

News 24

Mbombela - A 62-year-old domestic worker who worked for Mpumalanga's education MEC has filed a fraud case after she discovered that someone might have been taking her government issued salary without her knowledge. Linah Mkhabela, who had worked as a cleaner for MEC Reginah Mhaule since 2009, said she was unaware that she had been a government employee because she used to get her R2 000 monthly salary in cash.

"I thought that the MEC was doing me a favour because we were going to the same church, but when I applied for an old age pension at the South African Social Security Agency, I was told that I do not qualify because I had been a government employee," she said. Following failed attempts to resolve the matter with government officials, Mkhabela approached the EFF. The EFF investigated and discovered that an official in the office of the MEC might have been drawing Mkhabela's salary without her knowledge.

The party helped her to file a case with the police.

No payslip

Official government documents seen by this journalist show that Mkhabela was on the payroll of the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, which is responsible for the maintenance of government houses on behalf of Mpumalanga politicians who use state housing.

The documents also show that Mkhabela was earning a salary of between R71 289 and R87 330 per annum between August 1, 2012 and June 30, 2014. She claims she never received that salary, let alone a payslip to show that she was a government employee during that period.

She says the only salary she ever received was R2 000, which was given to her in cash by the official in Mhaule's office. According to the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, the reason for the termination of Mkhabela's services in 2014 was that all such employees were employed on contracts linked to the term of office of the politicians.

However, when Mhaule retained her position as MEC for education, Mkhabela asked that the MEC keep her on.

Pension fund contributions

"She agreed to retain me at a lower salary of R800 per month, but after a while I told her that the money was too little, and she increased it to R1 500 per month until my employment was terminated in April 2016," said Mkhabela. The documents also show that Mkhabela was contributing R508 monthly towards the government employees' pension fund (GEPF).

Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport spokesperson David Nkambule confirmed that Mkhabela had been on the department's payroll. "Ms Linah F Mkhabela was an employee of the Department since 1 August 2012. [Her] service was terminated on 30 June 2014 after the expiry of her contract, and not in April 2016," said Nkambule.

Mhaule's spokesperson, Jasper Zwane, refused to comment on the allegations, but confirmed that the department was assisting Mkhabela to make an application to the government employees' pension fund.

"The department is assisting her to get her pension," he said.

'Politicians do not care about the people'

SAPS spokespersons Brigadier Leonard Hlathi and Sergeant Gerald Sedibe failed to respond to a media enquiry, however, a source from the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, who spoke on condition of anonymity, confirmed that Nelspruit police had interviewed some officials regarding the matter.

EFF organiser in Mbombela, Sfiso Gumede, confirmed that a case has been opened at the Nelspruit police station. "The investigating officer has confirmed the police are investigating the case of fraud, and the case number is CAS 258/11/2016. "Politicians in the province of Mpumalanga have shown that they do not care about the people and the high level of corruption is an indication of that," said Gumede.

Read more on: [mbombela](#) | [domestic workers](#) | [fraud](#)