

**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND
TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**OFFICE OF THE DDG: LOCAL GOVERNMENT BRANCH**Private Bag X9078, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Southern Life Plaza, 271 Church Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3200
Tel: 033 355 6495 Fax: 033 355 6351Enquiries: Mr E Rorich
E-mail: Ernest.Rorich@kzncogta.gov.za**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BRANCH
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL****SUBJECT: PARLIMENTARY QUESTIONS:**No. 38/2021: Ms M Ntuli (DA) to ask the MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs:
Regarding billing in Local Municipalities; andNo. 39/2021: Ms M Ntuli (DA) to ask the MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs: With
reference to engineering capacity in Municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal.**AUTHOR:****SUPERVISOR:**NAME: MS NH ALLY
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RANK: HEAD OF DEPARTMENT
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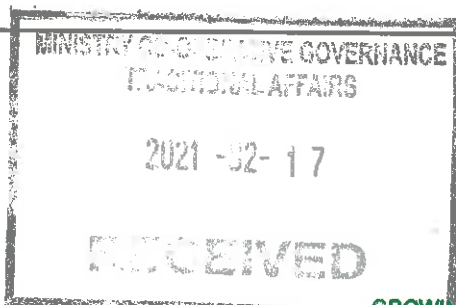
MARK ROUTE WITH *		SIGNATURE	DATE	REMARKS
MS N NDLOVU CHIEF DIRECTOR: CORPORATE COMMUNITATION	*	<i>Approved by Mr Liptak</i>	15/02/2021	
MR T TUBANE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS	*		15/2/2021	
MR S HLOMUKA HONOURABLE MEC: COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS			19/2/21	

REMARKS:

KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Administration

Received by the Office of the HOD

15 FEB 2021

Private Bag X9078, Pietermaritzburg, 3200
Co-operative Governance & Traditional Affairs



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

MINISTRY

Private Bag X9078, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200

Parliamentary Liaison Office

Wadley House Building, 115 Jabu Ndlovu Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3200

Tel: 033 897 3828 Fax: 033 897 5615

The Secretary
KwaZulu-Natal Legislature
Private Bag X9112
3200

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION NO. 38/2021 MS M NTULI (DA) TO ASK THE MEC FOR COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS:

Regarding billing in Local Municipalities:

QUESTION 1

How often should municipalities be reading;

- (a) Water meters; and**
- (b) Electricity meters.**

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The Municipal Systems Act, 2000 does not prescribe a period when meters should be read and when it should be estimated. This is carried out by municipalities based on capacity and available systems. Some municipalities have systems whereby a consumer can call in with the meter reading.

However, as a good practice municipalities have always been encouraged, by CoGTA, to read monthly and in the event of estimating, to ensure that estimating should not exceed three consecutive months.

QUESTION 2

If residents are in arrears:

- (a) Should they be given notice before being cut off or restricted; and**
- (b) What is the timeframe for such notice period?**



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DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Indeed, consumers should be given notice and letters of demands prior to being disconnected. The notice period differs from municipality to municipality and it should be contained in the municipality's credit control and debt collection policy and by-law. Such action must comply with these as well as the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act.

QUESTION 3

Is the Department aware of any incorrect billing taking place in KwaZulu-Natal Municipalities;

(a) If yes, please provide details of each of those Municipalities;

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The Department received complaints of inaccurate billing at two municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal namely, eThekweni and Msunduzi.

QUESTION 4

How many times can a Municipality estimate bills before they are legally obliged to get up to date physical readings;

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

As indicated above, there is no legal prescript regarding the period for estimates. However, municipalities have been encouraged not to estimate for more than three months.

Meter reading was significantly affected during the COVID-19 lockdown as employees could not go out to read meters. In addition, it must also be noted that when municipalities cannot get to read meters due to not having access to properties (homes and businesses are locked), municipalities continue estimating until they are given access to read meters on these properties. This sometimes takes longer than three months.

QUESTION 5

If Municipalities are failing to adhere to the answers mentioned in Q1 and Q4, what recourse do customers have to resolve their issues;

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Consumers must follow the dispute resolution process as contained in municipalities' credit control and debt collection policies. Most municipalities have a complaints management system and/or customer care unit to deal with queries and complaints. In the event of dissatisfaction or inefficiency, the Accounting Officer should be finally required to respond. Customers also always have legal recourse.



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QUESTION 6

What is CoGTA doing to ensure that Municipalities are fairly and accurately treating customers in relation to billing;

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

There Department has supported Msunduzi Municipality in developing a revenue management plan which includes elements of capacity, meter reading and installation, data cleansing and enforcement. This plan is currently in implementation and monitored in conjunction with the Municipal Manager and Mayor.

Ethekwini Metro has been engaged on the complaints received and reported in the media generally and has responded regarding the internal controls related to revenue management. However, given the number of complaints and recurring nature thereof, the Department is undertaking an assessment of the revenue system and processes.

Annually CoGTA reviews municipalities' credit control and debt collection policies to ensure that municipalities have sound customer practices. In addition, the Department addresses queries received and supports municipalities on revenue management through Revenue and Debt Steering Committees as well as addressing specifically the issue of Government Debt. In addition, the Department has run a "Masakhane" Campaign to promote payment by consumers and undertook such a campaign at Ugu District. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, the Campaign could not proceed. COGTA in KZN has however, engaged with DCOG at National and is part of the Responsible Citizenry Communication Campaign.

QUESTION 7

Does the Department have a facility available for customers to seek assistance should they feel that they are being unfairly or inaccurately treated by their Municipality?

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Municipalities credit control and debt collection policies should have a dispute resolution process that consumers need to follow. CoGTA does not wish to usurp the powers of local government or undermine their competencies as enshrined in the Constitution. CoGTA does not also wish to open a floodgate for consumer complaints to come directly to another sphere of government without first addressing the matter with Municipal Councils. This remains the legal competence of local government. However, in exceptional circumstances CoGTA does intervene and mediate with aggrieved consumers.



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**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION NO. 38/2021 MS M NTULI (DA) TO ASK THE MEC FOR
COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS:**

Yours faithfully,

MR S.E. HLOMUKA, MPL

MEC FOR COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS

DATE:

19/2/21



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**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION NO. 39/2021 MS M NTULI (DA) TO ASK THE MEC FOR
COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS:**

With reference to engineering capacity in Municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal:

QUESTION 1

**How many vacancies currently exist in Engineering positions in Municipalities in
KwaZulu-Natal (local, district and metro);**

- (a) Please provide a break down per Municipality; and**
- (b) Where possible please provide the title of the vacant post.**

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The department monitors vacancies of senior management positions and will not have information of lower level positions.

QUESTION 2

**How many senior engineering vacancies exist in KwaZulu-Natal Municipalities (local,
district and metro);**

- (a) Please provide a break down per Municipality.**

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Municipalities with vacant Senior Manager Technical Services positions as at 01 February 2021 is as follows;

HEAD OF MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS
1. Abaqulusi
2. Impendle



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3. Jozini
4. Inkosi Langalibalele
5. iLembe DM
6. uMgungundlovu
7. Umzinyathi
8. eDumbe
9. King Cetshwayo
Total vacant posts: 9 out of 54 posts

QUESTION 3

Do KwaZulu-Natal Municipalities have a capacity problem when it comes to engineering staff;

- (a) If yes, why does such a problem exist; and**
- (b) If yes, how does this affect service delivery.**

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The department keeps track of senior manager vacancies at municipalities and provide support to the municipalities in drafting recruitment plans with timeframes and provide advice on compliance with legislative prescripts in the recruitment of municipal senior managers. According to the above table, only 9 out of 54 municipalities have vacancies in Heads of Technical Services. This is a 16% vacancy rate and is kept at this minimal number due to the close monitoring that the department provides.

QUESTION 4

Is it of the opinion of the Department that the Provincial Employment Equity targets are contributing to the lack of engineering capacity in the provinces municipalities; and

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The department is not of this opinion at all.

QUESTION 5

What is the Department doing to try and resolve the current engineering capacity problems in KwaZulu-Natal?

DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

As stated in 3 above, municipal vacancy rates at senior management level are monitored and where a vacancy occurs, there is support and advice provided pre-, during and post the recruitment process.



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COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS:**

Yours faithfully,

MR S.E. HLOMUKA, MPL

MEC FOR COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS

DATE:

19/2/21