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Tuesday, November 4, 2008

North's appointments chief scathing over leaks

DAN KEENAN

THE WOMAN charged with overseeing public appointments was told the names of Northern Ireland's four victims commissioners in a supermarket two weeks before they were made public.

Public appointments commissioner Felicity Huston complained in her annual report that the episode was blighted by "gossip and speculation", and that she had to monitor the government office that in turn resources her office.

Regarding the appointments of Brendan McAllister, Patricia McBride, Bertha McDougall and Michael Nesbitt as victims commissioners, Ms Huston was scathing of information leaks.

"It is unacceptable for such leaks of personal information to occur," she said. "Individuals must be able to apply for a public appointment and know that they will be treated with dignity and confidentiality."

The appointments are being challenged by Michelle Williamson, whose parents died in the IRA Shankill bombing in 1993.

On the running of her office, she said:"My office is housed in the middle of the civil servants I regulate. My budget is controlled by a department I oversee. I cannot appoint my own staff."

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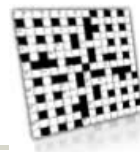
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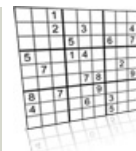
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