

## Joburg Council writes off R7.76bn of debt

The Roodepoort Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ROCCI) welcomes the new City Manager, Mr. Trevor Fowler and his new team and trusts that this new regime will take Johannesburg to its rightful place as a World Class African City during its first term of office.

One shudders to think what would become of our City finances should the old regime still be in place. Writing off R 7,76bn of a total debt of R10bn in its first year without evidence of any attempt to recover such outstanding debt borders on the ridiculous. It makes one wonder whether this was real outstanding debt by individuals and companies or rather an attempt to 'straighten the books' following the Billing debacle.

In bridging the communication gap between City and its citizens – timeous feedback on progress made in addressing issues such as the fixing of potholes and traffic lights should commence forthwith and not wait until the end of the 90 day time frame given.

Incidentally we notice that the road markings on roads in the Roodepoort area have been given a fresh coat of paint – yet there are glaring potholes on the very same roads receiving this facelift. Road directional signs remain old faded and in some instances in a state of disrepair. Perhaps Mr. Fowler can start by ensuring that there are enough suitable management personnel to manage performance.

Managing the debtors' book is listed as one of three financial priorities. The other two are liquidity management and balance sheet management. ROCCI is confident if the first issue is managed with a 'hands on approach' on a monthly basis – the other two priorities will take care of itself, as all there are borne out of the same Budget.

Five year priorities are to refurbish the water, electricity and sanitation infrastructure and to improve engineering capacity is widely welcomed and we look forward to a yearly progress report or report card on these issues.

The admission that Municipal Workers form a huge millstream around the neck of the City and has to be addressed forthwith is another encouraging step in the right direction by the new team and it should entrench its position 'as the dog that wags the tail' and not the other way around. Stringent rules need to be put in place governing the do's and don'ts in the case of protected strikes.

Roy Panday –

Executive Member

Roodepoort Chamber of Commerce and Industry

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