

Haddington Road – the final ask

MEMBERS of this Organisation, in workplace ballots right across the country, voted by a margin of 71% to 29%, to accept the terms of the government's Haddington Road proposals.

In the weeks before the ballot I attended many information meetings nationwide to explain why the INMO Executive Council was recommending acceptance of the revised proposals. I hope we made it clear that the Council fully recognised that acceptance was necessary because of the context of the new proposals, and in particular, because the government had passed a law that would have allowed for the implementation of even more draconian measures.

It is clear from the ballot that members understood this message and realised the alternative of isolation and industrial action – with no certainty of success – while being subject to pay cuts imposed by legislation, was even more unpalatable.

In these information meetings it was also apparent that while many aspects of the proposals greatly improved on the Croke Park II proposals (previously rejected by members) it was obvious the increased working hours and the new graduate programme remained very difficult to accept.

I now wish to reiterate that all workplace changes are subject to consultation and discussion, with a view to reaching

agreement with the INMO at individual workplace level. I cannot over stress the importance that members contact the Organisation if approached by local management before any changes to rosters or other terms and conditions of employment are introduced at local level.

I am also acutely aware that this is the third time in five years that nurses and midwives, and other public servants, have been asked to reduce their terms and conditions of employment. The government is on record as assuring us that this will be the last ask; that public servants have now given enough towards the country's recovery; and that no more should be sought from them.

Some members will say that they have heard these assurances before. However, all I can say, in response, is that the INMO will hold the government to this commitment. This must be the final time any Irish government comes to nurses and midwives to ask them to give more during this economic downturn.

A further priority, in the short to medium term, is that the INMO, alongside other unions, must seek the repeal of the legislation that gives the government unfettered power, in the absence of a collective agreement, to impose cuts on the terms and conditions of employment of public servants.

The presence of this new legislation effectively renders null and void, collec-



tive bargaining – any government in the future could simply impose this law if public servants refuse to accept any proposed deal. This can never be accepted and it must be a priority, for Ireland's entire trade union family, to achieve the removal of this legislation immediately.

In tandem with all of these further demands the health sector continues to be asked to cut, contract and reconfigure more than any other area of the public service. This cannot continue. Haddington Road must be the last ask of nurses, midwives and our health service. It must now be recognised by government that the health service, as a whole, has given all it can give while maintaining safe care.

Nurses and midwives as employees, and regulated professionals, and the health service itself as a public service, require and deserve protection. This will be our priority with immediate effect.

Liam Doran
General Secretary, INMO



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