)

N: It is then sent to London for formal approval by the Monarch. After this, it becomes law and is called an Act of the Northern Ireland Assembly.