

24/7 job with both pain and reward

What is the role of a government spokesperson? To answer this question Thabile Mange spoke Bongani Gaeje, spokesperson to the Mogale City mayor



TM: What does the job of a spokesperson entail?

BG: It is about interpreting, packaging and communicating municipal thoughts, policies and programmes to the municipality's stakeholders.

TM: Is it a 9 to 5 job?

BG: I don't think it is possible for it to be a 9 to 5 job. It is too involved a job for it to be. It is really a 24/7 job.

TM: Do spokespeople lie sometime?

BG: I can't speak on behalf of spokespeople in general, but my view is that being a spokesperson has nothing to do with lies. Spokespeople are sometimes referred to as spin doctors. For me spin is a usually pejorative term signifying a heavily biased portrayal in one's own favour of an event or situation. It is a euphemism for propaganda. While traditional PR may also rely on creative presentation of the facts, spin often implies deceptive and/or highly manipulative tactics. I honestly do not consider myself a spin doctor. I interpret, package and communicate the organisation's thoughts, policies and programmes to all its stakeholders without deception or manipulative tactics. Lies have no place in this. I must say though that it is a very challenging job, mostly because it relies on many others who possess organisational information.

TM: What skills do you need to be a spokesperson?

BG: Communication skills.

TM: What academic qualification is needed?

BG: Personally, I think even someone without a matric certificate can pull it off. I think what is important is the ability to appreciate the dynamics and the context within which the institution you speak for operates, and of course, have the communication skills

referred to above.

TM: What are the joys of being a spokesperson?

BG: It is a very challenging job. It demands a lot out of a person. If done right it guarantees fulfilment.

TM: And what are the challenges?

BG: Information flow.

TM: What are the challenges of dealing with the media?

BG: The media believes it has a job to do, and does it whichever way it chooses. There is not much one can do with that. I do have a problem though with media people who do not take it upon themselves to do thorough research.

TM: Does a spokesperson sometimes get wrong information, unintentionally so?

BG: As indicated above, I think information flow (and the accuracy thereof) is the biggest challenge.

TM: Is being a spokesperson a thankless job? If yes, why?

BG: I work with a principal that enjoys being challenged in terms of formulating communication messages, fortunately for me. It is an environment that recognises and appreciates the work that is done. So in my case, my work is acknowledged and appreciated. And of course, unappreciated if it happens to be sub-standard work. I can't remember the last time this happened though.

TM: What would your advice be to would-be spokespersons?

BG: Knowledge is power.

OPEN INVITATION TO HOUSEHOLDS TO REGISTER FOR FREE BASIC SERVICES

BENEFITS FOR INDIGENTS

1. 50kWh free electricity
2. 6kl free water
3. Subsidised rates and taxes
4. Free installation of prepaid meters

QUALIFYING CRITERIA

Households who are unable to pay for their assessment rates and services accounts and who are interested in applying for indigent status must conform to the following criteria; the applicant:-

1. Must be a resident of Mogale City and must produce:-
 - a. Proof of ownership (eg title deeds or allocation paper)
 - b. An active MCML account registered in the applicant's name
 2. Be in possession of a valid green South African identity document.
 3. Have a joint household's income of R0 – R1660
 4. Have proof of pay slips if they are employed and earning as above in 3
 5. Submit a copy of recent bond statement and a 3-month bank statement where applicable
 6. Not own more than one property
 7. National social security grant slip (if applicable)
 8. Copy of death certificate of the account holder (where applicable)
 9. Affidavit stamped and signed by the commissioner of oath
- Applicants without relevant documents will not be considered
- For household who do not, municipal offices are open for making alternative payment arrangements.

BENEFITS FOR MAKING PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Mogale City Local Municipality will consider:-

1. 100% write-off total debts, once approved, followed by monthly subsidy of R86

2. Accounts in excess of the R86 subsidy must be in full each month
3. 100% write-off on interest charged on the total outstanding debt on condition that the account is consistently for the period of 12 months

CONDITIONS

Indigent status will be granted on the following conditions:-

1. Indigent grant is subjected to the installation of prepaid meters
2. Preliminary registration does not automatically qualifies applicant as indigent
3. Applicants must allow home visits for an assessment of indigents status
4. Applicants must continue paying their current account until installation of pre-paid meter
5. Submission of fraudulent information will disqualify the applicant and once disqualified;

All arrears will be come payable immediately
Stringent credit control measures will apply
The applicant will not be eligible to apply for this assistance for a period of five years

For more information about free basic services visit:-
Municipal pay points
Indigent office at the Civic Centre, corner of Commissioner and Market Street, Krugersdorp
As part of the socio-economic survey, fieldworkers will visits households for registration and verification purposes.

Mogale City is committed to effective, efficient and economic service delivery and will continue to provide free basic services to vulnerable groups thereby creating a better life for all residents.

Don't let our differences bring down the house

You know, a splash of letters conspicuously published on Pages 4 and 5 of the *Krugersdorp News* regarding a beach party held at Coronation were partly truthful but also sparked a senseless attack on the mayor's spokesperson Bongani Gaeje.

About three letters screamed for the head of Gaeje. Some disgruntled members of the public alleged the municipality did not adequately respond to their complaints about the party.

This came as no surprise because some residents are known to be quick to rummage around for mistakes or what they think is bad.

You may have noticed in their letters, complainants never offer any solution but rather accentuated their personal interest.

In any case, I am not trying to fly the flag of any group but to thrust a heavy blame to everyone involved in this fracas. By this I am referring to both organisers of the party and complainants in the nearby suburbs. Both parties should know who is fooling who?

What annoys me is that our people seem to be ignorant to the fact that the city would not run smoothly if there are divisions amongst our society.

Undeniably, residents are not so united to talk about issues but

rather unwind within their apartheid demarcations, suburbs and townships, and grumble about the behaviour of their fellow residents.

As you might have noticed, we never showed interest in

practicing what refined sociologists call a "melting pot" model which took place in rural SA between Afrikaner farmers and black sharecroppers.

Through this industrious model, we would emerge a rainbow nation that shines with dignity and a society that exchange cultural differences to make this a better city. Understandably, "melting pot" is a model that seeks to unite different groups in a way that to exchange cultural differences so to understand each other.

We need to face the reality that we are all not respecting each others' values and cultures.

The noise emanating from the park at the early hours of Sunday denied nearby residents a peaceful sleep. This is perhaps because of ignorance that we continue to have towards each others' values and



BY KEOTSHEPILE WA MOGOTSI

culture. Look at it this way! The beach party disgusted residents in the nearby suburbs for some reason.

However, party organisers also saw fit to unwind in a somewhat modest fashion perhaps to lure different races to join in as one unity to build a non-racial country.

Both parties pose their valid reasons but left a huge gap in between. There is no mutual understanding between both parties? When others pull the other way, others pull the opposite way.

As a result, the aftermath sparked complains about filth and loud noise rather than cultural exchange type of model that could have changed wrong perceptions about ourselves and also about this type of gigs.

Still on the subject, the mutual acceptance of cultural diversity remains a pipe dream within our

society. When are we going to see our backyard depict a true picture of a rainbow nation we see in other parts of SA?

September 24 is known for the celebration of Heritage Day – a public holiday

on which South Africans across the spectrum are encouraged to celebrate their cultural heritage and the diversity of their beliefs and traditions, in the wider context of a nation that belongs to all its people.

In this type of celebration, we remember the cultural heritage of the many groups that make up the population of SA. This is a day that educates us about our beliefs and respect for other people's cultures.

On this day, we remind ourselves that the family of Mr De Klerk in the suburb deserves a peaceful Saturday night without intolerable noise from Coronation Park. And that the family of Mr Modise at Kagiso deserves a peaceful day without agonising noise of quad bikes in the outskirts of Kagiso. Heritage Day address such issues as to understand and respect each other.

Like before, the majority of our

suburban friends in Mogale City never attended heritage celebration held at Maropeng. Tell me! What needs to be done to draw our people close to one another to learn about their cultures and beliefs?

Hours of loud music is wrong but it could have been avoided if only all of us were involved in preparatory session of this party.

Is *Krugersdorp News* the only platform to raise such issues? When are we going to see Mr and Mrs X of Monument meeting Mr and Mrs X from Swanierville at the community meeting addressing the future of this city and its people, especially the youth?

When are we going to see this type of beach party carefully orchestrated by all races and attended by youth of all races? Tell me! If only our suburban youth were also involved in various meetings of this party, wouldn't they have had a platform to raise issues of safety, noise and the duration of the party?

We must all get involved in activities in our city. We need to create awareness on matters relating to what others like and dislike. Let's not point fingers like we did at Gaeje. Surely, there are other channels we can use. Ask your ward councillor not the *Krugersdorp News* editor.