

Defaulting govt depts left in dark

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Three government departments settled their overdue water and electricity accounts to the tune of more than R77 million and two others have pledged to pay Polokwane Municipality another R57 million by the end of this week after the municipality terminated their electricity supply last Thursday.

By Tuesday the provincial departments of Public Works and Education as well as the national Department of Public Works settled their accounts. The provincial departments of Rural Development and Health have, however, not paid as yet but acknowledged their debt and undertook to settle their accounts by tomorrow (Friday). Their services were provisionally reconnected, according to Communications and Marketing Manager of the municipality, Matsidiso Mothapo. Mothapo could, however, not provide exact figures as the calculations were in progress at time of going to print.

Before embarking on the cut off operation with members of the municipality's Finance Portfolio Committee last Thursday afternoon, Member of the Mayoral Committee Charles Molepo told the media that despite several pleas and notices as well as engagements with Chief Finance Officers of the departments, the provincial departments of Rural Development, Public Works, Education and Health as well as the national Department of Public Works owed the municipality in excess of R53,1 million, R50,9 million, R9,7 million, R4,4 million and R16,4 million respectively, being the top defaulters.

The municipality's debt book is currently more than R1 billion and 14 government departments and state entities were responsible for R144 million of this amount before the cut-off.

In reply to a question regarding non-pay-

ment for services in Mankweng, Molepo said the municipality will soon proceed with the installation of prepaid meters and will thereafter take a position regarding the recovery of historical debts.

Mothapo said that the municipality is currently arranging for a high delegation engagement with government departmental heads regarding servicing of their debts as there is an intention to install prepaid meters for all government departments and entities.

"It should be understood that services terminations are not meant to punish anyone, but a just exercise to ensure that the municipality is also able to provide much needed services to consumers. Consumers have a responsibility to pay for what they have consumed. We appreciate and are thankful to all who continue to pay for the services," Mothapo said and alluded to the fact that the cut-offs were executed in such a way that it did not affect learners in schools and hospitalised persons.

In another development a group of residents of Seshego, led by one of the two South African National Civic Organisation structures in Limpopo, marched to the civic centre in Polokwane to deliver a memorandum relating to the persistent water crisis and incorrect billing on Monday. According to the organiser of the march, Tumi Shiloti, Executive Mayor Thembi Nkadimeng was not available to receive the memorandum. "We will engage with the community on Wednesday afternoon to decide where and when the memorandum will now be delivered."