

R99 billion needed to fix city – mayor

Msimanga's R4bn budget meant for service, maintenance

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A WHOPPING R99 billion is what the City of Tshwane ideally needs to improve infrastructure to provide desirable services to all its residents, mayor Solly Msimanga revealed yesterday.

He was addressing an audience of journalists, MMCs and senior municipal officials during a post-budget speech session, hosted at Zwavelpoort in Pretoria East.

The mayor talked at length about how the DA-led administration would implement its service delivery priorities in the 2018/19 financial year. "We are going to need in the range of R99bn to get our infrastructure to be at the level that everybody will be getting the services they deserve," he said.

During his budget speech, Msimanga announced that the total capital budget of the city amounted to R4bn for this current financial year.

He said the city had increased its maintenance budget by 21% for this year.

"We are now putting in R1.6bn in terms of maintenance," he said.

He also explained the importance of investments to attract investors.

"This year, we decided that R550 million would go towards ensuring that our industrial zones get a bit of a shake-up, so we are beginning to attract investors into that particular space."

Msimanga added that the National Treasury was happy with the budget "because it makes sense". He dismissed claims that services for townships were not prioritised – an amount of R100m had been put aside for housing in these areas, he said.

The city had identified areas where it needed to intervene, despite these areas not necessarily being within the municipality's

core mandate, Msimanga said.

He mentioned early childhood development and the Gata Le Nna Expanded Public Works Programme as among those interventions.

During his budget speech last week, Msimanga said a total of R9.9m was allocated for early childhood development programmes.

"R5 million of this will be rolled out towards the after-school programme in all seven regions, as a response to the social challenges facing our communities.

"The purpose of this initiative is to demonstrate that the city cares for its residents, particularly the children and the youth.

The programme aims to keep children busy with various sports, culture and homework assistance programmes," he said.

The city would also build a clinic at Lusaka, in Mamelodi east, to the tune of R60m.

Msimanga reiterated calls to fight against the scourge of cable theft in the city, saying community members must also assist by reporting criminals.

An additional R100m would go towards the fight against cable theft, Msimanga added.

MMC for Finance, Marie-Lise Fourie, bemoaned the culture of non-payment among residents, which negatively affected service delivery in the city.

She said: "We are sitting with a culture of non-payment. It has been with us for many years.

"The challenge is to get to a stage where we can convince consumers to pay their current account.

"The moment you start paying your account, we will turn the city around so much quicker."

She said the city's intention was to create an environment, in which the economy could work.

Fourie added that it was about time that dependency on the city was decreased.

"We have to start to build cash reserves," she said.