



Serving those who serve the public

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11th November 2015

To : Each IMPACT Member
[a] Working on a Service Level Agreement with Irish Water
[b] Working in non-domestic water billing and meter reading
Local Government & Local Services Division and Municipal Employees' Division

Dear Colleague

You may be aware that Irish Water has decided to shed 1,500 jobs from the local authority workforce that currently provides a service level agreement. The proposal is contained in the Irish Water Business Plan published last month. My circular to Branches dated 22nd October refers. A document titled "*Transforming the Irish Water Industry Service Delivery Model*" is available on IMPACT's website – www.impact.ie.

The proposal presents a serious challenge to IMPACT and the Irish Congress of Trade Union's group of unions, which represents workers in local authorities throughout the State.

The proposals constitute clear breaches of the understandings and agreements the union has negotiated, which has facilitated the transfer of ownership, control and operation of water and sanitation services from local authorities to Irish Water.

EXISTING COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

Faced with this unilateral position, IMPACT and the ICTU group of unions asserted that we would not tolerate breaches of the collective agreements that have been essential to the operation of Irish Water.

These agreements are:- **[a]** the service level agreement with local authorities that provides for local authorities to be responsible for the operation of the water and sanitation services until at least 2026, and **[b]** the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

The service level agreement provides that there will be discussions on an annual basis between the local authority employers, the unions and Irish Water, to determine the required staffing levels by grade and number in each local authority.

The Lansdowne Road Agreement provides that there will be no compulsory redundancies in the public sector and that direct labour is the preferred method of service provision in the public service. The Irish Water business plan, if left unchallenged, will represent a clear breach of these agreements. It is for this reason that IMPACT, along with the ICTU group of unions, is undertaking a ballot for industrial action.

PRECAUTIONARY STEP

The decision of the Local Government & Local Services Division and the Municipal Employees' Division to ballot members on industrial action is a prudent precautionary step.

Industrial action will not take place if Irish Water and the local authorities abide by the collective agreements cited above. However, a pre-determined outcome to discussions on the required staffing for the service level agreements cannot be acceptable.

In the interest of clarity, IMPACT is not saying that we will not discuss reduced staffing levels with Irish Water and the local authorities. We have already engaged in discussions that have led to significant staffing reductions in the first two years of operation.

DANGERS OF PRIVATISATION

While Irish Water maintains that the job cuts will be achieved by improvements in services and efficiencies, they have not been able to identify where these efficiencies will arise. IMPACT and the ICTU group of unions are opposed to any arrangement, which will not provide the necessary staffing to allow a satisfactory service to be delivered to the Irish public. The union is acutely aware of those interests who wish to privatise water services in Ireland. Any agreements, which provide for staffing cuts without identifying where the efficiencies will arise, will only play into the hands of those who wish to discredit public service provision. Equally, the union will not tolerate displacement of public service jobs, which amounts to privatisation by the back door.

NON-DOMESTIC WATER BILLING AND METERING

IMPACT is also aware that Irish Water intends to take over responsibility for non-domestic water billing and metering. In this regard, the union will be seeking assurances in relation to the terms

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and conditions of our members who currently provide these services. The union is also seeking to ensure that current service level agreements protect the permanent employment of staff.

The union is also seeking to ensure that the provisions of the service level agreements to back-fill posts which are assigned to Irish Water are honoured.

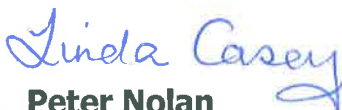
CLEAR MESSAGE

Colleagues, this is a critical time for workers in water services provision. It is essential that we send a clear message that local authority workers will not be scapegoated in this matter. As Irish Water's actions have precipitated this dispute, the union decided to ballot those members involved in the direct provision of services to Irish Water. Should it be necessary, the union will extend the ballot to other workers in the local authority sector. IMPACT and the ICTU group of unions have provided protections for the terms and conditions of members whose employment was threatened by the establishment of Irish Water. The votes of IMPACT members in each branch in both the Local Government & Local Services Division and the Municipal Employees' Division will be aggregated. IMPACT will determine the nature and extent of any industrial action that may take place arising from this ballot.

We now need your absolute support to continue the protection of the employment of workers in the sector and to protect the public control of water services in Ireland.

For further information, please see IMPACT's website – www.impact.ie FAQ.

Yours sincerely



Peter Nolan

p.p.

**National Secretary
Local Government & Local Services Division,
Municipal Employees' Division**

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