

We need to work together to make a change

By Haniff Hoosen MP – DA Shadow Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

Honorable Chairperson,

We extend our compliments to Minister Dlamini-Zuma on her appointment. The Democratic Alliance (DA) offers its full support to you Minister, when you put the interest of our country first. We will however, raise our voices when things fall apart.

We do not want to see our towns and cities fail, because if that happens, it affects everyone, regardless of which political party they support. We all have to work together to keep the water flowing and the lights burning.

In many respects, the lives of our citizens have become better since 1994, yet in many areas, the situation has worsened. This is often due to a lack of accountability.

Three years ago, 54 municipalities received a clean audit, today that number has regressed to 18 out of 257.

Let's analyse for a moment why we find ourselves in this situation. It comes down to two basic failures. Weak governance and weak political leadership.

- Take for example the drought stricken municipalities of uThukela District and Alfred Duma. Millions of Rands have disappeared in tenders whilst the citizens go without water for decades;
- In Mooi Mpofana businesses and residents will be left in the dark if the municipality doesn't settle its eskom bill.
- In the Eastern Cape, the MEC appointed the least competent candidate for the position of Chief Financial Officer in the Sundays River Municipality, yet the

other 4 candidates were more highly qualified – this is why municipalities struggle to maintain good financial health;

- The Amahlati Municipality is one of 30 municipalities that are struggling to pay their employees whilst others are struggling to stop raw sewage spilling into our rivers and streets;
- In Limpopo all 27 municipalities failed to improve their audit outcomes, yet they spent R177 million on consultants to help them with their financial management;
- The same situation prevails in the Free State, where not a single municipality received a clean audit;
- More than R1.2 billion worth of tenders in municipalities across South Africa cannot be audited because basic documents have disappeared.
- Irregular expenditure has grown to R21 billion and again there will be no consequences; and,
- A few years ago, the Manase Report presented evidence of massive fraud and corruption in Ethekewini. To this day not a single person has been held accountable or sent to prison.

It seems that even placing a city under administration is not the solution. Towards the end of last year, almost 10% of our municipalities had been placed under administration and the list is growing.

Although investigations are undertaken, nobody goes to jail. People steal money and instead of going to jail, they get rewarded with other positions. Some of them even end up here in Parliament.

Minister, before we start fixing municipalities, we first have to fix your own department. Receiving a disclaimer from the Auditor-General is not a good example to set.

There must be consequences for poor performance or else we will see more and more examples of weak governance.

This is the basic principle that underpins DA Governments. Which is why they are consistently rated the best run in the country

And then there are examples of weak political leadership.

- Constant chaos in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Council caused the budget to be delayed four times already and in the meantime, service delivery is delayed;
- In Kwa Dukuza, the Youth League secretary general has brought the municipality to its knees because he was convicted of murder;
- In Ethekewini, the mayor is busy mobilizing her supporters to make the city ungovernable because she is being charged for fraud and corruption. Her supporters have now turned on the Municipal Manager and he fears for his life. There are now suspicions that the acting mayor was poisoned during a recent council meeting; and,
- In Msunduzi, one of the dozens of municipalities under administration, councillors are refusing to attend council meetings and decisions cannot be adopted. The City Administrator has received death threats for his attempts to get the city back on its feet.

Honourable Minister, the internal political factional battles in your political party are destroying our towns and cities.

These factions are fighting each other instead of fighting for the citizens.

There must be consequences for politicians who are working to render municipalities ungovernable. This is treason and they should be sent to jail.

Strong political leadership and clean governance is required to turn the situation around.

These are the two core principles that we as the DA hold firm in our management of municipalities.

This is why life is better for the 15 million people who enjoy some form of DA government in towns and cities across our country because we manage the public purse with honesty, attract more investment and create more jobs.

Whether we like it or not, these are facts proven by many independent studies including the auditor general who found that 12 out of the 18 municipalities who received a clean audit are governed by the DA.

But it is still not perfect and where we regress, we take firm and appropriate action.

Chairperson, the issue of job creation in our country is a matter that the DA takes very seriously. It will form the central focus of the DA administration in this 6th parliament.

Ten million South Africans are walking our streets without jobs. This department CAN make a considerable contribution towards reducing unemployment if we create a conducive environment for investment.

No business in the world wants to invest their millions in corrupt municipalities where there is no water, no electricity and poor municipal services delivery.

If we get our towns and cities working, we will get South Africans working.

Honorable Minister, you have inherited a mess and we want to offer you our help to clean up that mess. If we work together, we can overcome some of these challenges.

We want to extend our assistance to you and the department.

We have a team of qualified people who want to share with you, the lessons we learnt and the interventions we implemented to turn cities around.

In the spirit of working together for a better South Africa, we hope that you will accept this invitation today because if our municipalities fall apart, our country will fall into ruin and more South African's will be left without a job.

I thank you.