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Bruce Crawford MSP
Finance and Constitution Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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Dear Bruce,

Thank you for your letter of 24 October regarding the Finance and Constitution Committee's scrutiny of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill. The Secretary of State for Scotland and I look forward to discussing these issues with you when we appear before the Committee on 8 November.

As we leave the EU, it is the Government's overriding objective to deliver a smooth and orderly exit and as part of that, ensure no new barriers to living and doing business are created within the UK.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will ensure we have a functioning statute book on the day we leave the EU. The Bill also temporarily replicates the current frameworks that exist under EU law, so businesses and individuals know which laws apply while we undertake discussions with the devolved administrations on where common approaches will and will not be required in future. The UK Government has been clear that we will only seek to establish common frameworks where they are needed and that we expect this process to result in a significant increase in the decision-making power of each devolved administration. The Government has always been open to suggestions as to how the Bill could be improved – though we have also been clear that we cannot accept any changes that risk undermining the Bill as a whole and the benefits of the UK internal market. The UK Government will carefully consider the views expressed by the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government, as well the views of the UK Parliament and the other devolved administrations.

Since the Bill's introduction to the UK Parliament, the First Secretary of State and the Secretary for State for Scotland have met with the Scottish Government's Deputy First Minister and Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe. The Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations met last month where, as your letter notes, principles were agreed that will guide the analysis on where common approaches are needed and where they will not be needed. Further to this Ministerial engagement, official level engagement is ongoing on the Bill, including discussion of the amendments put forward by the Scottish and Welsh Governments.

The Bill is at an early stage of its consideration by the UK Parliament and as you will appreciate we cannot pre-empt the debate in the Committee stage of the Bill, which will commence on 14 November. I note that the Bill's Committee stage in the House of Commons will include debate of amendments put forward by MPs that reflect the Scottish and Welsh Governments proposals. The Government looks forward to this debate and would also welcome any further observations from the Finance and Constitution Committee in the course of its scrutiny of the Bill.

The Secretary of State for Scotland and I look forward to discussing these issues in more detail with you during the evidence session scheduled on the 8 November.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

**ROBIN WALKER MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
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