



Publication: Daily News - Main
Title: How city ratepayers' money is spent
Publish date: 05 Oct 2022
Page: 3

Reach: 23508
AVE:R 55687.63
Author: Zainul Dawood

MUNICIPAL SPEND

How city ratepayers' money is spent

ZAINUL DAWOOD
zainul.dawood@nl.co.za

THE eThekweni Municipality should be investing money to address the city's adverse infrastructure challenges, including water and sanitation infrastructure in need of urgent prioritisation.

This is the view of eThekweni Municipality deputy mayor and president of political party, Abantu Batho Congress (ABC), councillor Philani Mavundla. He was responding to posts circulating on social media by a political party leader, blaming the ABC for not supporting the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). The message reads: "How can you vote against creating employment for our disadvantaged people, yet you were voted for by the black majority."

Mavundla was concerned about the assertion that the ABC does not care about the poor majority. "It is wrong and a gross misrepresentation of the party's position on the poor black majority."

The EPWP contract extension came up for approval at eThekweni's full council meeting. Mavundla said he was firmly against the subsidisation of the EPWP with hard-earned ratepayers' money as this meant eThek-

wini residents must pay additional tax which was unconstitutional and grossly unfair.

"In the last financial year, ratepayers of eThekweni subsidised this programme by an additional R200 million over and above the R60 million from taxes collected by the SA Revenue Service," Mavundla said.

The ABC, Mavundla said, supported the EPWP as a poverty alleviation programme funded by taxpayer money via the national government. Mavundla said in council, the ABC voted against this unfunded mandate and will in the future continue to vote against it should it be presented to the council.

"The programme's R60 million budget as set out by the national government is an indication of its commitment to address prevalent unemployment and poverty through job and entrepreneurial opportunities."

The ABC said there were more pressing infrastructure projects the city should be investing in. Mavundla said that in eThekweni, R1.7 billion – equivalent to 54% of the municipal budget – was lost due to Non-Revenue Water in the year 2020/21 alone.

"This year we are expecting this figure to increase to close to 60% losses of water. This is not the only problem.



ETHEKWINI Municipality deputy mayor and president of political party, Abantu Batho Congress, Philani Mavundla. | TUMI PAKKIES/African News Agency (ANA)

In the last five years R1.9 billion has been spent on sanitation in informal settlements," Mavundla said.

The city has debilitated water and sanitation infrastructure with 50% of its usable life span having long passed its limit and needed R10 billion to be repaired, added Mavundla.

"We cannot be in leadership and fail to be cost conscious and to take good care of the people's money. To add salt to the wound, hostels in eThekweni – the mandate of Provincial Government – are funded by the municipality."

Mavundla said this was yet another unfunded mandate which the municipality had been paying for instead of service delivery for the communities and ratepayers of eThekweni, as well as those who qualify as indigent in terms

of the law. Mavundla said the city had instead prioritised the mandates of other spheres of government.

Hostels and the rental stocks of eThekweni received free water and free electricity, he said, "paid for by those of us who care enough to pay our utilities".

"This is not sustainable and cannot continue. Residents paying for services in eThekweni, cannot continue to fund residents who choose not to pay, yet believe they are entitled to the same services. In eThekweni, when a resident who normally pays his or her utility bill is not able to do so, his or her services are disconnected. Interestingly, the hostels are never disconnected."

ABC secretary general Phumelele Phahla said the party stood for truth and integrity; and was committed to the

fair treatment of people. "The president of the ABC would rather be an ordinary councillor and forfeit perks associated with being a deputy mayor if he must have his integrity under question by lying and buying votes, at the expense of residents paying for services with their hard-earned money."

Mavundla believes that the people and ratepayers of eThekweni deserved the truth because they had voted for honest political leadership.

"Councillors' salaries are paid for by the very same people; we must ensure they gain value for their money. The ABC believes the additional R200 million the city spends to fund EPWP should be repurposed to funding infrastructure projects to create sustainable jobs."