



14 February 2021

Premier Ntombela Notes Misleading Reports by The Weekly Newspaper

The Free State Office of the Premier wishes to register its disappointment with the conduct of The Weekly newspaper.

On Friday, 12 February 2021, the newspaper published an article with the headline '*NTOMBELA'S 'PURGE' RESHUFFLINGS EXPOSED*'. According to the misleading and inaccurate article, it alleges that Honorable Premier Ntombela has been on a mission to 'purge' Chief Financial Officers and Heads of Departments said to be 'aligned' to the former Premier, Mr. Ace Magashule.

This is nothing but a gross fabrication intent to mislead the people of the province and also seeks to drive a wedge between both Mr. Magashule and Premier Ntombela. We wish to state for the record that the Premier has not 'purged' nor does she intend doing so to any official of the Free State Provincial government.

In a rush to publish lies and exaggerations disguised as 'news' The Weekly disregarded the number one rule of journalism: which is offering the other party, in this case the Office of the Premier, a right of response. The newspaper sent questions on Thursday, 11 February 2021 at 19:59, and stated that their deadline was at 22:00 on Friday, 12 February 2021.

However, much to our disappointment, the newspaper published their article on the same day (Friday, 12 February 2021) that we were to respond to their enquiry. While disappointed, we are not entirely surprised by this newspaper's conduct, which for some time, has been on a crusade to tarnish the image of Premier Ntombela and those closest to her.

For instance, in yet another misleading publication dated 5 February 2021 under the headline '*DODGY 25-YEAR DEAL BACKFIRES ON MAFUBE*' the newspaper referred to the Premier's spouse, Mr. Madala Ntombela as the former Municipal Manager of Mafube Local Municipality. The article implies that because of his alleged municipal manager position, he signed off on a contract which has subsequently financially crippled the municipality, which is completely false.

It is worth noting that Mr. Ntombela was *not* a municipal manager, but a mayor and therefore was not, in line with the municipal finance management act, empowered to sign off on any contractual agreement on behalf of the municipality.

The Free State Provincial Government is aware of the challenges at the municipality and is committed to bringing a speedy resolution to the issues currently affecting the municipality. In the interim, the provincial government, under the leadership of Premier Ntombela, has placed the municipality under administration. This is a practical intervention aimed at ensuring the smooth running of the municipality to provide basic services to the people of Mafube.

The type of slander, disguised as journalism by the newspaper, does nothing but blemishes the noble profession of journalism. Premier Ntombela fought for and is a fierce supporter of free press, however it has now become increasingly clear that The Weekly are intent on attacking Premier Ntombela for reasons only known to them.

Premier Ntombela is firmly focused on improving the quality of life of the people and will not be distracted by false reportage or anything else.

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