



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

The Presiding Officer
Rt Hon Tricia Marwick MSP

David Stewart MSP
Convener, Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
T3.40

29 May 2014

Dear David

Public Petition PE1514

Thank you for your letter dated 8 May in relation to Time for Reflection.

Time for Reflection is an opportunity for MSPs and members of the public to join together before a meeting of the Parliament commences. As the Committee knows, Time for Reflection is normally held in the Chamber as the first item before parliamentary business commences each week.

It is important to note that Time for Reflection was established by a resolution of the Parliament in 1999 and is not covered by *Standing Orders*. There has been no demand in this parliamentary session in the Bureau for a further resolution on Time for Reflection.

As Presiding Officer, I invite contributors to lead Time for Reflection following agreement with the Parliamentary Bureau and, critically, based on nominations made by Members. Contributions are made from both religious and non-religious perspectives. Contributions, although not a formal part of parliamentary business, are recorded in the *Official Report*.

Speakers at Time for Reflection are varied, reflecting both religious and secular viewpoints and, unlike prayers in the Westminster Parliament (which currently have no multi-faith or non-faith element), members of the public are able to watch and hear Time for Reflection either in person or through the web feed.

You may wish to note that, recently, the Bureau agreed a forward programme of contributors. It also agreed that the Bureau would further consider Time for Reflection as an item in the Chamber at a future meeting to review whether the Time for Reflection contributions meet the objectives set out in the resolution of Parliament.

The format and management of Time for Reflection was agreed by the Parliament in 1999. In Session 2, the Bureau reviewed the contributions to Time for Reflection and agreed that religions and faiths with smaller numbers of adherents should be included to a greater extent than the proportion within Scotland would indicate (based on the Census return 2001). The overall percentage of Church of Scotland contributors was

reduced accordingly and the following table has been used as a guide since then (based on 36 contributions per year)—

Religion/faith	Contributions	Percentage (approx)
Church of Scotland	12	33.3
Roman Catholic	8	22.2
Other Christian	4	11.1
Buddhist	1	2.8
Hindu	1	2.8
Jewish	1	2.8
Muslim	2	5.5
Sikh	1	2.8
Another religion	1	2.8
None	5	14

The Bureau is aware that the figures on religion in Scotland from the latest census were contained in Release 2A which was published in the latter part of last year. The Committee may wish to note that Census figures (rather than any discrete research or guidance from any organisation) have been used as a guide to contributions. In agreeing a programme of contributors, nominations from Members are key and including as many of the nominations as possible is important.

Another important consideration for the Parliamentary Bureau in examining Time for Reflection will be that any suggestions which might be taken forward would not result in a system that becomes expensive, bureaucratic and time consuming to operate.

I have already highlighted that nominations from Members are an important part of the process. Usually the contributor is a constituent nominated by a Member and this provides an opportunity for Members to highlight people in local communities. It also protects Time for Reflection and ensures that it does not become an opportunity for organisations or individuals to engage Members in any campaign in the Debating Chamber - there are other avenues available for engagement with Members.

I trust the Committee will find this information useful and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

TRICIA MARWICK

Contributors to end of year 3 in Session 4 (Session 4 ends April 2016): May 2011- April 2014 = 102 contributions in total

Religion/faith	Percentage (approx)	Actual Number	Percentage	Diff %
Church of Scotland	33.3	42	41.18	7.88
Roman Catholic	22.2	13	12.75	-9.45
Other Christian	11.1	17	16.66	5.56
Buddhist	2.8	2	1.96	-0.84
Hindu	2.8	2	1.96	-0.84
Jewish	2.8	3	2.94	+0.14
Muslim	5.5	5	4.90	-0.60
Sikh	2.8	4	3.92	+1.12
Another religion	2.8	1	0.98	-1.82
None	14	13	12.75	-1.25
	100	102	100	

Gender	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Male	25	26	27
Female	5	10	9

Youth contributors	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	2	2	4

Community/third sector	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	4	2	4