

COGTA MINISTER

“CRACKS A WHIP” TO UNDER ACHIEVING MUNICIPALITIES



Deputy Minister of CoGTA, Mr Andries Nel, Minister of CoGTA, Dr Zweli Mkhize, MEC for CoGHSTA, Mr Jerry Ndou and Treasury MEC, Mr Rob Tooley.

In an effort to assist municipalities that are struggling, Minister of CoGTA, Dr Zweli Mkhize paid a visit to the Province. The visit formed part of the interventions identified by government to assist municipalities that are distressed and are unable to deliver quality services to the residents. The seven (7) municipalities that are categorized as distressed are Vhembe District Municipality, Mopani District Municipality, Thabazimbi Local Municipality, Musina Local Municipality, Mogalakwena Local Municipality, Fetakgomo Tubatse Local Municipality and Modimolle - Mookgopong Local Municipality. These municipalities form part of the 87 municipalities that are either distressed or dysfunctional in the country. The visit to the Province is also part of a call by the Minister that municipalities need to go back to basics and doing what communities expect such as filling of vacant posts in strategic with qualified, competent and experienced professionals, improve financial management, infrastructure development and maintenance, promote good governance and ethical leadership as well as put people and their concerns first. The Minister was accompanied by the Deputy Minister, Mr Andries Nel, CoGHSTA MEC, Mr Jerry Ndou and Treasury MEC,

Mr Rob Tooley. The first stop of the Minister's visit was Bolivia Lodge in Polokwane on Tuesday, 10 July 2018, where he was able to interact with the Mayors and Municipal managers of the struggling municipalities. Presentations were made to the Minister on the challenges they encounter and why is it difficult for them to move away from the category of “struggling/ distressed municipalities”. From the meeting, the Minister picked up that there was a decline in revenue collection by the affected municipalities, which negatively affected their financial viability and ability to honor their financial obligations for bulk electricity and water. Other challenges include: lack of consequence management resulting in irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure increment (Mainly in Supply Chain Management), poor application of project management principles, lack of stability in the leadership position, Poor understanding of municipal infrastructure environment and accounting requirements and unavailability of required documents for audit purpose.

In his response, Mkhize indicated that there is no time for

excuses, people deserve better services and that municipalities owe much to their communities. He appealed to the municipalities to work together with all the relevant structures and ensure that they turn the situation around for the better. He also urged municipalities to take the Back to Basics approach, and identify the needs of the people based on their IDP's. “We want municipalities to achieve clean audit reports and ensure that our communities are able to benefit”. Mkhize is also worried that the municipalities were approving unrealistic budgets without the funds to finance the projects. He also touched on the issue of municipalities that have invested money in VBS Mutual Bank saying that the funds invested might be lost forever.

MEC Ndou appreciated the Minister's visit and said the affected municipalities should partner will all the relevant institutions to improve the situation and be able to deliver quality services to people.