

Open letter to:

President Cyril Ramaphosa and Mr Mmusi Maimane

Dear Sirs

RE: Concern about the falling apart of Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipal Council.

As the church leadership of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, it pains us to bring to your attention as the national leaders of the two strongest local parties, the collapse of the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality, and the suffering it is causing among our parishioners and wider constituency – who are also your voters.

The decline of systems and service delivery caused by corruption, petty political warfare has reached alarming proportions. The people of this metro deserve better governance.

Daily, we as church leaders helplessly witness the political infighting and corruption which lead to unfulfilled promises, job losses and administrative embarrassments.

As pastors we continually hear the cries of those living in dire poverty and being left without services, opportunities, hope and faith in a better future.

Without your urgent intervention, the economy of this metro will collapse.

- Writing on behalf of Metro Churches in our Column, “The Church in Community” Apostle Neville Goldman highlighted some of the “storm clouds” threatening the life of this Metro as per the Minutes of the Oversight Committee - Municipal Public Accounts Committee meetings:
- About 14,000 more people have become unemployed in Nelson Mandela Bay over the past six months. (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. 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.
- Sadly, 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 of appointing a permanent chief financial officer. (City Press)
- Council took a seven-week recess despite National Treasury having gone on record of warning that the failure to appoint a permanent CFO before the end of August 2019 would negatively impact and 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, resulting in qualified audits from the Auditor General
- The issue of suspended officials continues, and cases of corruption are dying in our commercial courts. These are signs of the failure of the legal department.
- We have not seen maturity in coalition governance in our metro. There is a continual struggle for power.
- 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 is on the increase.

Furthermore, official statistics put employment at over 35%. Some 107 239 of the 289 000 households in the metro are classified as indigent; 44% of households rely on at least one social grant; there is a 30% HIV & AIDS prevalence rate; 20% of residents have no or limited schooling. Resultantly, 36% earn less than R1 600 per month; and there is a backlog of 84 266 housing units.

We presume that you have been briefed by your leadership in Nelson Mandela Bay about the deterioration of living standards because of the leadership under the present coalition. Quite respectfully, Mr President and Mr Maimane, you saw the results for yourselves, having recently described the streets as “filthy”, especially in townships.

Dirty streets, potholes and water leaks are all visible signs that the municipality has stopped serving the residents.

We call on you, as our nationally elected leaders to bring discipline into your respective party structures in the metro, and to instruct your members to work together in order to save the city. The time for party politics and the scoring of political points at the expense of the people living in the metro must cease.

As the combined and united leadership of the Church in Nelson Mandela Bay we will continue to call on you to account for the malaise in which our metro currently finds itself.

We implore you, in God's Name, to provide political leadership and show statesmanship and call upon our elected municipal officials to show that you and they really care about the voters. Please act now.

From the Churches in Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Community.

Chairperson NMBM Church Leaders Network: Bishop Jacob Freemantle

Supported by

Pastor Daan Botha: Harvest Christian Church

Dr Jimmy Crompton: Word of Faith Christian Centre

Bishop Eddie Daniels: Anglican Church of SA (Port Elizabeth Diocese)

Bishop Jacob Freemantle: Methodist Church of SA (Grahamstown District)

Reverend Andile George: Moderator Presbyterian Church (Central & Southern Cape)

Apostle Neville Goldman: Ebenezer International

Bishop Mvusi Gwam: Bishop Kingdom Embassy Ethiopian Episcopal Church

Reverend Howard Hans: Chairperson Metro SACC

Dr Bukelwa Hans: Provincial Vice President of the SACC

Pastor Mary-Rose Jacobs: Secretary NMB Religious Leaders Desk

Bishop Mlungiseleli Koliti: Ethiopian Episcopal Church

Bishop Glenn Lyons: Presiding Bishop of Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of SA

Reverend Themba Mahuwa: Branch Secretary SACC: NMB Metro Branch

Reverend Danie Mouton: Director Synod Eastern Cape DRC

Dr Dave Pedersen: National Director Vineyard Churches SA

Pastor Richard Preston: New Covenant Ministries International (NCMI)

Pastor Russell Viljoen: Ebenezer North

Pastor Johannes Welskit: Regional Leader EC AFM

Bishop Vincent Zungu: Catholic Diocese PE