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MEMBER UPDATE: GEMS INCREASES AND ONGOING ACTION

The GEMS fight continues. It is, however, important to acknowledge that this matter has grown beyond the scope of NAPTOSA and even beyond FEDUSA. In response, we are working in close collaboration with other unions within the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC), and more specifically within COSATU, to build a united labour front.

The recent Provincial and National marches were a great success and played a critical role in applying additional pressure on all relevant stakeholders.

As part of the escalation strategy, FEDUSA has applied for a Section 77 certificate through National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC). This certificate enables unions to embark on protected strike action in relation to socio-economic issues. A meeting was secured with NEDLAC on 17 April 2026, where FEDUSA formally presented its application and motivation.

The submission clearly outlined the widespread impact of steep medical aid contribution increases across schemes, positioning the issue within the scope of Section 77 as a socio-economic matter affecting all workers, not only GEMS members.

GEMS was present at the proceedings. While its Principal Executive Officer (PEO) agreed with most of FEDUSA's submissions, there was disagreement regarding Part B, which relates to strike action. GEMS' legal representative challenged the classification of the matter as one of mutual interest. FEDUSA has reserved its right to respond to this technical argument at the appropriate stage of the process. Notably, GEMS continued to regurgitate its previously stated justifications for the increases.

Encouragingly, the Minister of Health supported FEDUSA's position, affirming that the matter is indeed socio-economic in nature. The Council for Medical Schemes also acknowledged and supported the Minister's submission.

Due to time constraints, not all parties, including the Department of Public Service and Administration, were able to present. The session concluded with the Chairperson suggesting a possible settlement, referencing ongoing work by certain government departments to develop pricing regulations for healthcare providers, which may influence medical aid costs. FEDUSA did not accept this proposal at this stage and will engage further during the formal discussion phase.

It is important to emphasise that this process adopts an umbrella approach, addressing excessive increases across all medical aids, not just GEMS, thus reinforcing its classification as a Section 77 socio-economic matter.

NEDLAC is expected to schedule a continuation meeting within the next two weeks.

At the same time, time FEDUSA's Public Service Committee will report to the NEC later this week, where efforts will be made to secure full federation-wide support. This is critical, as all workers are affected by these steep increases.

Members can click [here](#) to access the Minister of Health's statement for further insight.

Why is this important?

- 🇺🇸 The 2026 salary increase has effectively been swallowed by the GEMS contribution increases.
- 🇺🇸 GEMS was originally established to provide public servants with affordable, quality healthcare. This objective has been undermined by the current exorbitant increases.
- 🇺🇸 The threat of further ridiculous increases in 2027 must be stopped now as well as lowering the current 9,5% burden.
- 🇺🇸 Many members are now opting out of medical aid due to affordability, which places them and their families at significant risk.

NAPTOSA will continue to keep members informed as developments unfold. The unity of workers remains our strongest tool in this fight.

Mr BL Manuel

Executive Director