

Dear Member

## **INTO BALLOT**

We have been engaged for the last year now in efforts to arrive at an acceptable cost of living increase for you which addresses both the cost-of-living crisis and continues to address the devaluation of your salary that over a decade of underfunding in education has seen your workload increase to compensate for.

As things currently stand there are two pay awards outstanding; the first is for the 2021/22 year and the second for the incoming year 2022/23. We have to date been unable to arrive at what we consider to be an acceptable resolution for these years and consequently the Central Executive Committee of INTO and the Northern Committee, informed by the views of the membership, have concluded that we are left with no option but to ballot members for industrial action. Industrial action is always a last resort and is employed only as a means of forcing the Department of Education and the employing authorities to engage in serious and meaningful negotiations with your trade union representatives who in this case are the NITC of which INTO is a key member.

INTO in concert with the other teachers' unions are seeking to take collective, co-orientated and focused industrial action to bring about such a negotiation. To allow you as an INTO member to play a full part in this process we will shortly be asking you to participate in a ballot to authorise industrial action. We are legally obliged to do so. The ballot papers will be posted to your home address, and you will be asked a number of questions which we ask that you consider carefully and then respond to. Your response then needs to be placed in the accompanying envelope and returned to the Scrutineer. These responses from all those INTO members eligible to vote will be used to inform the next steps INTO will take on your behalf.

There are two major types of collective industrial action you will be asked to consider; these are action short of strike and strike action. It is vitally important that you respond and return your ballot for a number of reasons.

I. The first of these is the larger the return overall the clearer the message is to the union leadership as to your commitment to taking action on this issue.

II. Secondly and equally important, the Department of Education and the employing authorities need to be shown that they are dealing with a determined and united workforce.

III. Lastly, we need to satisfy the INTO's own internal democratic processes.

The internal democratic processes of INTO demand that in the case of a proposal to take strike action two thirds of those who respond to a ballot are in favour of such action. Should that benchmark not be reached then the Central Executive Committee of INTO is prohibited by rule from authorising such action taking place. A failure to reach this benchmark would be a disaster as it would be internally divisive and provide the Department of Education and the employing authorities with the impression that INTO is divided and therefore weakened. Of course, a low turnout in the ballot which reached the two thirds benchmark is equally disastrous in these circumstances there would be little point in embarking on a full-blown campaign of industrial action based on the results of a ballot which only captures the views of a limited percentage of

INTO members. Therefore, it is essential you exercise your ballot and ensure it is returned in the envelope provided.

Over the next couple of weeks, you will be receiving additional information directly and via our website and social media feeds concerning the forthcoming ballot. This information will include material relating to issues involved that necessitate this ballot, what the potential impacts of taking action are for you as an individual teacher and INTO member. We ask that you make every effort to keep up to date with developments and read this material so as you are entering into this process fully aware of the consequences for both yourself and your colleagues. Other teachers' unions will be engaged in similar activities with their members as we along with them under the NITC umbrella are seeking to act collectively when it comes to taking industrial action. There may be some differences in timings as we each seek to satisfy our own internal democratic and administrative processes but be assured, we are united in seeking a resolution to this dispute that you will find acceptable.

The leadership of the INTO, across the island, is determined that whether you teach in Ballycastle or Ballybunion, Newry or Nenagh that your work will be recognised and the salary you receive for it is one that reflects your efforts and respects your professionalism. Your participation in the forthcoming ballot will re-enforce this and send a clear message to the education systems in both jurisdictions that teachers are done with being treated as drones to be exploited.

Yours sincerely



**Gerry Murphy**  
**Northern Secretary**



**Siobhan McElhinney**  
**Northern Committee Chairperson**