



2-16 Gordon Street, BELFAST BT1 2LG
Tel: 028 9032 1442 Fax: 028 9043 8737 Text-phone: 028 9023 8411
e-mail: lra.ceo@lra.org.uk website: www.lra.org.uk

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Budget Consultation
S1, New Buildings
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7NA

To whom it may concern

Re: Draft Budget 2015-16 Consultation - Comments of Labour Relations Agency

The Labour Relations Agency (the Agency) , on viewing the draft budget proposals 2015-16, notes the fiscal challenges facing the Northern Ireland Executive at this point in time. The Agency would make the following comments.

The Agency recognises the priority status of the economic challenges facing Northern Ireland and would highlight the critical contribution to economic and business success made by the creation, maintenance and continuous improvement of good employment relations.

In the short to medium term the public sector in Northern Ireland will be facing radical change, in relation to which, the application of good employment practice and the early resolution of disputes will be crucial if costs are to be kept to a minimum and fairness is seen to be applied across the board.

The Agency supports the principles of the DEL vision (Page 50) and in particular the commitment to help people into employment and promote good employment practices and the further commitment to develop and maintain a 'fit for purpose' employment law framework (Page 51). These are important foundational elements in maintaining an effective employment relations system in Northern Ireland.

The Agency's statutory duty is to improve industrial relations in Northern Ireland. To this end the Agency provides impartial and independent advisory and dispute resolution services for employers, employees and their various representatives and representative bodies. These services are highly regarded by the social partners and the wider community of employment relations stakeholders.

Chair
Ms Marie Mallon MSc HRL Chartered MCIPD



Chief Executive
Mr Bill Patterson MBA FCIPD

Constructive and stable employment relations have been an historic attraction to inward investors to Northern Ireland. This tradition can be built on by all employment relations stakeholders. The Agency is facilitating this agenda paying particular attention to the support of small and medium sized firms, a vital area for realising sustainable growth in Northern Ireland's private sector.

There are inherent tensions in the current overall budget position which could well result in challenging times for employment relations in Northern Ireland. It is therefore important, going forward, that the vital role of good employment relations is fully recognised and supported.

Yours sincerely,

W PATTERSON
Chief Executive