

## Signs of a Metro in Crisis

We live in a country of 13 official languages.

Which means we are ultimately dependent sign language. Our transport system is a typical example. All our road markings, colour coding, and signage all convey the same message to road users – no matter what their mother tongue is.

The cost of ignoring these signs is devastating, in the form of deaths and injuries on the roads of offenders and innocent road users alike.

The worst thing that can happen to any society is when the majority ignore the signs that should guide our decisions and lives.

There are signs in our metro that cannot be ignored. Ignoring the signs of a metro in crisis is like going through a red traffic light and hoping you do not collide with another motorist.

The Scriptures quote Christ as saying: "Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is.

“And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. “Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?” (Luke 12:54-56 NKJV).

He is talking directly to many of us. We look for signs in the weather, but somehow, we miss the signs of the time or season our metro is in.

These are some of the storm clouds that threaten in our metro: (Source Minutes of Oversight Committee - Municipal Public Accounts Committee meetings):

- About 14,000 more people have joined the unemployment line in Nelson Mandela Bay. (Statistics South Africa - Labour force Survey)
- The water crisis continues. Businesses are feeling the impact of the water shortage and soon more jobs will be shed.
- The continued employment of officials as acting directors continues. Some directorates have more than one acting director.
- We have an acting city manager, acting chief financial officer, and acting chief operations officer. These are important positions of authority in which there is no stability.
- We are rated as the worst-performing Metro in terms of revenue collection and spending.
- Further grant funding R500m from treasury was withheld due to the failure to appoint a permanent chief financial officer. (City Press)
- Council goes on what is now a seven-week recess despite National Treasury having gone on record to warn that the failure to appoint a permanent CFO before the end of August 2019 would affect the approval of any roll-over applications for unspent conditional grants.
- Lack of capacity is identified in the Auditor General’s Audit Committee report for 2017/2018 as the main challenge facing Nelson Mandela Bay.
- The Committee expressed serious concerns about the Internal Audit and Legal Services divisions that were underperforming due to lack of capacity.
- Irregular Expenditure – this is a long outstanding issue due to historical matters which have not been resolved. The Committee was of the view that Council should deal with the writing off of the historical matters resulting in the Irregular Expenditure of approximately R12,4 million, by 30 June 2019. It was added that a break-down of cost per directorate in respect of the R12,4 million that needed to be written off should be submitted to the Municipal Public Accounts Committee's next ordinary meeting.

- The issue of suspended officials continues, and cases of corruption are dying in our commercial courts. Both of these are signs of the failure of the legal department.
- In addition, we have not as yet seen maturity in coalition governance in our metro. There is a continual striving for authority.
- Daily service delivery challenges, dirty roads, unsupervised digging up of roads and pavements for fibre cables, unfixed leaking water pipes, sub stations shorting out, and increased levels of crime are just a few of the other signs that we are in crisis.
- The murder and abuse of our women and children are on the rise. Our judicial systems need to act more harshly.

These are some of the dark clouds gathering, but what about the season?

Solutions come when we have lost hope. Hopelessness reveals our need for corporate strength.

It is a season to reassess the role of all our stakeholders who are ultimately responsible for the running of the metro.

An example of what can be done is the work of the community policing cluster board. We must commend all the stakeholders under the leadership of its chairman, pastor Timothy Hendricks and the Presiding general, General Patekile.

Well done, and please keep up the good work.

To the church in the community, let us continue our struggle for the wellbeing of the poor. Stay visible as we address these three giants in our season, poverty, inequality and unemployment.

Corruption cannot be tolerated under our watch.

The resurgence of civil society is one of the positive signs for the people of the metro.

Civil society, which includes the church, needs to put continued pressure on our political heads to ensure good governance and accountability.

We demand decisive leadership.

We demand accountability and performance-related assessment.

And we can take hope in the fact that every dark cloud has a silver lining. We will overcome the dark clouds if we stop ignoring the danger signs.

Apostle Neville Goldman: Ebenezer International.