A New Year’s Message from Michelle O’Neill



2024 marked the return of the political institutions, bringing with it a new horizon and immense opportunities for people here.

We fought hard for this return because we are committed to delivering for workers, families, and everyone in our community.

The return of the Assembly and Executive marked a moment of possibility.

People wanted the Assembly and Executive back because they wanted real change in their lives.

They rightly wanted political parties back around the table, working together for them and their families.

Our greatest strength lies firmly in our people, and by empowering them, we can seize the incredible opportunities that lie ahead.

Whether you're from Pomeroy or Portaferry, the Shankill Road or Ballymurphy, as First Minister for all, I am committed to representing you and delivering hope and opportunity for you and your family.

My guiding principle is to serve everyone equally across our community, working relentlessly to make a real and positive change in people's lives.

We've made significant progress on key issues that affect people right across society.

One of the Executive's first acts was to award public sector workers the fair pay increase they absolutely deserved.

Projects that were stalled for years due to the absence of an Executive are now coming to fruition. Major developments, like the A5 and Strule campus, are progressing, while Belfast's state-of-the-art transport hub is now open—bringing us one step closer to a cleaner, greener society.

Finance Minister Caoimhe Archibald secured vital additional funding for essential services like health and education, while childcare costs have been subsidised, putting more money back in families' pockets as we continue working on long-term strategies to reduce costs further.

Momentum is also building behind the expansion of Magee University, with progress continuing towards delivering 10,000 students at the campus.

Despite the challenges of 14 years of British government austerity, the Executive has come together to agree budgets and launch our draft Programme for Government, laying the foundation for a brighter future.

Tragically, 2024 saw seven women murdered in the North. Behind every death is a family left shattered by grief.

As a society, we must and can do better.

That's why launching the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls strategy was a top priority for this Executive, and why I will continue to ensure the strategy's targets are delivered.

We all share a responsibility to challenge the misogyny that enables such heinous crimes to persist.

Women should feel safe in every street, town, and city across this island.

As a leader, my job is to keep pushing us forward, united in purpose, to bring about real change in people's lives.

The potential we have is limitless.

As a mother and grandmother, I want the best opportunities in life for our young people here at home.

A future where our children can realise their full potential— with access to good jobs, a roof over their heads, and lives full of exciting opportunities.

Local ministers are now in the driving seat, making decisions that will shape the lives of people here, with your best interests at heart.

Together, we're building a brighter and better future—one that we can all be proud of. A future defined by prosperity, progress, and positivity.

As we write the next chapter, let's stay united and chart this path forward together.

I recognise there is still much to do, and I am more determined than ever to continue delivering strong leadership and positive change.

Let’s embrace the opportunities ahead, united in purpose, as we build a brighter future for everyone who calls this island home.

I wish you all a happy, peaceful, and prosperous 2025.

Athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh.