

**NFP Response: Feedback session Report: Taking Legislature
to the
People at Abaqulisi Municipality in 2010**

Madam speaker
Honorable Chairperson
All guests

A crucial part of our work as public representatives is that of facilitating public participation as mandated by the Constitution and the various visits that have been done at Abaqulisi Municipality since 2010 are one of the most important ways in which the Legislature has done this. These visits have confirmed that while progress has been made, there is much more work to be done.

One of the major issues facing Abaqulisi is the housing backlog. This is evident in the number of housing projects in the municipality. Many of these projects have struggled, for a number of reasons. These include challenges with skills, weather conditions, theft and in the case of the Housing Project in Ward 7, funds were mismanaged and therefore housing delivery was compromised.

Honorable Members, one of the great sins of Apartheid is that it took from the majority of our people, black people, the dignity of owning their own land. In a democratic South Africa, we now have the opportunity to address this wrong and to restore that dignity. In the case of the Bhekuzulu Housing Project, the Department of Human Settlements gave the municipality R6.8 million. We welcome this but we believe the department needs to go further. There is clearly a struggle on the part of local government to deal with housing backlogs and the increasing demand for houses. The department should not simply provide financial resources but

must also ensure that municipalities possess the skills and expertise they need to deliver on these demands.

As the NFP we believe efficient and effective healthcare provides a solid foundation for a healthy society. What we need are competent people with the right skills and passion in order to turn our health care system around. A poor public health system hits poor people the hardest. It is for this reason that we support the call from the communities in ward 7 and at Nsunduzane to have clinics built in these areas. I was shocked to learn that in these areas people have to walk long distances and cross a mountain in order to access a clinic. This would be unheard of in an urban community. People in rural areas are clearly still disadvantaged and government needs to prioritise their needs more urgently.

One of the challenges facing not only this community but the province as a whole is that of damage caused by natural disasters. We were pleased to hear that Abaqulisi has a Disaster Housing Project, to fix structures which are damaged by natural disasters like storms. We are however disappointed that the project has not had the desired impact and has not received the support it requires from COGTA.

The province needs to conduct a skills audit and determine municipalities are able to handle the additional responsibilities and where they are not, they need to be assisted. The Disaster Management Act prescribes that there should be a centre in each district municipality and as the NFP we fully support this. But this would simply address half the problem. These centres need to have people with the leadership, skill and experience to respond effectively when disasters strike. We cannot continue with pouring money into projects which do not achieve their objectives.

Honorable members, it is now common knowledge that KwaZulu-Natal is facing a full-scale water crisis. On Wednesday, the

Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform declared the province a disaster area and experts say this is the worst drought to hit the province in twenty years. The communities in Abaqulisi have felt this harder than most. The lack of water in wards 6, 13 and 17 has reached crisis levels and the water tanks provided by government are insufficient.

Access to water is still an issue, especially rural areas such as Abaqulisi, where infrastructure is mostly not upgraded, which forces people to travel long distances in order to obtain water. Government must come with a resolution on how to turn this around. I would also like to encourage community members to play their role in the water sector. The participation of communities in the water sector is important. Government needs to play a stronger role in educating communities about the role they have to play in saving water and in using it sparingly. We are all responsible for how we use water; we are all in this together.

As the NFP we believe the best form of governance happens when all three spheres work together. We encourage the provincial government to continue engaging local authorities in Abaqulisi and provide assistance and leadership when it can. I hope we will return here in future to assess if any progress has been made since this today's Sitting. Let us all work together to make this municipality a better place to live in, for all our citizens.

Thank you.

Presented by: Hon Vikizitha R Mlotshwa