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Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
The Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

8 January 2018

*Dear Theresa,*

As you know, over recent weeks I have been undergoing a number of medical tests on my lungs. In the last few days I have been told that I have a small lesion in my right lung which needs to be removed. Clearly, my long term health and my family are my priorities and I intend to proceed with surgery at the earliest opportunity. While the operation is expected to address the issue and I will get back to work relatively quickly, recovering from surgery and regaining my strength will take several weeks.

I recognise that this comes at an important moment for politics in Northern Ireland. I feel intensely the impact on public services of the continuing absence of devolved government. There is an urgent need to re-start talks between the parties. We are now well into overtime to re-establish an Executive if further intervention into the day to day affairs of Northern Ireland is to be avoided.

Securing the positive outcome for Northern Ireland and the Island of Ireland following the UK's departure from the EU will continue to be at the forefront as we enter the next stage of the negotiations. Other pressing issues also need to be addressed including the launch of the public consultation on implementing the Stormont House legacy bodies to help respond to the needs of victims and survivors of the Troubles.

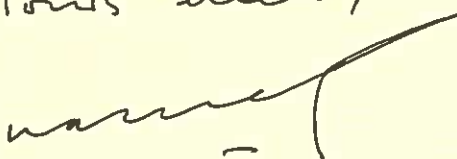
I had expected to continue to lead this essential work with renewed intent in the immediate weeks ahead. I recognise, however, that as a result of my forthcoming surgery I will not be able to give the effort, energy and complete focus needed at this important time if we are to secure the positive outcomes both you and I are committed to achieving. In the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland and the Government as a whole, with much regret, I believe that the right thing at this time is for me to stand down from my current responsibilities.

It has been a huge privilege to serve in your Government and to serve the people of Northern Ireland as Secretary of State. I have very much enjoyed the role and been moved by the spirit, determination and kindness of so many people. Despite the challenges and the huge frustrations felt as a result of the lack of devolved government,

Northern Ireland has so much potential and we can be positive as to what can be achieved in the years ahead. The parties in Northern Ireland should grab hold of this and get on with delivering this shared future benefiting the whole community.

Rather than looking for reasons not to restore the Executive the parties should focus on why this matters now more than ever. My earnest wish is that we see devolved government restored as quickly as possible. The parties have got over much bigger issues in the past and at this important time they have a duty to do so now.

Thank you for your own personal kindness and thoughtfulness – it has meant a great deal. My focus will now be on getting on with surgery, getting on with my recovery and getting back to frontline political duties and my responsibilities as MP for Old Bexley & Sidcup at the earliest opportunity. With Cathy and my children, I am blessed in having a loving and supportive family around me who give me strength and will help me through to the speediest recovery.

Yours ever,  


**RT HON JAMES BROKESHIRE MP  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**