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14 November 2018

To: Each Branch Secretary Local Government & Local Services Division and
Municipal Employees' Division

Copy: LG&LS Divisional Executive Committee
LG&LS Industrial Staff, Organisers and PA's, S Cody and B Harbor

Re: Government Proposals for the Transformation of Irish Water

Dear Colleague

I attach a copy of correspondence received from the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government which sets out the Ministers position on government proposals for the Transformation of Irish Water. The most significant section of this correspondence is set out in the following paragraphs

"The Minister is requesting that the parties including ICTU and relevant affiliated trade unions engage in a process, assisted by the WRC, to develop a framework for the future, which would replace the current SLAs, with arrangements which:

- (a) Provide Irish Water, as the national water services authority, with the necessary control of operations, accountability and capacity to manage risk and communicate and negotiate with all water services workers on the change agenda and provide a single identity for customer facing services;
- (b) Ensure that Irish Water is not left without an appropriate skilled workforce to carry out its statutory functions and local authorities are not left with stranded costs; and,
- (c) Address the concerns of workers in relation to the future deployment of the current local authority water staff, by developing arrangements which meet the objectives set out in (a) and (b) above, while not requiring the invoking of Section 19 of the Water Services (No.2) Act, other than by collective agreement. (*Section 19 relates to the process of designation of local authority staff for transfer to Irish Water on termination of a SLA.*)"

The proposals will be the subject of extensive consultations within the Local Government and Local Services and Municipal Employees' Divisions of Fórsa together with colleague unions. As they currently stand the proposals fall short of the union's requirements as set out in our submission to the WRC. As such the unions will demand a meeting with the Minister to ensure that these principles are integral to any process.

While the union is greatly concerned of the effect on members and local authorities of the termination of Service Level Agreement the development of an adequate response to the Ministers proposal must be cognisant of a number of factors.

- The shape of future water services will be determined by the Oireachtas.
- There is currently no detectable desire amongst local authority staff to transfer to Irish Water.
- There needs to be constitutional protection to ensure that water services will remain under public control. The union believes this should be done in conjunction with the forthcoming local elections on 14th May next.
- Unless alternative arrangements are put in place the current Service Level agreements will expire in 2025.
- The Department have outlined their intent to address the concerns of workers without utilising Section 19 of the Water Services Act which allows for the Designation of staff to another entity. It has been a paramount concern of Fórsa that this legislation would not be used to compulsorily transfer staff to Irish Water.
- There must be a sustainable role for Local Government.

The Divisions will now engage with committees and representatives and colleague unions to formulate their response. To this end the Cathaoirleach of the Local Government and Local Services Division and the President of the Municipal Employees' Division of Fórsa have agreed to a Special Joint Meeting of their Council and Executive respectively.

This meeting will be held at **11.30 on 3rd December** next in Fórsa offices, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1.

Please bring this notice to the attention of all your members.

Yours sincerely



PETER NOLAN
National Secretary