

## DEMANDS

# Municipal workers strike on the cards

**BALDWIN NDABA**

baldwin.ndaba@inl.co.za

MUNICIPAL workers in all 257 municipal councils in South Africa may down tools if the government goes ahead with the implementation of a 4% salary increase, which has been proposed by the wage negotiations facilitator at the bargaining council.

While municipal unions are yet to make such a pronouncement, the South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) has urged its members to prepare for a protest against employers following a breakdown in negotiations over wage increases.

Samwu and the South African Local Government Association (Salga) have been involved in protracted wage negotiations that resulted in the appointment of a facilitator to oversee the process, which was marred by serious disputes.

Now, it appears these negotiations will stall again after the facilitator tabled the 4% salary increase for workers.

Samwu deputy secretary Dumisane Magagula said they received the offer on June 7, saying the purpose of the facilitator's proposal, if agreed to by all parties (Samwu, the Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union and Salga) would form the basis of a salary and wage agreement for the sector.

"As Samwu, we are of the view that the facilitator's proposal is biased towards Salga as the employer. The facilitator has neglected all of the issues which were put forward by workers. In fact, we have noted the facilitator's proposal as a repetition of the employer's arguments and offer throughout these negotiations," Magagula said.

He said the facilitator has proposed that the parties agree to the following:

- \* A three-year salary and wage agreement.

- \* A 4% salary increase in the first year of the agreement and projected CPI minus 1% in the outer years.

- \* A total freeze on all benefits to municipal workers in the first year of the agreement. These will be fully unfrozen only in the last year of the agreement.

- \* The sectoral minimum wage to increase only in line with salary increases.

- \* The deferment of the employability of Expanded Public Works Programme and Community Work Programme staff and the demands for maternity and paternity leave to other processes.

Magagula said the 4% proposed salary increase was spitting in the face of municipal workers. The proposed increase meant that the least paid municipal workers would receive a salary increase of R356 before tax.

"It should be noted that food inflation on its own is above 10%, while other items in the cost of living have significantly gone up.

"Workers had demanded a R4 000 salary increase across the board. This was to ensure the wage gap in the sector is narrowed and workers receive decent increases.

"Yet again, the facilitator neglected the genuine demands of workers and continued doing the bidding for the employer and proposed a below-inflation salary increase," Magagula said.