

Attention:

Mr Chris Ndlela, Msunduzi Mayor
Mr Mxolisi Nkosi, Municipal Manager

Tuesday, 10 November 2015

Memorandum from the Waste Pickers at the Msunduzi New England Road Landfill

As waste pickers earning our livelihoods at New England Road Landfill in Pietermaritzburg we are deeply saddened by what was quoted in *The Witness* on Friday¹, that Msunduzi Mayor Chris Ndlela flagrantly endorses the use of pellet guns to force waste pickers off the landfill. It is at the landfill where waste pickers derive income and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by recycling and limiting what waste is left to decompose. Waste pickers aid in saving landfill airspace by reclaiming recyclables.

We are concerned about the failure of the construction of a materials recovery facility (MRF) at the New England Road Landfill. This, despite funding from tax payers money that have been allocated through the provincial Cooperative of Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) in 2011. The construction has been postponed for more than two years now. None amongst you from your respective departments have thus far clearly informed us on what the delay is. We have written letters and made phone calls but without the result of an understandable explanation.

Noting that:

- People who reclaim waste from the landfill earn a legitimate livelihood through this recycling process;
- The waste pickers at the landfill site have formally organised themselves and they have democratically elected leadership and are organised into a registered cooperative;
- The security hired by the Msunduzi Municipality have in the past shot people and physically abused people who have worked on the landfill site, which has resulted in criminalising people who seek to make a legitimate livelihood from people's waste;
- The National Environmental Management: Waste Act 2008 allows for the 'salvaging' of waste off landfill sites as stated in Section 51 (i);
- The landfill is poorly managed and people do not have safe areas to work from;
- The monitoring committee has failed to meet regularly to make meaningful input into the management at the landfill site;
- We have called for a meeting with officials from both municipal officials to address our concerns but we have been ignored.

We therefore call on the Msunduzi Local Municipality to:

- Ensure that maintains Pietermaritzburg is an incinerator-free city;
- Start building an MRF as soon as possible;

¹ The Witness, 6 November 2015 – "War on waste pickers"
<http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/War-on-waste-pickers-20151105>

- Ensure that the waste pickers will not be barred from earning a livelihood from the landfill site;
- Ensure all future developments on the dump will only occur after participation and consensus has been reached with the waste pickers;
- Urgently set up a meeting with the waste pickers and relevant NGO's to address the above concerns.

We expect your response by end of business this Friday, 13th November 2015.

Yours sincerely

Nonhlanhla Mhlophe

On behalf of Waste Pickers at the Msunduzi New England Road Landfill and the South African Waste Pickers' Association (SAWPA)