

■ GHOST PLAGUE

EPWP 'ghost worker' arrests loom

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WITH more arrests pending in eThekweni Municipality's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) ghost workers saga, the provincial Public Works Department has urged those involved in the scheme to come clean as the net was closing.

This follows the arrest of three senior eThekweni officials last week in connection with the scheme.

Those arrested are Xolani Vilane, safer cities administrative manager; Andile Shangase, an EPWP facilitator; and Robert Nkosi an EPWP recruiter.

All three have appeared before the Specialised Commercial Crime Court, and are currently on bail. They are expected to appear in court again 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.

He set out new guidelines for the programme, including open advertisement of the programme.

Yesterday, the city and the provincial departments of Public Works and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs held a provincial councillors workshop in Durban to outline the guidelines of the programme and to identify opportunities as phase four of the programme is set to be rolled



RAVI PILLAY

out for the 2018/19 financial year.

Ravi Pillay, KZN Public Works MEC, said the programme, which was meant to provide temporary jobs to unemployed people, was fraught with the challenges of ghost workers.

"This means that money that is supposed to be paid to 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 practical 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 bodies that are supposed to be there," Pillay said.

He encouraged those embroiled in the corruption to come clean

because the net was getting tighter.

He said that all those responsible and participating in the scheme were going to be found out as the pursuit to clean up the programme is well under way.

Nomusa Dube Ncube, KZN Cogta MEC, said the workshops would be taken to municipalities across the province.

They would soon clampdown on some beneficiaries of the programme who were not performing their duties while still getting paid.

"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 that those sitting at home and collecting a pay cheque are kicked out of the programme," Dube Ncube said.

She said that some councillors in some municipalities had turned the programme into something that was benefiting some and excluding others.

Thulani Mdadane, deputy director general in the provincial Public Works Department, said it was aiming at obtaining a clean audit for the EPWP programme.

"The arrests are a response to some communities complaining of people being paid yet they were not employed. It also emerged from the (Hawks) investigation that some people were not even in the EPWP system, meaning they are ghost beneficiaries," Mdadane said.