

Feedback: Special PHSDSBC meeting

As a result of the increase in infections and death of frontline health workers, labour decided to call for special Council meeting. The meeting was convened on 14 January 2021 and the following agenda items were discussed:

Provision of transport to frontline health workers

It was previously reported that pursuant to the declaration of the *Disaster Management Act* and the lockdown in March 2020, labour requested the employer to provide transport to frontline health workers. Labour wanted frontline workers to be protected from being infected with COVID-19 while commuting in public transport. A collective agreement on the provision of transport to frontline health workers was drafted but the employer failed to secure a reasonable mandate to implement its provisions.

As a result of the second wave and the increase of infections amongst frontline health workers, labour re-introduced this agenda item. Labour insisted that the employer should consider the health and safety of these workers as the COVID-19 variant was spreading rapidly. Labour submitted that the employer should review its mandate regarding provision of transport and provide labour with feedback as a matter of urgency.

The employer noted labour's submission and committed to re-submit the inputs to its principals to review the mandate on the provision of transport to frontline workers. The employer will provide feedback at the next Council meeting to be held on 28 January 2021. The draft collective agreement is *attached* for ease of reference.

Provision of protective personal equipment (PPE)

Labour submitted that the increase of COVID-19 infections amongst frontline health workers was exacerbated by insufficient provision of PPE. Labour insisted that PPE must be provided equitably to all frontline health workers. Labour further requested the employer to provide quality PPE to prevent infection amongst health workers. Findings by the Public Protector indicated that N95 masks were not sufficiently protective of the virus. The quality of this mask placed the health and safety of health workers at high risk.

The employer noted the submission and will engage its principals for inputs. The employer also committed to submit the consolidated statistics on PPE stock levels at the next Council meeting.

Token of appreciation

Labour registered frustration and disappointment with the employer for failing to provide a token of appreciation to frontline health workers at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic. Labour felt that the employer did not take the plight of these workers seriously. The efforts of these workers deserved a token of appreciation such as tax relief or danger allowance, amongst others. The employer promised at the last Council meeting to finalise on the matter and implement accordingly.

The employer indicated that the consultation process with relevant stakeholders was at the final stage and it would provide concrete feedback at the next Council meeting on 28 January 2021.

Strategy: Rolling out of COVID-19 vaccine

Labour requested the employer to make a presentation to the Council about the strategy to roll out the vaccine to 1.2 million frontline health workers. Labour wanted to know how the provision of the vaccine would be prioritized amongst these workers. Labour insisted to be included into the processes of rolling out the vaccine as it has a direct bearing on the conditions of employment of frontline health workers. The employer noted the submission and will make a presentation to Council as soon as a mandate is provided.

GENERAL MANAGER