

ANC set Nelson Mandela Bay on the road to better future

IN response to the In My View opinion article titled "New administration values input and has plan to fix NMB" (May 18) by Retief Odendaal, the member of the Nelson Mandela Bay mayoral committee for budget and treasury, the writer makes insinuations that the new municipal government inherited a broken administration.

Time and space constraints won't allow me to dwell on the issues he captures wherein he alludes that mayor Athol Trollip discovered inefficiency and the new government had to do a turnaround.

Odendaal is speaking as if he was not a DA councillor in that past term, wherein oversight was part of his responsibility.

There are facts and untruths in Odendaal's narrative.

Challenges faced by the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality were a reason why the ANC intervened to bring in former mayor Danny Jordaan in March 2015.

Challenges were glaring, and administration was weak, slow and unreliable, causing under-performance in service delivery.

I agree with Odendaal on this point and it was discovered by Jordaan that various forensic audits pointed to areas of corrupt activity within the metro.

The 2015-16 budget was in an advanced stage, pointing to a deficit of R439-million.

The projection was that the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality's cash holdings would be entirely used up in three years.

Various projects such as the IPTS and metro police were stalled, in many areas service delivery was under-performing and tendering processes were extremely slow, but Jordaan's leadership style and

acumen provided the political leadership needed by the metro.

Immediately the 2015-16 budget was refined and re-worked, and ended up on the eve of the budget/IDP adoption in May last year showing a surplus.

Cash holdings jumped up to R2-billion in the bank for the first time.

Nelson Mandela Bay escaped a gloomy economic outlook with a positive ratings jump that made the city more attractive to investors and lenders – a move that led to a boost to service delivery plans.

The city's stabilised financial standing and prudence saw it move up three notches on the national ratings scale, from an upper medium-grade rating (A1.za) to a high-quality one with low credit risk (Aa1.za).

Internationally, the Bay stood at Baa2 – medium grade, with moderate credit risk – which the ratings agency attributed to the city's solid financial performance and declining debt levels.

This was for the 2014-15 financial year, for which the city had been put on watch for a possible downgrade.

In its report, Moody's said: "Continued fiscal consolidation has led to a continuously robust financial performance and a comfortable liquidity position."

The improved rating saw the city become more credit-worthy, affording it to borrow larger sums of money for less and

effectively lightening the financial load of ratepayers.

At that time the metro had over a period of a year managed its finances in a prudent and sustainable way, re-ignited confidence and mobilised the resources of all our social partners.

Then Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality sat alongside Ekurhuleni and the City of Cape Town, having the highest credit rating of any municipality in South Africa, and our financial credibility in the eyes of the banks was fully restored.

The metro police was launched on May 13 last year. The IPTS system was carefully re-appraised and was to be launched in September last year.

Service delivery bounced back following the improved efficiencies in the administration:

- Some 4 000 serviced sites were provided early last year and 3 000 houses were built in areas such as Joe Slovo, Area 9 and 10 in KwaNobuhle, Chatty, NU 29 in Motherwell, Walmer Township and Missionvale;

- Some 2 215 homes were provided with electricity connections;

- The Nooitgedacht low-level water supply scheme was heavily funded and partly completed;

- The Fishwater Flats Waste Treatment plant was massively extended;

- Weekly waste collection was introduced, which now the DA-led coalition

Right of Reply



Gift Ngqondi

claims as its achievement;

- Our waste management plans were augmented with a number of new vehicles bought;

- A new traffic management system was implemented, resulting in a great improvement in the collection of fines;

- Three modular libraries were handed over to the Kuyga, Colchester and Zwide communities;

- Landfill sites were rehabilitated and the Kragga Kamma Waste Drop-off Centre was opened following renovations;

- More than R50-million was spent on storm water control measures;

- All high mast lights became energy-efficient and much brighter with LED fittings;

- The Tramways building was extensively remodelled by the MBDA;

- Some 40 sport facilities were upgraded with two hard surfaces installed;

- Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality took over the running of some old age homes;

- Various public works programmes created 7 000 jobs.

The success of the team led by Jordaan had in a short space of time (six months) led to the injection of investments by the following companies:

- Beijing Automobile International Corporation (BAIC) injecting a R11-billion vehicle manufacturing plant that has created 2 500 direct jobs;

- Logistics Park – investment of R327-million with 751 jobs created;

- Lighting Innovation invested R60-million and created 120 jobs;

- Clover invested R100-million and

created 100 jobs;

- Discovery invested R20-million and created 500 jobs;

- Mutual Financial Analysts invested R11-million and created 300 jobs;

- Aspen expansion invested R1.8-billion and created 400 jobs;

- Prasa invested R1.4-billion;

- VWSA invested R4.5-billion;

- Transnet invested R8.5-million and additional R700-million was invested.

The DA-led coalition cannot claim easy victories while it is clueless in leading and managing the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality.

Nothing has changed in the metro and our finances are not in good shape due to the coalition's inability to stabilise our finances.

Its glaring weaknesses are evident in the continued bickering in its marriage of convenience, hence it has bungled in the planned IDP/budget wherein it presented the ANC 2016-2021 Five Golden Years IDP plan put forward by Jordaan.

The list of catalytic projects as identified in the 2016-17 IDP are not included in the current draft IDP.

Section 3.3 of the IDP on the built environment performance plan (Bepp) has omitted three main focus areas of the Bepp particularly:

- Urban network strategy;
- Growth nodes;

- Informal settlement and marginalised zones.

The draft IDP/budget 2017-18 of the DA-led coalition, adopted last week, depicts a bleak picture of service delivery, and the most to be affected by this scenario are historically disadvantaged communities in the African townships and northern areas of the metro.

Most ward priorities are not a reflection of continuity and are not aligned to the budget.

Key questions that this DA-led coalition must answer are:

- Is the current draft budget 2017-18 to be passed municipal standard chart of accounts (mSCOA) compliant?

- Are government department's strategic plans available?

- Are the projections correct given the outcry on evaluation of properties?

I have captured this scenario which reflects the contradictions to what Odendaal has reflected in his article.

It reflects the fact that this DA-led coalition has no plan to fix Nelson Mandela Bay except its continued sound bites and megaphone narrative that it has brought stability and change, and that we have a bright future.

Clearly it is clueless and our people deserve better.

Gift Ngqondi is the ANC Nelson Mandela Bay regional head of the communications unit.

Nelson Mandela Bay escaped a gloomy economic outlook with a positive ratings jump