# First Minister and deputy accused of failing Northern Ireland Assembly



First Minister Michelle O’Neill and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly stand accused of a gross dereliction of duty as Paula Bradshaw, chairwoman of the Executive Office scrutiny committee, raises alarm over the stagnation within the Northern Ireland Assembly. During her appearance on BBC NI’s Sunday Politics programme, Bradshaw—an MLA from the Alliance Party—expressed her discontent, pointing out a shocking lack of significant legislative progress under the current leadership.

Since the return of devolution, the Assembly has failed to deliver a meaningful number of Bills. An initial work programme for 2024 outlined 18 proposals, yet only eight have been introduced three-and-a-half months into the year. “That isn’t good enough,” Bradshaw stressed, criticising the prolonged consultations that have resulted in little to no tangible action.

Bradshaw’s biting critique questioned the ethos of O’Neill and Little-Pengelly’s leadership: “Where’s the Bill? Where is the impetus from the ministers to bring them forward to us to do the work we are charged with in terms of scrutiny and get them out to the far end for those people who will benefit from them?” Her remarks underscore the urgency, given that only 18 months remain in the current mandate, which will be further hindered by recess periods.

Critics like Bradshaw are increasingly vocal about the notion that the leadership is more fixated on crafting a favourable image than on making the hard legislative choices needed for effective governance. When directly asked if she believed O’Neill and Little-Pengelly were too distracted by their public personas to govern effectively, Bradshaw’s response was unequivocal: “In a word, yes.” She emphasised a troubling reality where optics trump substance, leaving constituents yearning for true representation and effective management.

As pressure mounts for legislative advancements, O’Neill and Little-Pengelly’s silence on these serious allegations reveals a concerning lack of accountability. It raises an essential question: will they continue to squander this critical opportunity, or will they finally focus on the hard work needed to build an effective governance framework that benefits the Northern Irish populace? The clock is ticking, and waiting for action is not an option for those clamouring for change.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.agendani.com/non-executive-bills-in-the-northern-ireland-assembly/> - This resource provides context on the current legislative situation in the Northern Ireland Assembly, noting the lack of non-Executive bills and limited Executive bills that have passed into law. It supports the claim that there has been a lack of significant legislative progress.
* <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9939/CBP-9939.pdf> - This document outlines the challenges in forming a Northern Ireland Executive, which impacts the Assembly's legislative progress. It discusses the delays and political pressures influencing governance, aligning with criticisms of leadership distractions.
* <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/northern-ireland-executive-formation-bill-session-2023-24/> - This resource explains recent legislative efforts to extend the deadline for forming a new Northern Ireland Executive, illustrating the on-going political challenges that could divert leadership focus from legislative advancements.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cp378n9z3gzt/northern-ireland-assembly> - BBC coverage often includes analysis and updates on the Northern Ireland Assembly's activities, which can provide context to the political climate and challenges faced by leaders like Michelle O’Neill and Emma Little-Pengelly.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/northern-ireland> - The Guardian provides news coverage on Northern Ireland's political scene, including the Assembly's progress and challenges, which can support claims about leadership focus and legislative stagnation.