

Future rosy for Tshwane under the DA, says mayor

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BEING the mayor of the capital city has been a learning curve for mayor Solly Msimanga, he conceded yesterday. But the road ahead looked rosy and residents would be treated like VIPs.

Msimanga was marking the end of the first year since his DA wrested Tshwane from the ANC in the 2016 municipal elections.

Mayors in charge of the DA-led municipalities were reporting back on their performance since they came into power. Msimanga said since being sworn in as mayor, he had to learn a lot.

"When we took over the city,

we knew there were things we knew that we knew, and that there were things we knew we didn't know. But then there are things that we got to know that we knew we didn't know," he said.

While the road travelled so far had not been smooth, largely due to a R2 billion budget deficit inherited from the ANC administration, Msimanga expressed optimism about the future.

"When the DA took over in Tshwane, the capital city was on the verge of bankruptcy with a deficit in excess of R2bn due to two decades of reckless governance by the ANC," he said.

His administration, he said, began addressing a multitude of cost-cutting problems to help

stabilise the city and grow its economy – and the people of Tshwane could look forward to being treated as "VIPs".

He added that they would get better service than they ever had.

Under his leadership, the city had made efforts to attract investments worth R2.29bn in just nine months.

He said the investments, which would assist in job-creation, had exceeded the set target to attract at least R10.5bn in five years.

Msimanga expressed satisfaction in the way the DA had run the city during the year in authority, hinting that better service delivery projects were in store for residents.

"This is just the beginning of things to come in this administration," Msimanga said.

He lamented that the city had inherited an almost R700 million broadband contract from the previous administration.

"The city is working to get on a solid legal and financial footing so we can continue with the roll-out of Tshwane's free WiFi project in a way that does not threaten to bankrupt the city," he said.

Msimanga added that the aim was to proliferate WiFi offering to ensure that more residents had access to it and to date, the city had identified 1 000 spots in need of WiFi installation.

"The city is also extricating

itself from a R2bn smart meter contract which was found to be irregular by the auditor-general. Legal proceedings are under way and we are optimistic that this will put the city in a much better position to provide affordable and sustainable electricity to our people," he said.

The city had also uncovered massive corruption, he pointed out. "These include the city hall scandal, the R30m shoe polish debacle, as well as the Dinokeng Tribe One-Nicki Minaj fiasco that cost the residents in excess of R60m, which is under investigation."

The extravagant mayoral mansion located in Muckleneuk was in the process of being sold to free up much-needed funds

for the city, he said.

Although "blue lights" were banned, it was only President Jacob Zuma who could use them in Pretoria, as he was allowed to in terms of certain laws of the country, Msimanga said.

More than 2 804 title deeds had to date been handed over to beneficiaries, and the city planned to deliver at least 6 000 more in the 2017/18 financial year.

"The city is creating 23 000 Expanded Public Works job opportunities to alleviate burden of poverty and ensure people can find work," Msimanga said.

In partnership with Eskom, the city had ensured that more than 80% of households had



BIG IMPROVEMENT: Mayor Solly Msimanga, left, shares a light moment with DA leader Mmusi Maimane at a progress report-back session in the metros governed by the party. PICTURE: DIMPHO MAJA

access to electricity.

Msimanga said more than R13m has been invested in

the restoration of water infrastructure, among other achievements.