

Dear Presiding Officer

I hope you and the family are keeping well during this difficult time.

Following a virtual meeting of the Scottish Parliamentary Labour Party (SPLP) yesterday, I am writing to express concern that Parliament has gone into a two week recess period. We feel strongly that during these difficult and unprecedented times it is even more important that there is a proper system of scrutiny to hold the Scottish Government to account.

Whilst I'm sure all political parties and members are trying to work constructively with the government to best assist our constituents, key workers, business etc., there are on-going issues and problems that require urgent answers from the First Minister and her government; not least the lack of testing, problems with appropriate PPE and the sadly increasing numbers of deaths in Scotland. Therefore, I am formally requesting that you recall parliament for one day each week during this recess period for a question session with the First Minister and her government.

The SPLP also considers that a system of virtual working for the parliament must be possible (as it seems to be in other jurisdictions) and, therefore, asks that you work with the SPCB, the bureau and your officials to instigate such a system as a matter of some urgency. Failing this, a fair system of representation in the chamber for voting purposes must be implemented. To this end we would be grateful if you would reconvene the Parliamentary Bureau as soon as possible to consider these matters.

Finally, as I have already intimated to you in previous correspondence, the SPLP have asked me to formally request that a dedicated Covid committee be instigated as soon as possible. The make-up of this committee will, of course, be a matter for the bureau to decide, and we also expect that the existing committees will continue with their own on-going work on this matter.

Please convey the SPLP thanks to all staff who are continuing to work hard to support the parliament, whether at home or on-site, during this extraordinary and challenging time.

Take care and keep well

Kind regards

Elaine Smith MSP

Business Manager Scottish Labour