VERSION 3 | THE LEADERSHIP TEST

THE LEADERSHIP TEST FACING FESTUS OSIFO

Stewardship oversight and the credibility of organised labour

The sale of TUC's transport-relief buses and application of proceeds towards a secretariat is a test of leadership judgment. It asks whether a president and the approving NEC/NAC protected the intended beneficiaries, assessed alternatives, controlled costs and disclosed their decisions. The strongest response is a complete account that members can examine.

Strategic judgment begins with purpose

Government presented its CNG intervention as a way to improve affordable transport. Converting buses into property changed the way the resource would serve workers. A secretariat may deliver long-term organisational value, but leadership must explain why that value justified giving up the transport service and what authority permitted the change.

Strategy requires choosing between competing benefits under constraints. The relevant comparison includes fares saved, routes served, reliability, operating costs and fleet risks, alongside the secretariat's cost, rent savings and member services. Property acquisition is not a sufficient performance measure. Leadership must account for the opportunity cost borne by workers.

Operational competence means examining options

A union may lack the capability to operate a fleet directly. Recognising that limitation can be sound management. It should lead to assessment of professional operation, controlled partnerships or leasing with enforceable welfare conditions, where permitted. Leadership should publish the options considered and the reasons for choosing sale.

The same discipline applies to the transaction: independent valuation, a defensible sale method, buyer due diligence, conflict declarations and reconciliation of all proceeds. A good strategic intention cannot compensate for weak execution. A properly executed transaction cannot, by itself, justify an unsuitable strategic choice.

Independent oversight must be visible

NEC/NAC approval distributes responsibility across the governance structure. It should demonstrate that representatives challenged assumptions and understood consequences. Members need the exact approving body, its constitutional authority, quorum, proposal, supporting papers and minutes, including any dissent and any required external consent.

An approving council becomes ineffective when its role is reduced to validating leadership preferences. But that conclusion should follow the record, not an assumption about who originated the proposal. The decisive question is whether the body exercised independent judgment. Collective approval should make the account stronger, not make individual responsibility disappear.

Transparency is a leadership obligation

Publish the full chronology, including when members were informed. This should establish the actual delay and address the concern about disclosure more than a year after the decisions. A material asset transaction should not become intelligible only after an exchange between rival leaders. Routine reporting protects the organisation before controversy develops.

Spending choices reveal priorities

Permanent residence at Transcorp and the bulletproof vehicle require a clear cost and funding account. Where union funds paid, members should see the business need, approvals, procurement and alternatives. Security needs deserve assessment; they do not remove cost discipline. Extended hotel accommodation should be compared with suitable leased accommodation over the same period.

If institutional infrastructure needed financing, what reductions were made in leadership expenses before welfare assets were sold? A capital plan should assess dues income, reserves, phased delivery and

financing costs. Resources should be managed within a coherent budget, with the president's expenditure subject to independent scrutiny rather than exceptional treatment.

Training must improve the institution

Osifo said during the November television exchange that he was attending advanced leadership and management training. Members should judge that investment through observable improvements: stronger budgeting, better records, effective procurement, constructive oversight and prompt corrective action. Course attendance is an input. Institutional performance is the outcome that matters.

The brand depends on conduct

TUC's public standing is built on a promise of representation. When the handling of welfare assets remains contested, a gap can open between that promise and workers' experience. Publicity may explain a sound decision, but it cannot replace a sound decision or repair missing records. Trust requires a consistent relationship between what leaders demand of others and what they practise themselves.

This controversy risks weakening confidence in dues administration, collective decisions and future welfare programmes. It can also distract from bargaining priorities. Those are reputational and organisational risks, not proven measures of lost membership or negotiating power. Leadership should address them before they harden into lasting disengagement.

Osifo is responsible for the TUC system he leads and the account it provides. His former PENGASSAN presidency creates reputational spillover, but does not establish involvement by PENGASSAN's current leadership in the bus transaction. Responsibility should be assigned to the people and bodies that actually proposed, approved and implemented the decisions.

What a credible leadership response looks like

Disclose the asset and funding trail, including allocation conditions, operating support, sale records, buyers and secretariat payments. Commission an independent review with access to the relevant documents. Publish its findings and a dated corrective programme. Where failures are established, identify responsibility and apply fair remedies, including recovery of losses or restoration of intended benefits where appropriate.

A constitutional lesson for our new union

Reform must constrain officeholders through rules: consultation thresholds for major disposals; purpose controls on donations; independent audit oversight; quarterly financial reporting; annual audits; and approved limits for travel, accommodation, vehicles and security. Conflict disclosures, competitive procurement and protected member questions should be routine. Training expenditure should carry an obligation to report practical improvements.

These safeguards must apply to founders and future presidents alike. Our new union earns credibility by making leaders answerable before a crisis, including when members question a popular officer. Strong institutions make accountability enforceable without requiring a personal confrontation.

The leadership test is whether workers can examine the decision, trace the money, understand the benefit and obtain correction where the institution has failed them.

EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST

Help build our new union, where members can question decisions and hold leaders accountable. Express your interest in being part of our new union at **https://save-union.org/interest.html**.

Public context: Federal Ministry of Information, 29 September 2024; Pi-CNG programme reporting; TheCable, 2 November 2026. Transaction and expenditure details follow the account provided to Save the Union.

Sources: Government announcement | Programme reporting | Television exchange report