# C:\Users\Luzukob\Desktop\BCMM Logo.jpg

# Political Overview presented at the Councillor’s Workshop by the Executive Mayor of Buffalo City Metro,

# Cllr X Pakati

*19 March 2018*

**Programme Director, Speaker Councillor Alfred Mtsi**

**Deputy Executive Mayor, Councillor Zoliswa Matana**

**Chief Whip of Council, Councillor Mzwandile Vaaiboom**

**Fellow Councillors from our Metro**

**Municipal Manager, Mr Andile Sihlahla**

**Management of the City**

**Ladies and gentlemen, good morning!**

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to be speaking to you this morning in this workshop held under the theme: **The Enhancement of Good Governance and Democracy**.

This workshop is properly themed as it makes a befitting acknowledgement that governance can only be good if it is coupled with democracy. The citizen’s participation in our affairs are therefore critical as they not only earn us legitimacy, but they also affirm the principle of democracy being Government of the people, by the people, for the people.

This is why constant contact with our people is necessary so that their views find expression in our programmes. Our gathering here should be with the intention of streamlining the thinking of our people and their objectives in the development planning of the municipality.

This means that we should endeavour to give meaning to the various pleas and suggestions that our people make during our Mayoral Imbizo programme and the Integrated Development Planning consultations. As we are to embark on the full scale IDP programme, we need to ensure that this properly aligns and institutionalise the thinking of our people regarding the development of our city.

Democratic participation is a political human right guaranteed by our current dispensation. It is therefore important that as we celebrate Human Rights Day in just two days from now we take stock of how we have geared this municipality to be in the service of the people and as an instrument for affirming their basic human rights.

**Context of Governance in Our Metro**

**Honourable Speaker**

The debate about enhancing good governance and democracy is well located within the challenge of context of grappling with the developmental challenges of our people in complex urban spaces.

Our situation as a metro is made more complex by the fact that we are leading a city that is urban on the one hand, with all the accompanying sophistry and rural, with all the accompanying backlogs. The urbanised space itself has clear apartheid divides making our task to be not only about providing services to our people but also about undoing the injustices of apartheid urban planning. Good governance for us should therefore ensure that we undo this fractured urbanism that currently prevails.

Our Metro is one of the two Metros in the Eastern Cape and one of the areas with relative industrial activity. This and other pull factors of urban life, has led to a rapid rise of urbanisation in our metro.

Whilst our population growth rate is far lower than other metros, the socio-economic circumstances of the people that our city attracts creates what can be referred to as ‘The New Urban Crisis’. Our job is therefore to make this city liveable to all its inhabitants with no discrimination based on race, class or gender.

Human settlements, for instance, should not be built far from where our people work. All the developmental interventions we will be discussing in the next two days should ensure that we foster a new form of urban integration that guarantees everyone’s Right to the City.

**Socio-Economic Overview**

Deputy Executive Mayor,

The events of the previous month serve to confirm the resilient nature of our democratic system and its institutions. There was a seamless change of the President of the Republic and a subsequent cabinet reshuffle without any ruckus.

What we have observed is that the new era ushers in a promising economic environment as there is now hope that business confidence and investor confidence are likely to be on the rise due to the political stability and policy certainty that has been brought about by this transition. Our currency overall has been on a positive trajectory ever since the conference of the governing party in December and it has thus out performed most other emerging market currencies.

Whilst these developments might do little in expeditiously reversing the slow growth trajectory in our country, we welcome them as they at least create a pre-condition for investment and growth. The reality is that our economic challenges are structural and thus require radical measures in order to adequately change them.

We should however ensure that we properly capitalise on the current economic outlook in a manner that properly positions the city as a credible investment destination. The fact that cities are the key engines of growth for the national economy cannot be over-emphasised.

We need to further ensure that we work very hard in retaining the businesses that are still in our city as a form of protecting our economic base. There need for us to protect our existing industry and further stimulate economic activity is shown by Statsa’s Quarterly Labour Force Survey results which shows that our unemployment as a city has decreased by 5.1 percent. This means that our official unemployment rate decreased from 34.1 percent to 29 percent.

This is improved even if you consider it on a year to year basis as the unemployment rate at this point last year was 33.4 percent. Whilst these numbers are high, the decreases show work in progress and this is why we need to properly industrialise our economy and mobilise more investment into our city.

**Critical Importance of the IDP Process**

**Honourable Speaker**

It is our understanding that this workshop is also held with the intention of considering the IDP and Budget process. We should ensure that our planning and expenditure serve to consolidate our current position as an instrument of service delivery for our people. It should diligently address all the challenges that I have just alluded to in a consistent and sustainable manner.

What is important is that whilst doing this in the short to medium term, it should properly align to our long-term plan, the Metro Growth and Development Strategy. What is fundamental is that it should be guided by the manifestos of the governing organisation which was a commitment to our people and thus the essential mandate of our term as this current council. It should after all contribute to the creation of an economically thriving, spatially transformed and habitable African city.

All the actions we take therefore should be with the intention of building a metro that is well-governed, connected, green and innovative***,*** and which is overall a place to live, work, invest and play. Our city should be characterised by rapid and inclusive economic growth with falling unemployment, poverty and the elimination of inequalities.

The IDP and Budget process should better inform the product of the State of the Metro Address so that we do not lie to our people. When we go to our people in the middle of the year we should be giving a detailed and properly conceptualised account of how we are going to turn things around as a further consolidation of our work. Our improved governance, which is indicated by the unqualified audit outcome, should thus clearly translate into improved service delivery and thus living conditions. All of this can happen if this process is handled with the necessary due care, commitment and professionalism.

**Conclusion**

Fellow Councillors,

As we engage in the formalities of this workshop, we should ensure that we emulate the values of selfless service to our people as epitomised by the story of our icon, the late President Nelson Mandela, whose centenary we are celebrating this year. Let this year be a year of sacrifice in the service of our people so that their lives are truly changed for the better.

I thought it important that I share with you a statement that I shared with the leadership of BCMDA at their Annual General Meeting earlier this year. The statement was made by former President Thabo Mbeki on the occasion of the 90th birthday of President Mandela in 2008:

“As we join you Madiba to celebrate your 90th birthday, we undertake that we will do everything we can to continue to serve the masses of the people for whom you sacrificed so much.

We commit ourselves always to strive to advance the goals to which you dedicated your life - the goals of a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa.

We will continue to work hard to eradicate the poverty that continues to afflict millions of our people.

We will continue to work for the unity and the upliftment of the peoples of Africa, the renaissance of our Continent and the building of a better world.”

These wise words are a promise to Madiba, but they are also instructive on how his legacy should be celebrated. It is therefore important that as we deliberate in this workshop, we be filled with the need to better the lives of our people.

Let this be a very productive workshop.

**I thank you!**