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**Committee on
Standards in
Public Life**

Nicola Sturgeon MSP
Gordon Lamb House
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04 August 2016

Dear First Minister,

I am writing to you in your capacity as leader of the Scottish National Party.

In July 2015, I wrote to you about the reform of party political finance. In the view of my Committee, it remains a key issue of concern for the public as evidenced by recent press stories about donors and honours, and expenses and spending in elections. One of the conclusions reached by the Committee at the time of its 2011 report on party finance, was that the system whilst not corrupt, was perceived as corruptible.

That report recommended a carefully balanced package of reforms intended to be accepted as a whole. We argued at the time that the recommendations should not be 'cherry picked' so as not to unduly benefit or disadvantage any one party. Following the report's publication, the three main parties convened talks. But those talks failed and party funding remains largely unreformed.


I accept that five years on, the figures on which our 2011 analysis were based need revising and, where possible, gaps in information filled. We therefore commissioned Dr Michael Pinto-Duschinsky to produce a further research paper on British Party Parliamentary Candidate Expenditures and Funding 2010-2015, and I have enclosed his papers with this letter for your information.

I am also now asking the leaders of the main political parties to re-convene cross party talks to look again at possible reforms to bring greater integrity into the funding of political parties. We are under no illusion as to the complex nature of these issues; cross-party consensus and a great deal of political will is required if this issue is to be resolved.

In the absence of cross-party consensus for wholesale reform, the Committee remains interested in exploring smaller reforms which would begin to improve the integrity of party political funding and help avoid the over-reliance of the major parties on a small number of big donors.

Given the destructive nature of this issue for politics in the UK, we believe it is necessary to continue to press for reform.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Bew". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and 'B'.

Lord Bew
Chair, Committee on Standards in Public Life