

# eThekweni 'not tackling Ingonyama rates debt'

**THABISO GOBA**

Opposition party members said there is no plan by eThekweni Municipality to recoup the R194 million it is owed by the Ingonyama Trust Board (ITB).

According to the recently passed 2021/2022 budget, ITB is one of the city's biggest debtors with R194 million owed in rates and services.

Unlike with other debtors, there is no plan on how the city plans to recoup the money from ITB or institute any consequences.

For example, the budget states that the City issued a disconnection notice to Public Works in January if they did not make a minimum payment of R12,7 million towards their debt.

"A report to brief the mayor has been finalised. The mayor will discuss all the matters relating to ITB with the board," reads the budget.

Nicole Graham, Democratic Alliance eThekweni caucus leader, said the issue of ITB has never been raised for discussion during a Durban Executive Council meeting.

"When it comes to debtors that are politically sensitive there is always a reluctance to deal with it, that's what I have noticed," said Graham.

"There has never been a way forward

that has been presented," she said.

"My understanding is that if you use a municipal service you need to pay for it. It needs to be resolved soon because it is a lot of money and the amount goes up all the time."

Blessed Gwala MPL, Inkatha Freedom Party National Chairperson, was philosophical about ITB's debt to the municipality. "Ingonyama existed way before the formulation of municipalities. A lot of these municipalities are actually built on Ingonyama land yet they never paid any compensation for that and keep

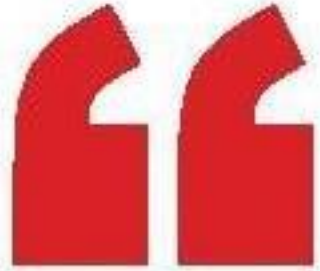
profiting from the land," he said.

Gwala claimed that it was actually the eThekweni Municipality that owed ITB.

Msawakhe Mayisela, eThekweni Municipality spokesperson, said the city was engaged in talks with ITB through the provincial and national government to recover the rates owed.

In the past, there had been confusion over who is liable for the payment of rates as there are many people living on the 2,8 million hectares of land owned by ITB. "The rates are charged to the owner of the property ... the Ingonyama Trust and they are liable for the payment of rates," said Mayisela.

The ITB was approached for comment but did not respond after two days of probing.

 **When it comes to debtors that are politically sensitive there is always a reluctance to deal with it ...**