

Depts slow to pay small contractors

SISEKELO KHUMALO

SEVERAL KwaZulu-Natal business forums have accused provincial government departments of dragging their feet on payment for work done by small contractors.

Some of the organisations that expressed concern over the past week include the Delangokubona business forum, Vukuzakhe Emerging Contractors Development Programme, KwaZulu-Natal Association of Business, and Eyesizwe Contractor Development Programme.

Eyesizwe KwaZulu-Natal deputy chairperson Lungile Zuma said they had complained to the Department of Public Works about contractors not being paid for long periods.

"The contractors were supposed to be paid within 30 days, but there are some contractors that have not been paid for 12 months to two years," said Zuma.

"The KwaZulu-Natal government, provincial departments and the MECs have all failed us dismally as black contractors and small business owners. Radical economic transformation is not happening," she said.

Public Works director for communications Kiru Naidoo said the issue of delayed payments was receiving attention with the relevant departments.

"There may be some cases with certain client departments where payment was delayed. Those issues are receiving attention between ourselves, the relevant departments and Provincial Treasury.

"We do not believe there can be cases of delays of up to 24 months unless there is a genuine dispute. We invite you to provide specifics so that we may comment," said Naidoo.

"Radical economic transformation does not mean there are no processes. Procurement law must still be complied with ... contractors must still comply with database requirements and compete within the preference group. Unfortunately there are a few who believe they can become beneficiaries without processes and compliance," Naidoo said.

KwaZulu-Natal Association of Business president Sizwe Cele said "there are people who have ended up losing their businesses because of this".