

Our Ref: AMcK/JC

3 January 2008

Melanie McGinnis  
Priorities and Budget Consultation  
Room E5:20  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont  
Belfast BT4 3SR

Dear Ms McGinnis

**Re: Building a Better Future: Draft Programme for Government, Budget and accompanying PSA Framework 2008 – 2011 and Draft Investment Strategy 2008 – 2018**

The Equality Commission welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above documents. We recognise the crucial importance of successive Programmes for Government priorities, plans and budgets and their potential impact on equality of opportunity and good relations in Northern Ireland.

The Programme for Government is a real opportunity to provide leadership on equality of opportunity and good relations at the highest levels. We have some concerns about the content of the Draft Programme as outlined in our response, concerns relating to the difficulty of identifying the links between the Draft Programme, the Draft Budget and the PSA Framework and thus the likely impact overall on equality and good relations.

We also have concerns which we will take up separately about the absence of an accompanying Equality Impact Assessment of the Draft Programme for Government and Draft Budget, despite commitments that this would be undertaken. This represents a serious omission and will mean that responses will not adequately reflect equality concerns.

Key to the delivery of the PfG through the budget will be government's ability to include equality and social considerations through public sector procurement. This lies at the heart of service delivery as well as major infrastructure investment. The forthcoming guidance, prepared by the Commission with Central Procurement Directorate, on *Equality of Opportunity and Sustainable Development in Public Sector Procurement* should be of considerable assistance with this and we will let you have final publication details when available.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarification on any of the issues raised.

Yours sincerely

**Evelyn Collins**  
**Chief Executive**



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