

CORRUPT OFFICIALS MUST FACE FULL MIGHT OF THE LAW

Pretoria News 27 May 2020 **LEBOGANG MASEKO** Maseko is a social media practitioner at the Department of Water and Sanitation. She writes in her personal capacity.

MPS SERVING on the portfolio committee on human settlements, water and sanitation last week commended the Department of Water and Sanitation for acquiring an unqualified audit in the 2018/19 financial year.

This clean audit is only the second one in 10 years. While this is not really something to write home about, it is a step in the right direction in stabilising the department.

These are the results of measures that have been put in place in turning the department around to ensure that it functions optimally and implements its mandate.

However, the portfolio committee also noted that the department had lost millions in fruitless and wasteful expenditure from its main account.

The department said an amount of R46.7 million

that the plan be implemented with urgency in order to turn the department around, so as to improve and enhance the delivery of services to the public.

Clean drinking water and suitable sanitation are basic human rights. As such, corrupt officials at the department cannot continue to squander taxpayers' money.

They should be held accountable and face the full might of the law, while Tshangana and his team gear up to implement the Financial Recovery Plan to ensure this does not continue to happen.

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The plan seeks to stabilise the department, its water boards and decisively deal with all the officials found to have transgressed and flouted the Public Finance Management Act.

Priority intervention areas of the Financial Recovery Plan include funding and budget management, which will entail the implementation of debt collection, a revenue enhancement strategy and a zero-tolerance stance on overdraft.

Other factors to be considered in the effective implementation of the plan include expenditure control, financial governance and enhanced accountability from officials.

What this means is that there will be an active implementation of accruals and payables management plan.

This will be done to keep in check the fruitless and wasteful expenditure remedial measures.

In addition, a comprehensive reconciliation of assets and liabilities to enable maintenance of proper accounting records for management and reporting purposes is set to be implemented by DG Tshangana and his team.

Minister Sisulu has since issued a strict directive

related to the management fees charged by its entity, Lepelle Northern Water.

An additional R13m was for the charges on standing time and interest on overdue payments for the projects that were implemented by Amatola Water.

This follows Minister Lindiwe Sisulu's announcement at a media briefing recently that 86 officials in her department had been found guilty of fraud and corruption.

Millions squandered recklessly by officials is a concerning trend in the government, especially in the tough economic climate we find ourselves in as a country, due to the rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, and other competing demands.

For a department that is mandated to deliver a basic and significant service such as the provision of water and sanitation, it cannot be allowed that this kind of money is not recovered.

To address this, the department's acting director-general Mbulelo Tshangana has committed to work with his team to clean up the department through the effective implementation of the Financial Recovery Plan.

This came in light as more than R16 Billion worth of projects were issued irregularly, including corruption and fraud by officials in the Department and its entitles.

These, are some of the strides that the Minister continues to focus on in rooting out corruption, even amid negative media reports that continue to propagate false claims that she has her eyes set on becoming Deputy President, as a result casting doubt on her capacity to bring about positive change in the water and sanitation sector.

The negative media reports are but an unfortunate deterrence of what needs to be done to accelerate the provision of water, especially now as the global community is at the mercy of the Coronavirus pandemic.

As President Ramaphosa said while addressing the nation on Wednesday 13 May 2020, we need to come together apart and embrace change. Change in this regard, is meant to restore the dignity of the most impoverished in the country, through the supply of proper sanitation and clean water.

For the sake of our country, let us put politics aside and allow Minister Sisulu to do what she is appointed to do, which is to ensure that the country's water resources are protected, managed, conserved and controlled in a manner suitable to benefit the environment and all citizens of the country.

We should not praise a fish for swimming, what we should do is to commend a captain from saving a sinking ship.

By Lebogang Maseko - Maseko is budding social media practitioner and works for the Department of Water and Sanitation.



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