

Re: Revised RHI attack statement

Timothy Johnston

Sent: 12 December 2016 17:53

To: Clive McFarland

Cc: John Robinson; Richard Bullock; Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry; Christopher Stalford [Christopher_stalford1912@outlook.com]; Deborah Armstrong; Gregory Campbell; Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

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On 12 Dec 2016, at 16:33, Clive McFarland <clivemcfarland@dup.org.uk> wrote:

Taking on board some comments from John refering to "data protection & privacy legislation" rather than specifically the Data Protection Act.

Will the oppositions support measures to curb RHI costs?

DUP MLA Christopher Stalford has called on Opposition parties within the Assembly to state whether they will support proposals brought forward by the Economy Minister to reduce the financial impact of the renewable heat scheme.

Pointing out that some parties ignored clear warnings about costs of the scheme when they opposed its closure, he said:

"The revision of history surrounding the RHI scheme must be stopped. Our oppositions appear to believe they can now not only decide what the outcome of investigations should be before they have been completed, but that they are entitled to their own facts in order to reach those predetermined conclusions.

Both the UUP and SDLP leaders personally voted against the closure of the RHI scheme. They claim it was because the Minister said it was a good scheme. However, they carefully leave out what the Minister told them when the proposal to close the RHI scheme was laid before the Assembly:

"I have to sound an important warning: opposing the legislation means opposing the ability to suspend the scheme at all. That means continuing with an open-ended commitment to fund renewable heat, no matter what the cost". (NI Assembly Hansard: 15th February 2016)

I am glad Simon Hamilton has indicated he will bring forward proposals to significantly reduce the costs of this scheme. The opposition parties should now give a commitment they will support these proposals and not attempt to play party politics. Having ignored clear warnings in the past and voted for "an open ended commitment.... no matter what the cost" we deserve to know if they will continue to play games on this important matter.

The Department for the Economy is also writing to all applicants, seeking consent for the publication of details. This is the proper mechanism to achieve such a goal, rather than the SDLP leader's proposal that a Minister or a Department should wilfully ignore data protection and privacy legislation. Again, it is the Economy Minister who is not only taking action, but taking the correct course of action whilst our oppositions choose cheap stunts to grab a headline, regardless of the legal consequences.

There is a need for some answers from our oppositions. What would happen in another legislature if parties ignored such a clear and stark warning about open-ended commitments and would keep a scheme in operation "no matter what the cost"? Also, what would happen to any other opposition leader who called for a wilful breach of privacy legislation?"

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