



Mayoral Report
to Council meeting
held 31 March 2023

**BROKEN, BANKRUPT AND BEHEADED:
It's time to prepare for a new season**

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Introduction

Speaker, members of the mayoral committee, councillors, acting municipal manager, acting directors and all officials of the municipality, members of the public present, guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning, goeie môre, molweni, dumelang, and as our Khoisan forebears would have said, Tsai Tses.

Context

The council meeting of today, 31 March 2023, signals the beginning of preparations for a new season, indeed the new financial year of the municipality. Today I place before council the prescribed draft IDP, SDF and the draft budget 2023/24, in compliance with prescribed 90-day notice period as set out in the law.

With council's concurrence today, these draft documents will go through a community consultative process before we revise and adopt the final versions thereof. Allow me to remind you that second to the legislation, these three documents are the core strategic documents which guide the business of the municipality. It is therefore of vital importance that we consult widely and wisely and listen to the heartbeat of the communities that we serve as we make these documents available for public comment and input as of today.

A new season awaits us

As we review the past season and plan for the future season, I am reminded of the wisdom of a sage from the ancient near east as recorded in the Book of Ecclesiastes, which in Hebrew is the word Koheleth, which means "the one who convenes an assembly" or simply a preacher, possibly a modern say Speaker.

In Chapter 3 of Koheleth the writer soberly reminds us that there is a time and a season for everything under the sun/heavens:

- ² a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
- ³ a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
- ⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
- ⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
- ⁶ a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
- ⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
- ⁸ a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Interpretation and application

What the ancient writer is telling us, among others, is that life is a balancing act between two opposing impulses, in fact, two diametrically opposed forces both competing for our attention. We are required to find balance – equilibrium - if we are going to survive and find meaning in this game called life, where paradoxically, death is also a certainty.

I would like to extrapolate the lessons of survival and balance from Ecclesiastes as we, the councillors of the Cederberg Municipality, prepare to enter a new season as signalled by our draft budget and consultative processes which will start today. As I read the signs and interpret Cederberg reality, I am struck by the fact that the season and indeed the challenge in which we find ourselves is one of **rebuilding a vulnerable municipality**.

To use the discursive framework of Koheleth and its sage, I would say that for this council and this municipality, it is now ***a time to build and not a time to destroy*** – it is now ***a time to stabilise*** a very vulnerable institution; in fact, it is ***a time for peace and not a time for war***.

Our time to campaign and fight each other is past. It is now a time to govern.

For some of us, Mr Speaker, it is a good reminder that there is a time to speak, but there is also time to be silent. There is a time for war but there is also a time for peace. A time to tear down and a time to mend/repair, says the wise writer of Ecclesiastes.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, I believe we are entering a time where we are called upon to make peace and to mend/repair our broken municipality. It is, of course, easy to blame and point fingers. The greater challenge is to join hands in order to repair and build. Let us be clear - the ruling coalition should not govern alone. We all need to govern together. We all need to serve our people together.

The clarion call

I call upon all councillors today to embrace our role as statesmen and women, indeed that group of wise elders and first citizens of this municipality. Let our actions cause the people out there to admire and adore us and not to hate and reject us.

We will, of course, have our differences. But let us find reasons to join hands so that we can serve our people together – so that we can use our governance to create a better municipality that serves all its people.

A new vision

In fact, the IDP document before us says that our revised vision as a municipality is ***to be the home of good governance, service excellence and opportunities for all***. This is our expressed vision for the next season which is in front of us. We can and we must strive to be the home of good governance, service excellence and opportunities for all. It is my hope that as we prepare for the new season, we would find reasons to want to work together.

Let's be sober and grateful

In the same breath, I am sure we will hasten to remind each other that the Cederberg Municipality is broken, bankrupt and has been beheaded, administratively speaking. Our infrastructure is ailing, our financial situation shows huge deficit and therefore we have an unfunded budget and our administration is headless. The challenges facing us are legion, but I am convinced that with sufficient political will and commitment, we will be able to pull the Cederberg Municipality back from the precipice of disaster.

In this regard, I wish to thank the provincial government and the surrounding municipalities in our district for their willingness to assist us during this vulnerable time.

In the same breath let me say thank you to the staff/administration for your dedication and effort. I appeal to you to double your current efforts to make the turnaround of Cederberg possible.

I believe that we have what it takes to turn the Cederberg Municipality into a model for the rest of the country. I believe we will be able to turn our new vision statement into reality and become the home of good governance, service excellence and the place where there are opportunities for all.

Of course, the journey in the direction of our new vision requires a sober mind and a willing heart.

I am reminded of story about a patient who went to the medical doctor for his yearly check up. The patient's health had declined dramatically since the last visit to the doctor. When the doctor ask the patient if he had taken the medication that was prescribed the patient responded by saying: No, I just hoped and prayed that I would get better. I did not take the prescribed medicine. Well, said the doctor, it's quite simple, you cannot expect to get healthy if you don't take the medicine.

Unfortunately, this will apply to us as a municipality. We will have to take the prescribed medicine if we are going to survive and heal – get better - as a municipality. We will have to become more honest and sober about the challenges we face and, more efficient at all levels of delivery - be that finances, delivery of basic services, customer care and so forth.

The government reminds us that we are here to serve others and not ourselves. We are here to provide basic services well summarised by the call for clean water, clean towns and clean administration.

Conclusion

I conclude my Mayoral statement today by taking you to my opening remarks which said that today marks the beginning of preparations for a new season in the life of this municipality, as I table the draft budget, IDP and SDF. As we review the past season and plan for the future season my prayer is that we join hands to make a positive difference in the lives of all our people.

I therefore invite you as councillors, to be the statesmen and women of this municipal region; to be the role models and living examples of what it means to join hands and rebuild a broken, bankrupt and beheaded municipality. I remind you that our vision is to be the home of good governance, service excellence and opportunities for all – and may I add – in our lifetime.

I thank you.