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**Committee of Public Accounts**  
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8<sup>th</sup> March 2012

Mr. Brendan Howlin T.D.  
Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform  
Government Buildings  
Upper Merrion Street  
Dublin 2.

Dear Minister.

Thank you for your letter of 8<sup>th</sup> February.

I cannot say that I agree with you about a member of the Oireachtas not sitting on a selection committee, because that would be perceived as “compromising the independence of the post of the Comptroller and Auditor General.” By whom and why?

I perceive what you say as a reflection on the integrity of members of the Oireachtas. If we are not considered sound enough to sit on an interviewing board how can the public believe that we can be relied upon to legislate?

You are also suggesting that civil servants sitting on an interview board are not conflicted, something the public might not agree with either, with good reason.

What do you mean by a “TLAC-type approach”? “Type” is a flexible description.

Will civil servants be on the interviewing board; will they be in the majority and will Accounting Officers, who will have to answer to the new C&AG, be represented? How many qualified accountants and human resources professionals from the private sector will be on the board?

A perception is growing among politicians and members of the public that public service interview boards should have a majority of external members, among them professionals and, I would say, politicians. This would balance any possibility of a cultural and/or vocational mindset among public servants on the boards unconsciously, or consciously, influencing outcomes.

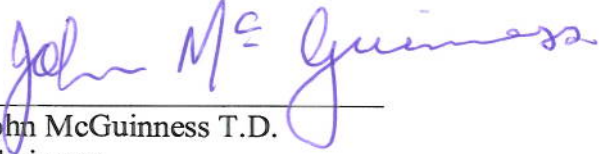
In my opinion, the process of selecting a C&AG should be beyond reproach, given the independence that the C&AG has to have from the public service. To be blunt: I do not think it proper that Accounting Officers should have a role in selecting a C&AG, an officer they will be reporting to.

I believe, Minister, that the introduction of new blood, new ideas and private sector experience of modern financial and administration methods would be enormously helpful to

your efforts to revitalise and reform our public service. These should not be impeded by a bias, however arising, among a group of interviewees.

What better way to signal a new way of doing business than to create a role in the process for the Public Accounts Committee. The Committee is willing to take on the responsibility, in the national interest. My fear is that you seem reluctant to take that bold step.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John McGuinness". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and the last name "McGuinness" clearly legible.

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John McGuinness T.D.  
Chairman