

Debate on NCOP Provincial Week Report 21-24 July 2015

Madam Speaker

Honorable Leader of the NCOP Week Delegation

Honorable Members

As the NFP we believe that local government is the most important sphere of government as it has a direct impact and contact with communities. We need to make sure municipalities are well controlled and managed.

Although the report shows a decrease in the amount spent on consultants from 5% to 4%, this figure is still too high and unnecessary. Municipalities need to be skilled and capacitated enough to handle matters of governance with as little outsourcing as possible. During these tough economic times, we cannot continue to employ people and pay them for jobs which are then done by external consultants.

We are also concerned by the continuing drought situation in the province which is addressed in the report which indicates that over 30 000 livestock have died as a result. We are concerned by the response to this crisis; it is not being treated with urgency. A few weeks ago, water pipes worth R15 million were found deserted on the road in UMkhanyakude; this cannot be good news for water relief efforts.

Another basic commodity that is under pressure is the energy sector. While many of us face challenges regarding increasing

electricity tariffs and load shedding, 21 years into democracy and many more people in our province still do not have access to electricity. This is the story of the people of KwaSilwane. The NCOP week revealed that there are 884 houses in this area and none of them have electricity. Apparently, Eskom has been to the area several times and yet there has been no positive response from them. We would like to ask that the MEC personally intervene in this matter by engaging Eskom as a matter of urgency.

An issue which the report briefly alludes to is that of land reform and how slow this process has been. It is stated that the question of land ownership remains a challenge in the province. It is for this reason that the NFP would like for the province to undertake a land audit of all available and arable in the province and to begin a process where it is distributed to meet the requirements of land reform, by providing title deeds to beneficiaries and by training them to use the land so that it can be productive.

We are pleased to note that the Auditor General has found significant improvements in provincial audit outcomes. Twelve municipalities have progressed to clean audits and eight have maintained them. The AG attributes this to strong leadership at Senior Management Level in municipalities and it is therefore clear that when municipalities have people with the right skill and expertise; they do well.

However, we were dismayed to see that Amajuba District Municipality has regressed to a disclaimed audit opinion. This municipality has been plagued by with problems for years now and we are surprised that the MEC of COGTA has not taken steps to have it placed under administration as she has done with other municipalities. We strongly call on her to show leadership and to take action now.

Finally, we are also concerned to hear that Municipal Demarcations will only happen after the 2016 local elections as this seems like a clear attempt to give the ANC majorities in councils where they did not receive such majorities at the ballot box during elections. We will be monitoring this process very closely.

Presented by: Honorable Erickson Zungu