

## **Budget Debate on Vote 32: Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment**

**Speech by Hannah Shameema Winkler MP**

**DA Member on the Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and Environment**

House Chair,

Last year, 461 people died in devastating floods that pummelled my home province of KwaZulu-Natal. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), in South Africa and the Southern Africa region, climate models project increases in temperature that are higher than the global average, increased frequency and intensity of heatwaves, and shifts in rainfall patterns that could lead to more frequent droughts in some areas and increased flood risk in others. The reality is that torrential rains, devastating droughts, and intense heatwaves are an imminent reality that municipalities across South Africa are woefully unprepared to handle.

The National Climate change Bill which is presently underway is intended to provide a regulatory framework for the effective management of inevitable climate change impacts through enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change, but, in its present incarnation, it does not provide enough resources and support for local municipalities, is unclear on how climate policies will be implemented at the local level, and it is short on enforcement mechanisms to ensure that municipalities follow through on their responsibilities. And these are just to name a few. As it stands, we are facing a governance crisis across South Africa where municipalities are collapsing like dominos. Unable to deliver on basic services, the prospect that these municipalities are going to be tasked with protecting the people of South Africa from climate change impacts is just unfathomable.

But, there is a city that is paving the way in its climate change response, one that is emerging as a global front-runner, and yes, you guessed it, it is the DA-led city of Cape Town. Among only 43 cities worldwide, out of 596, that have been scored, the DA-led City of Cape Town received the highest grade from the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). The scoring took into account how sub-national city governments manage, measure and address greenhouse emissions, as well as other climate-related risks such as water security. There is hope, South Africa. And it comes in the shape of a DA-led government.

One of the most amazing things about our country is that we have a constitution that clearly outlines in Section 24 that: Everyone has the right to an environment which is not harmful to their health or well-being and a right to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations. There are however too many instances where you and your department are failing to honour these provisions.

Minister Creecy, two years ago, the High Level Panel tasked to review policies, regulatory measures, practices and policy positions that are related to hunting, trade, captive keeping, management and handling of elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros released a report that was unambiguous in its direction – it called for an end to the captive lion hunting industry. Two years later, and we find ourselves still with at least 9000 lions in captivity and counting. In March this year, we finally saw a glimmer of hope when the Honourable Minister called for stakeholder participation regarding voluntary exit from this industry. This is a commendable first step, yet it remains just that, a step. As we speak, lions continue to be bred for canned lion hunting, this is illogical. If the aim is indeed to phase out the industry then why has a moratorium on breeding not been implemented?

In February of this year, you authorised the export of 12 cheetahs to India, as part of a 10-year cheetah translocation project in a Memorandum of Understanding with India. Two of these cheetah have now died in the last two months. Minister Creecy, you would be aware that non-detrimental findings for threatened or protected species must undergo a public consultation process before they are adopted. Now, we know that this did not transpire, and instead “advice” from the scientific authority was used to justify this export. What has further come to light is equally as disturbing: In accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, Cheetahs, which are Appendix 1 Species, that means species threatened with extinction or protected species, require a permit for export. Minister Creecy, your department has revealed that these permits do not exist. The fact is that you and your department have unlawfully exported 12 of our South African Cheetah. And now 2 are dead. Who is going to take responsibility? And how are you going to justify the further export of any cheetah under these circumstances.

Now, moving to one of the most beautiful and biodiverse provinces in South Africa, my home province of KwaZulu-Natal. In March of this year, I wrote a letter to your office requesting urgent assistance in the sewage crisis in eThekweni municipality. To date, I have not even received an acknowledgement of receipt. However, I am not sure why I would have been surprised at this. The lacklustre, arrogant, and ineffective response to the sewage spills that has basically destroyed Durban’s tourism economy is symptomatic of what this ANC government has come to represent at every level of government. I am uncertain as to what more needs to transpire to get your attention on why immediate serious intervention is required in this sewage disaster: more dying fish, more sick people in hospitals, more joblessness? What the residents of the city can count on though is that the DA will once again do, what you are too scared to do, and that is take the ANC-led eThekweni to court and hold them accountable for non-compliance

What one can be sure of is that wherever there is an ANC-orchestrated mess, you will find the DA rebuilding and demanding accountability.