

RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT REVIEW OF ADVERTISING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. It is a cause of great concern that the review fails to make mention of the Irish language, despite the "robust action" promised Irish in the Good Friday Agreement. Government advertising should be placed with the daily Irish language newspaper Lá and with the new Irish language community radio station, Raidió Fáilte.
2. Recruitment advertising should be weighted to ensure maximum access to areas of need where joblessness is highest.
3. It is a disgrace that thousands of pounds of public money are wasted by placing the Belfast Planning Notices in the Belfast Telegraph, News Letter, and Irish News instead of in the Andersonstown News Group. This situation should be rectified immediately to save money and ensure wider access to the notices by the people of Belfast.
4. It's essential that advertising be weighted to ensure equality across the four main political blocks, UUP, DUP, SDLP, Sinn Féin. It's noteworthy that while the pro-UUP newspaper (Belfast Telegraph), pro-SDLP (Irish News), pro-DUP (News Letter) newspaper all receive millions of pounds in government advertising without going through any tendering or value for money process, the newspaper with a pro-Sinn Féin editorial line, Daily Ireland, is denied ALL government recruitment and public notice advertising. Daily Ireland should be on all advertising schedules.
5. The total reach of a newspaper group should be considered in assessing advertising schedules. Thus Daily Ireland should be considered along with the Andersonstown News, North Belfast News, Lá and South Belfast News, which, would, of course, give it a circulation much greater than the News Letter's and equivalent to the Irish News.
6. We note that OFMDFM are concerned that appointing one agency to oversee government advertising would be unwise because of "the adverse impact such a move would have on the local advertising agency marketplace if a substantial revenue resource was removed." However, when lobbied by community groups on the need to secure 35 jobs at Daily Ireland by dealing with it equitably, government said the potential loss of jobs in a TSN area couldn't be considered in its decision making. This new attitude should inform the approach to Daily Ireland also.

In summary, we recommend:

1. End to the block on recruitment and public notice advertising in Daily Ireland immediately.
2. An immediate start to government campaign and classified (recruitment and public notice) advertising in Lá.
3. The placing of Planning Notices for Belfast in the Andersonstown News Group.
4. All advertising campaigns to consider how to achieve maximum impact in areas of need.

Yours sincerely

Charles Fisher