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Financial Commission says govt must stop e-Tolls 'Double Speak'

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Commission chairperson Professor Dan Plaatjies said the government must be decisive and speak with one voice on e-tolls.

JOHANNESBURG – The government must stop its double-speak on e-tolls, the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC) has told Parliament.

There've been mixed messages on the controversial system, with Finance Minister Tito Mboweni insisting that government back the user-pay principle, and the ANC in Gauteng repeating its calls for e-tolls to be scrapped.

Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula said he hoped a solution to the divisions could be found but the FFC, which advised organs of state on economic, fiscal and financial matters, said that people must pay.

Commission chairperson Professor Dan Plaatjies said the government must be decisive and speak with one voice on e-tolls.

“You can't have two different 'speak' on it. The pay-as-you-go speak because of borrowing of funds for road infrastructure and then a speak of there's no guarantee of payments and we have to look at other options. There's only one option: if you've borrowed money, you have to pay it back.”

Plaatjies said that citizens would end up paying **whatever the decision was on e-tolls**. He said people's refusal to pay had hit the **South African National Roads Agency** (Sanral) hard.

“This is a serious matter. It has actually eroded the credibility and the standing of Sanral in particular when it came to its ability to service those government guarantees.”

Plaatjies said the government should also stop its double-speak on state-owned companies – on the one hand saying they need to stand on their own feet, yet on the other, continuing to grant them cash bailouts.

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