



**Publication:** Post, The - Main  
**Title:** Critical infrastructure at further risk  
**Publish date:** 24 May 2023  
**Page:** 5

**Reach:** 40154  
**AVE:** R 28910.64  
**Author:** Charlene Somduth

POWER AND WATER SUPPLY FEARS

# Critical infrastructure at further risk

**CHARLENE SOMDUTH**  
charlene.somduth@nl.co.za

ETHEKWINI Municipality is not ready to go back to the full load shedding rotation on Thursday.

This is when the Metro will join the rest of the country on the power interruption schedule after more than a year of being exempt from stages 1 to 3. Since the floods in April last year, the municipality has been spared in order to give officials an opportunity to repair damaged electrical infrastructure.

While the municipality has accepted Eskom's decision, it said last week that it was still repairing the damaged electrical infrastructure. Political parties have slammed the City's poor planning, fearing disruption to power and water supplies because of the damaged infrastructure.

Thabani Mthethwa, the DA eThekweni caucus leader, said: "The lack of planning and foresight from the ANC in KZN and the municipality is outrageous.

"Complicity from mayor Mxolisi Kaunda and his city manager, Musa Mbhele, has put the city and province in a predicament where critical infrastructure is likely to deteriorate even further to unprecedented levels, putting businesses and the economy at greater risk."

Mthethwa said the ANC and Metro were aware that Eskom would reach such a decision and did nothing to prepare residents for what was coming.

"Residents have been facing extended blackouts, lasting days, due to our network being compromised. As such, a number of businesses have shut down... eThekweni is not ready for the full implementation of load shedding,



THE DA's Thabani Mthethwa

and the consequences will be felt across the country."

He said that in an exco meeting in January, the head of electricity, Maxwell Mthembu, confirmed that his department required R200 million for repairs.

"The ANC-led municipality opted to fund the EPWP (Expanded Public Works Programme) with over R200m when it is a nationally mandated project."

Mdu Inkosi, of the IFP, said ratepayers were in an unfortunate situation.

"Areas like Tongaat and uMlazi have been without water for a long time due to the infrastructure collapse, and it is only going to get worse... We have a minister of electricity, and I don't even understand what his role is. Since last year, the infrastructure has not been repaired. Do we not have reserves or a budget for disaster? Instead, we are waiting for the provincial or national government to help. The leaders within



THE IFP's Mdu Inkosi

the municipality don't plan properly."

Visvin Reddy, the African Democratic for Change (ADeC) leader, said: "There are clearly two issues here. The first is the insistence by Eskom to end the concession it granted to Durban, and the other is that infrastructure damaged during the floods is not repaired."

"Eskom is in... disarray. Its minister is in the dark and has no clue about what's going on. Eskom is at the centre of state capture as ANC politicians continue to feed from it. The grid is heavily compromised and on the verge of collapse. Our country is heading for complete darkness, and there will be a



THE EFF's Vusi Khoza

return of looting and rioting. This ANC government cannot manage this crisis because it is part of the problem."

Reddy said load shedding was the price South Africans were paying for the ANC's failed policies of cadre deployment and affirmative action.

"Corruption in the state-owned entity, involving senior ANC politicians, is also the problem. Why is there no action taken against ministers responsible for Eskom?"

Shameen Thakur-Rajbansi, the leader of the Minority Front (MF), said: "The municipality does not have the necessary capacity to spend on infrastructure repairs or a method on how to assess and reimburse affected homeowners to repair the damages themselves. On proof of expenditure, the National Treasury would release the R1 billion promised for the flood damages. Following the normal load shedding schedule is the



THE ADeC's Visvin Reddy

need of the hour as this will lighten the burden carried by the rest of the province and country."

Lindiwe Khuzwayo, the head of communications at the municipality, said at the time of the announcement:

"While the city's infrastructure is not yet repaired to pre-flood levels, the city acknowledges the country's need to reduce the load to protect the national grid. It has, therefore, become unavoidable for eThekweni to revert to normal load shedding stages."

She said some areas continued to battle with the damage from the floods, and as a result, there were certain sub-stations that could not be switched off as that would pose a significant risk to residents and infrastructure.

In a follow-up interview with **POST**, Khuzwayo said the new schedule had been designed, with blocks having "A" and "B" notation, which allowed for



THE MF's Shameen Thakur-Rajbansi

better load management and control. "Blocks up to 16 are residential and commercial blocks. They will have two-hour load shedding at a time. Key industrial nodes are in block 17 upwards and will be shut off from only stage 7 for a duration of four hours at a time."

She said some of the water infrastructure would be excluded from load shedding to minimise the impact on water supply, among them Inanda Dam, Wiggins Water Treatment Works and Durban Heights Water Treatment Works.

"In addition, pump stations have generators and will be able to continue working even during load shedding."

"Customers are urged to check their suburbs against their new block numbers. They are also urged to switch off high-load appliances during power outages to prevent high waiting loads when the power does return. This will prevent extended outages."