

■ JOB CREATION

# Crackdown on 'ghost workers', EPWP fraud

*Follows arrest of three eThekweni Municipality officials for benefiting illicitly from jobs project*

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A THREE-PRONGED effort by the KwaZulu-Natal departments of Public Works and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the eThekweni Municipality is set to respond to Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi's call to clean up the Expanded Public Works Programme.

This comes after the arrest of at least three officials from the eThekweni Municipality in connection with benefiting illicitly from the EPWP, where some senior officials within the city had filled EPWP posts with ghost workers who were paid in the region of R1.2 million for work they had not done.

Last Thursday, Xolani Vilane, a "safer cities" administrative manager, was arrested and appeared before the Specialised Commercial Crimes Court before being granted R5 000 bail.

Two other officials, Andile Shangase, an EPWP facilitator, and Robert Nkosi, an EPWP recruiter, have also appeared before the court, and all three are expected back there on February 21.

Last July, Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi admitted that there were flaws in the recruitment process of participants of the Expanded Public Works Programme, and set out new guidelines for the programme.

The city and the two provincial departments yesterday held a provincial councillors' workshop in Durban to outline guidelines of the programme and opportunities as phase four of the programme is rolled out for the 2018/2019 financial year.

Ravi Pillay, KZN Public Works MEC, said that the programme, which is to provide both temporary and ongoing jobs to unemployed people, was fraught with the challenge of ghost workers.



Nomusa Dube-Ncube

"This means that money that is supposed to be paying someone who is doing a piece of work has been taken out and gone into a few people's pockets. This is when you talk of the prac-

tical manifestation of ghost workers.

"I am pleased that the city is undertaking a systematic approach to match the EPWP workers on the payroll to the names and warm bodies that are supposed to be there," Pillay said.

He encouraged those embroiled in corruption to come clean, because the net (to catch them) was getting tighter.

Thulani Mdadane, Deputy Director-General in the provincial Public Works Department, said that they were aiming at getting a clean audit for the EPWP programme.

Nomusa Dube Ncube, KZN Cogta MEC, said: "We will now have many monitors who will be on the lookout to see whether people under this programme are actually doing their jobs, so in cases where there are those not doing their jobs and just sitting at home and collecting a pay cheque, they are kicked out of the programme, and people who are serious about working and advancing are installed."