

DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER O'NEILL, JUNIOR MINISTER LYONS AND JUNIOR
MINISTER KEARNEY
MEETING WITH NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE OF THE IRISH CONGRESS
OF TRADE UNIONS (NIC-ICTU)

WEDNESDAY, 10 JUNE 2020, VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

Those present: Deputy First Minister O'Neill
Junior Minister Kearney
Junior Minister Lyons
Owen Reidy (NIC-ICTU)
Alison Millar (NIPSA)
Patricia McKeown (UNISON)
Jackie Pollock (Unite)
Denise Walker (GMB)
David Kennedy (CWU)
Gerry Murphy (INTO)
Paddy Mackel (UCU).

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Officials in attendance: Dara O'Hagan
John Loughran
Donal Moran

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Background to meeting

1. The meeting had been arranged at the request of NIC-ICTU.

Matters discussed

2. Owen Reidy outlined three issues:
 - A request for more formal, quarterly engagement with First and deputy First Ministers
 - An acknowledgement that the Engagement Forum set up to assist the response to the Covid-19 crisis had worked very well and a request that it should be continued in a revised and reformed format post-Covid-19 – as a vehicle for social dialogue, independent of government
 - An update on New Decade New Approach commitments on employment and worker's rights. NIC-ICTU acknowledged the positive engagement in March with officials on the Programme for Government.

3. Deputy First Minister paid tribute to workers, especially those in the front-line, during the Covid-19 crisis. She indicated her support for more regular, formal engagement with trade unions. She acknowledged the excellent work of the Engagement Fork and was supportive of the idea of its continuing post-Covid-19. She updated NIC-ICTU on the Executive's response to the Covid-19 crisis, and the impact that has had on progressing NDNA and the Programme for Government. Work on PFG was picking up in tandem with Recovery planning..
4. Junior Minister Lyons echoed the deputy First Minister's comments. He, too, had no issues with more regular engagement, suggesting this could occur when issues arose. He suggested that a reformed Engagement Forum could have a wider membership, drawing in other sectors. He emphasised the impact of Covid-19 on all aspects of society, acknowledging the slipping of timescales on NDNA and PFG.
5. There was discussion about the importance of effective and ongoing citizen engagement and co-design for policy development and delivery, and the need to ensure that all societal groups are heard as part of the process.
6. There was discussion also regarding recovery from Covid-19, including quarantining arrangements, the pace of opening up business and society and that economic reasons should not override health and scientific advice.
7. **Owen Reidy** mentioned NIC-ICTU's "No going back" document and advised he would issue this to parties for their comment. He also undertook to write formally to Ministers to reiterate the three issues he had raised during the meeting.
8. The meeting concluded with the deputy First Minister confirming she will speak to the Health Minister Robin about the issues raised that will have significant impact in the event of a second wave of the virus and reiterated her commitment to effective engagement with the Union representatives going forward.

Note taken by:

NR

Programme for Government Team
TEO

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