



## OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR

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Attention: News Editors

For immediate release

05 August 2022

**SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF EKURHULENI  
MASS COMMUNITY MEETING IN THEMBISA  
MEHLARENG STADIUM  
05 AUGUST 2022**

Speaker of Council

Whip of Council

Mayoral Committee Members

Ward Councilors and PR Councilors

Officials of Ekurhuleni

All the Stakeholders

Residents of Thembisa

I greet you all,

Today we are gathered here to formally report back to the community of Thembisa in response to the issues raised in the memorandum submitted to the City.

I want to thank all the community members for attending this mass meeting to receive the feedback on the grievances raised I do hope that we will move forward in a positive way.

I would like to express my deepest condolences from myself and our Government to the families who lost their loved ones during the violent protest that erupted on Monday. May we please have a moment of silence.

It saddens me that the plight of our residents and concerns around the huge cost of living and the economy within our country has brought us to this moment.

I know that the last few months have not been easy for all of you. The petrol prices have increased, interest rates have increased, and many of you are still looking for work after losing your jobs because of COVID.

I want to apologise for not coming to address you earlier. However, I wanted to make sure what I am bringing you is tangible solutions rather than merely paying lip service to your complaints.

We are a listening and caring Multi-Party Coalition Government. We understand the challenges you are currently facing, and we want to ensure that we provide you with the basic services that you rightfully deserve.

We have been working tirelessly to find amicable solutions to address all the issues you have raised.

As a result, we have identified measures that are being implemented as immediate solutions to some of the issues. However, other issues that are a bit complex will be receiving more attention on ongoing basis. As the leadership of the City of Ekurhuleni, we will continue to work around the clock to find lasting solutions to some of the issues that don't have immediate solutions.

Let's get straight to business!

## **Response to the memorandum**

### **1. Electricity**

We are pleased that electricity has been restored in most parts of Thembisa after the destruction of the substation a few days ago. This is the first step which we have taken in restoring services and normality to the community.

## **2. Debt relief measures**

As a Multi-Party Coalition Government of Ekurhuleni, we have developed an aggressive debt rehabilitation programme that will assist residents with historic debt. We will provide you with a 50% write-off of debt in excess of one year on date of application approval – inclusive of rates, service charges, interest and other costs.

The scheme will be available to qualifying applicants from 1 July 2022 until 31 March 2023.

## **3. Billing System**

Many of you have highlighted the issue of historic debt and incorrect billing hanging over you and your families. This needs to be rectified immediately!

We want to assure you that the issue of inaccurate billing system is being resolved. We will also ensure that bills for water, sanitation, rates and taxes are separated from the electricity bill.

## **4. Indigent policy**

We are in the process of reviewing the indigent policy to ensure that all residents who qualify for subsidy can be assisted. The amended policy will be gazetted for public comments.

In the meantime, while the process unfolds, we have resolved to stop any disconnections and declines of indigent applications for the next 90 days.

As the leadership of Ekurhuleni, we want to assure all the residents who qualify for indigent policy that they will be assisted accordingly.

We will be hosting a two-week service delivery open day, with the Finance, Health and Social Development Departments to assist all residents with indigent applications.

Those of you who would like to apply for indigent policy will also be assisted during the Open Days.

To further help residents of Thembisa, we will be bringing this matter of the indigent policy review as an urgent item to Council for approval. We want to increase the property value threshold for qualifying indigent applicants. This means that more of you will now qualify for the free basic services that are provided within the indigent social relief package. This relief will go to the registered and deemed indigent households which will bring immediate relief.

## **5. Property rates and taxes**

For all property owners that believe their properties are over-valued and have never objected or sent a Section 78 query form to the City, such people can still submit Section 78 query forms at any of the CoE's Customer Care Centre or go to Valuations Section at Kempton Park Civic Centre to be assisted with this process. The Section 78 process will run until the current valuation roll comes to an end on the 30 June 2024. Our open days that run for two weeks will be there to assist you.

## **6. Notice service charges**

We will start rolling out the SMS system to notify all residents of their account arrears, which means that residents will no longer be charged for the administration and delivery of cut-off notice letters.

We urge all residents to ensure that they are registered on the Siyakhokha online portal so that you can start receiving SMS and emails communication regarding your accounts.

## **7. Waste Management**

The City of Ekurhuleni will distribute 27 000 wheelie bins to the households as soon as the next few days. This is an effort to help curb illegal dumping in Thembisa.

We will also clean-up all the illegal dumping sites around Thembisa, we appeal to members of the community to stop illegal dumping and conserve the environment.

In the long term, we will be building a recycling plant which will assist in keeping the environment clean and create employment opportunities for the community.

## **8. 100 free electricity units**

As the City of Ekurhuleni, we will continue to provide 50kws free basic units as we are allowed to. The 100kws free basic units is outside of our due restrictions as a municipality, therefore we are engaging with the Provincial and National government to find a solution.

## **9. Customer Service Care**

We have heard your outcry about the disservice that you have been subjected to at our customer care center and we want to assure that all our centers will operate six days a week from Monday to Saturdays (at 13h00).

Our centers will no longer close at lunchtime. The issue of unprofessional behavior by our staff members is receiving my attention. I have instructed the administration to investigate incidents of bribery, corruption and collusion with so-called lawyers who are stealing your hard-earned money. You pay these officials, so they must work for you.

We believe in the principle of Batho Pele, our residents must be served!

As you are aware that the customer care center building was burned down in the wake of the unrest, we have identified a new facility to ensure services continue and are provided to our residents. This new facility is located at the corner of Star Street and Asteroid Street, close to Makhulong Stadium.

We appeal to all residents to join hands with us in protecting this facility. It is your infrastructure that is meant to serve you.

## **10. Tariff A & B**

The City of Ekurhuleni has noticed that the issue of tariffs needs to be evaluated case by case. As a result, this issue will also be dealt with during the two-week long Open Day to assist you in ensuring that every household is billed under the correct tariff.

The City Manager has guaranteed that she will launch an investigation into external vendor charges – no one should be paying more than what is regulated.

With those words of response to your grievances, I and the rest of the leadership of the coalition government of City of Ekurhuleni hope we can forge long last amicable relations driven by going back to basic of quality service delivery.

We understand your frustration and anxiety. The current economic conditions in South Africa are placing a heavy toll on our citizens.

We need to be in constant contact with one another. The Speaker of the Council has committed to conduct training for all ward committee members. This is to ensure that every ward has a functioning ward committee which your ward councilors can use to drive your issues as they are the elected representatives for you to work with.

As Government, we need to make compromises to ensure we uphold our social compact with our residents.

Thank you for coming here today and we thank all stakeholders to joining hands in calling for calm, peace and stability as we move forward to proper together.

We will continue to improve service delivery in Thembisa and find ways to protect the most vulnerable citizens in our city.

Let's go back to basics to build a better Thembisa and Ekurhuleni.

I thank you.

END

For more information, please contact the Spokesperson for the Executive Mayor,

Mr. Phakamile Mbengashe on 011 999 1068

**Issued by the Office of the Executive Mayor of the City of Ekurhuleni**

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