

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

I S MFUNDISI

The Office of the Premier is the cog around which the wheel of governance rotates in the province. If the cog, as the centre, shows weakness we can expect misery from the other departments. We, however, have a Premier with steel nerves who will stand up to challenges that come her way.

The poor example set by the office in the 2008/09 fiscal year is cause for concern.

That the Provincial Public Accounts Committee warned in March 2008 that:

- i. "The Risk Assessment Plan be put in place in keeping with Treasury Regulation 3.2.1,
- ii. Payments of creditors be paid within 30 days of submitting their invoices and,
- iii. There were inconsistencies between measurable objectives in the Annual Report, Budget and Strategic Plan"

And the same was again raised by the Auditor General I this year's audit is a clear indication that members of this August house can go on talking while officials choose to ignore all advice.

The current Premier has inherited a poisoned chalice when one takes into account that the province is almost upside down. Some municipalities are dysfunctional and the same malady is finding its way into provincial government departments. It is a matter of time before some collapse or implode.

The time has come that people should know what the legislature is about. The same office that disregards the implementation of the recommendations of the watchdog of the legislature goes on to apportion themselves millions of Rand on bonuses, and this also done contrary to regulations in that the executing authority was not taken on board, *nogal*. The simple rule is that if you do not have permission from the owner, the executing authority in this instance, you have committed theft and a thief has to be arrested.

The time has come that government should set a sad example by prosecuting officials who are lackadaisical in doing their work yet do not forget to calculate their bonuses even when resources are scarce.

Out of a possible 22 key governance responsibilities the AG has noted that 10 have not been performed according to prescripts. This amounts to 45, 5% of work not done well and yet the government has had to pay bonuses, what for? This government should not be force fed mediocrity. We deserve top class performance. We in the UCDP feel that in the spirit of Batho Pele personal gratification should not supersede the interests of the general public.

The UCDP supports the Premier for having brought in forensic audits even in her own department. This we say particularly because of the dismissive manner in which the department responded to the queries from the Auditor General. It is unfortunate that some heads of department do not take their responsibility with responsibility. To imagine that this office is headed by the only Director General in the province, somebody to whom other heads of departments look up to and yet there is such conduct is an indictment to the selection processes for leadership positions.

The report makes sad reading as the provincial poverty profiles continue to indicate that the number of people living under the datum line continues to rise and what makes it worse is that poverty is not being rated as important. We argue this way informed by the fact that it is placed as no 5 out of the so-called TOP TEN "BIG BANG" PROGRAMMES identified by the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy. We in the UCDP will agitate for the reprioritization of the ten to have poverty alleviation placed high on the list.

It is seven months since the new administration took office but the website of government is non-functional. This situation should not be allowed to persist in this present age where information technology rules the roost. It is too long that the website has been unavailable. This is one medium that can assist in taking the province to the world. It could be that the lack of interest in this province by people with skills is prompted by this non-functional website.

While on the issue of the government website it is also a concern that departments such as Health and Social development, Provincial Treasury,

Human Settlement and the Office of the Premier are still constructing their sites. It is rather too long since the new administration took office.

It looks like the fortunate people are those who have subscribed to the Government Communication Information Services e-mailing system because they receive regular updates on what the provincial government is doing and this of course is also dependent on the extent to which the communications officers in the departments are devoted and dedicated to their offices.

The third but last paragraph of the Accounting Officer's Introduction to the Annual Report speaks in glowing terms of the appointment of the Provincial Advisory Council on Innovation and Information Communications Technologies. Its impact and presence have yet to be felt and seen. This also goes for the Provincial Information Society and Development.

The North West province has a dire need for information. The people are starved of goings-on in government

We hope the government has learnt in the past 15 years that governing by alienation and antagonism is detrimental to progress. We hope that the utterances made in the higher echelons of the government in this country regarding employing people because of their skills and experience is not empty rhetoric.

If that is the case we in the UCDP believe that the North West government stands to benefit much from what Thomas Gray said in his *Elegy written in a country church-yard*:

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness in the desert air”.

Qualified and skilled people perceived or known to belong to other political parties have been strangers in their country for too long. This should not be allowed to continue if we intend to make this province a success.

Hon Speaker, let me conclude by calling on the Hon Premier and her government to play all the notes on the keyboard of the piano to produce melodious music. Let no people suffer because of their political positions and or affiliation.