

Nelson Mandela Bay municipality budget passing 'an answer to prayer'



Senior ANC politicians and Nelson Mandela Bay Church leaders at a meeting on Monday to discuss challenges facing the city. They are, from left, Bishop Bethlehem Nopece, Litho Suka (ANC chief whip) Dr Bukelwa Hans (SACC), Bicks Ndoni (Chairperson of ANC), Rory Spence and Neville Goldman. (PHOTO: [TCN](#))

The Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality finally passed its 2018/19 budget today at a fourth special council sitting, in a breakthrough which metro Christian leaders view as an answer to prayer.

The Church, which was concerned that the budget impasse would result in people suffering by bringing service delivery to a halt, had "tried its hardest" to intervene in the crisis, said Rev Rory Spence, a member of a church leaders' task team which met with senior ANC politicians on Monday to urge them to support the budget for the good of the city.

While the ANC did not ultimately support the budget – boycotting today's council meeting, together with the EFF –

prayer leaders who have been hard at work mobilising urgent prayer into the situation were delighted with today's breakthrough which was made possible when the African Independent Congress's voted with the DA-led alliance in support of the budget and UF councillor Mkuseli Mtsila attended the meeting, making up the required quorum, even though he did not support the budget.

"I am very excited and pleased at this answer to prayer because needy people in a number of wards were facing much loss if the situation was not resolved," said Transformation Christian Network prayer coordinator Joan Keeling.

Fervent prayer

She said intercessors and Christian groups in the city who were asked to "pray fervently, without slackening, until the battle was won" had really caught the vision of the urgent need for prayer. Prayer warriors had sent her messages of thanks to God after the news of today's successful vote.

Keeling also said that Fred van der Westhuizen, Port Elizabeth representative of OM, who serves as a chaplain to the municipality, had played a key role in alerting church leaders to the seriousness of the stalled budget vote. Van der Westhuizen could not be contacted for comment at the time of posting this report.

It has been widely reported that the NMB Municipality faced being placed under administration and the council dissolved if it could not pass its budget by the end of the month.

The ANC and EFF have opposed the budget because they maintain it is not pro-poor. ANC councillor Rory Riordan has estimated that only 40% to 45% of the budget was being spent on addressing the needs of the poor, as opposed to the over 90% claimed by the DA, reports [News 24](#).

In a telephone interview with Gateway News today, Rory Spence said the church task team that met with the ANC leaders on

Monday, had acknowledged the party leaders right to fight for their constituents but had urged them to support the budget for the good of the city.

After today's special council meeting Mayor Athol Trollip thanked the two councillors, Mtsila and Buyeye, for attending the meeting, reports [Herald Live](#).

"We have put the people of the city first and without cooperation of Buyeye and Mtsila, who was at his post on time to make the meeting quorate, even though he opposed the budget for his reasons given.

"That is fine we don't always have to agree with each other in politics, but you need to be at work, if you are serious about service delivery," Trollip said.

"We are elated that we can get on with the business of putting the people first."

Council will reconvene next Wednesday to discuss other critical items on the agenda.