

Municipal workers reject proposed wage increase

Showdown looms in the local government sector

By Xpress Reporter

The gloves are off, and a nationwide municipal workers strike imminent. This is the situation in the local government sector, following the latest impasse over wage negotiations between workers unions and the employers.

The South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) has rejected the proposed wage adjustment of R356 per month. The union has instead stuck to its demand of a R4000 across the board monthly increase. The union has further accused the facilitator appointed to mediate between the unions and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), of bias.

SAMWU's deputy general secretary Dumisani Magagula says the facilitator has "neglected genuine demands of the workers", and has continued to do the employers' bidding by proposing a below inflation wage increase.

"Workers had demanded a R4000 salary increase across the board; this was to ensure that the wage gap in the sector is narrowed and that workers receive decent increases. In yet another attempt of repeating and doing the employer's bidding, the facilitator has proposed that all benefits that municipal workers receive should be frozen this also includes benefits that are negotiated at divisional and local levels.



WAR: SAMWU's deputy general secretary Dumisani Magagula says workers should prepare for war.

"For us this is an attack on collective bargaining and reversing the gains that have been made through the years. The freezing of benefits is one item that has always been rejected by our members," Magagula charged.

The union has demanded a R15 000 minimum wage for all employees in the sector. Furthermore, is demanding that any agreement reached between labour and the employer, in this current round of negotiations, should encompass extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) and Community Works Programme (CWP) workers, whom the union insists should be entitled to full municipal workers benefits.

"As SAMWU, we demanded that the scope of this collective agreement to include EPWP and CWP workers who allocated to municipality. It is our considered view that these workers are municipal workers by virtue of them providing municipal services and using municipal tools of trade.

"We had further demanded that new mothers should be given six months fully paid maternity leave and fathers be given 1 month fully paid paternity leave. We are of the view that delaying these matters will only do injustice, especially to EPWP and CWP workers as they are still under exploitative programmes with no job security or benefits," Magagula explained.

The union, Magagula added, is in the process of consulting its members regarding this latest proposal, which the union has described as "anti-worker and pro-employer". He said a strike action could not be ruled out at this stage, in the event the facilitator's proposal got rejected by the workers, and the employer refused to budge.

"We therefore urge our members to attend their constituency meetings for report back sessions and mandate taking. Municipal workers should also prepare themselves for the upcoming war with the employer," stated Magagula.