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Percci snubs Cosatu's call for labour broker ban

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UP IN ARMS ... Cosatu members staged a protest outside the Port Elizabeth City Hall, joining those in other provinces and international trade unions calling for the ban of labour brokers. Picture: MARIUS ROODT

ORGANISED business snubbed protesting Cosatu leaders yesterday by refusing to receive a federation memorandum which called for a ban of labour brokers.

Zingiswa Losi, Cosatu's first deputy president, was among those who lashed out at Port Elizabeth Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Percci) for declining to accept the memorandum. They instead received a letter from Percci chief executive Kevin Hustler, declining the document.

On the eve of the trade union federation's mass action, business and labour experts warned that a million jobs could be lost if Cosatu succeeded in forcing the government to ban labour brokers.

In the letter, Hustler told Cosatu that Percci was unable to receive the memorandum as it was not in control of its members' employment practices.

Percci's response came a day after the union federation and its affiliate, the National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa), wrote to all Nelson Mandela Bay companies using labour brokers to demand that they do away with the practice.

One of the companies, Guestro Automotive in Uitenhage, defended itself by pointing out that workers employed through labour brokers enjoyed the same rights as those of the permanent staff.

"It is important to point out that the labour broker currently used by the company complies with the bargaining council requirements, including pay and conditions of employment, provident fund contributions and so on," Guestro personnel manager Lynn Damons said.

The company has, however, requested a meeting with Numsa to discuss the issue, including alternatives to employing labour brokers.

Cosatu staged its countrywide protests amid public hearings in various provinces organised by Parliament's labour committee on the future of labour brokers.

"We look forward to Parliament and (the) government finally bringing an end to labour broking and all other forms of casualisation," Cosatu spokesman Patrick Craven said.

National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) spokesman Lesiba Seshoka said: "We cannot overrule the possibility of a complete shutdown of the economy if our demands for the end of labour brokering are not met." Seshoka said about 1500 of NUM's 3500 branches had participated in the protests.

Numsa secretary-general Irvin Jim attended a lunchtime picket of workers in Wadeville near Johannesburg. He said Numsa had held pickets in most provinces and he was "extremely happy" that about 700 people had joined the Wadeville protest.

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