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## PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE 25 MARCH 2003

Col 3053 ....

**Institutional Child Abuse (PE535)**

**The Convener:** The next petition for consideration is PE535, from Mr Christopher Daly, and concerns institutional child abuse. Mr Daly was particularly concerned that the Executive should follow the example of the Irish Government in recognising the need to acknowledge and support victims of past childhood abuse.

The Irish Government set up a commission to inquire into child abuse in Ireland and allocated £4 million per annum to establish a dedicated professional counselling service in all regions for victims of abuse. It also announced proposals concerning the mandatory reporting of abuse.

We sought the views of both the Executive and the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on survivors of childhood sexual abuse. In its response, the Executive indicates that it is considering whether an inquiry of the sort requested, or some other forum, should be

Col 3054 established to consider cases of abuse in institutions in Scotland and what other role the Executive might take in addressing those cases. It states that it will also consider the experiences of institutional child abuse in other countries.

The cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on survivors of childhood sexual abuse is of the view that it is right to expect such an inquiry and that an unreserved apology from the religious orders concerned to survivors would be appropriate.

Although the Executive response is positive to the extent that it indicates a willingness to consider some form of inquiry, it is short on detail and makes no mention of a timetable for a decision on how it intends to advance the matter. It is suggested that we write back to the Executive requesting that it develops its thinking on this extremely important matter and that it provides the committee with an update on progress early in the new session. In view of the complex issues involved and the intervening parliamentary elections, a reasonable amount of time should be provided for that; a reply could be requested by the middle of June 2003. That would allow the committee's successors to consider the petition again in advance of the summer recess. Is that agreed?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*