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# Filthy city's unused millions

Msunduzi has failed to spend a cent of R8 mln funds for street cleaning

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AS grime and filth continue to plague the inner city, Msunduzi Municipality is sitting on R8 million in grant funding that could be used to employ more street cleaners through the government's Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP).

This was revealed by EPWP provincial co-ordinator Xolani Xulu, who yesterday said the municipality had not reported a single cent spent from the allocated funds in the 2016/17 financial year.

Xulu, who was speaking at the launch of National EPWP Week outside Publicity House, said the programme is one of Public Works' initiatives aimed at assisting waste management projects to keep cities clean and healthy while creating employment.

"Msunduzi is not performing well in terms of job creation and reporting on the status of the programme.

"We don't even know how many workers have been contracted by the city through the EPWP programme to

date," Xulu said.

He said the grant was given to the municipality as an additional budget to assist in creating more jobs and at the same time keeping the city clean.

"They are moving very slowly in terms of utilising this grant. Out of the money given to them, they have not spent a single cent.

"If they can't spend the money, next year we'll have to reduce the grant allocation.

"We have indicated to the acting city manager that this is a concern to us. We have given the City until end of October to see change in expenditure."

Xulu said although the municipality had employed some people through the programme, they had not given enough people jobs.

"Msunduzi is a big city and the manpower we have now is not enough. The workers who have been hired are doing a good job but the capacity needs to be increased.

"If the municipality demonstrates the capacity to spend the grant money, we could allocate additional funds to

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ensure that even more people are employed to clean the city."

In recent months, *The Witness* has reported on the ongoing debacle regarding inner city decay. The business

fraternity in the CBD has been complaining about crime, vagrants and filth.

Business owners said the boon of owning inner city businesses had turned into a nightmare, as filth and general neglect take root.

They accused Msunduzi Municipality of not delivering on numerous promises to deal with the city's decay and said they continue to operate in a derelict environment.

In the past three months, a KFC franchise, a Nando's franchise, Upper Crust Bakery and Boxer Supermarket, which were previously situated in Langalibalele Street, have packed up and left.

According to some members of the business community, the increase in the numbers of vagrants has also given rise to criminal activities and has discouraged customers from patronising their stores.

This has left some businesses struggling to generate sufficient profits.

Recently, City spokesperson Thobeka Mafumbatha said the municipality had set up a task team that has been

involved in a CBD clean-up for the past two months.

DA Msunduzi caucus leader Sibongiseni Majola said they had not received any reports from the municipality on their grant spending on the EPWP programme.

"It is shocking that the money has not been used. The city is not good at generating its own income to deal with the filth but it still fails to use a supplement from Public Works to address the decay.

"It's no surprise that we have three general managers facing disciplinary processes," Majola said.

He also questioned the City's recruitment process in the programme.

"They employ a certain few to serve their own political purpose. The process is not transparent and the municipality continues to contravene the regulations which were given to council by Public Works."

Efforts to reach Msunduzi Municipality for comment on this story were unsuccessful yesterday.

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