

12 March 2017

Dear Martin,

Like many I was surprised to learn of your illness and of its seriousness.

Then, on reflection, I thought it behoved me, as the First Minister when we first achieved devolution to the Assembly created by the Good Friday Agreement some eighteen years ago, to say how much we appreciated all that you did to make that happen. In doing that you reached out to the Unionist community in a way some of them were reluctant to reach out to you.

Without knowing the detail of how the republican movement moved to that point, I and my colleagues believed that you were indispensable.

I will never forget the truly historic first meeting of the Executive and how we approached that seriously and in good humour, marred only by the absence of two Ministers. I think that that even tempered manner was characteristic of all your time in office, and we knew that it was never at the expense of your principles.

Perhaps the best expression of your approach was your meeting with Queen Elizabeth.

There are many today, as we sit with the clock ticking down to the deadline for getting the institutions up and running again, who think that if you were at the helm, we would face this prospect with greater optimism.

With salutations

David Trimble