



GAUTENG
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**MEDIA
STATEMENT**

**TO: ALL MEDIA
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: 23 SEPTEMBER 2024**

**STATEMENT BY THE ACTING SECRETARY TO THE GAUTENG PROVINCIAL
LEGISLATURE ON ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD AND CORRUPTION IN THE
INSTITUTION**

On Friday, 20 September 2024 we came to learn of a news article on News24 and other media platforms making unfounded accusations about Gauteng Provincial Legislature for allegedly firing the former Secretary to the Legislature Mr Peter Skosana and turning a blind eye on fraud and corruption. The statement that Mr Skosana was fired, and that the Legislature is turning a blind eye on fraud and corruption is not true.


These unsubstantiated accusations allege that the institution interfered in the disciplinary processes of 32 employees and two Members of the Provincial Legislature (MPLs) who were accused of defrauding the institution in a forensic investigation initiated by the former Secretary to the Legislature Mr Skosana. In the article, it is stated that there was interference in the disciplinary processes of the 32 employees; this too is not true. Furthermore, it is not true that there was a forensic investigation that was initiated by Mr Skosana to investigate the alleged fraud against the two MPLs.

These matters involve allegations that 32 employees submitted fraudulent travel claims during Covid 19 lockdown and that two MPLs should pay back travel stipends they were paid for overseas travel that they did not undertake.

The article in News24 further stated that the Legislature irregularly paid more than R335 000 to the employees who were not entitled to the claims as they could not have incurred the expenditure during lockdown. The information contained in the article is not correct.

The article falsely alleges that the institution fired Mr Skosana for initiating a disciplinary process to recover the funds. The Legislature refutes the statement that Mr Skosana was dismissed.

The claim that the former Speaker Honourable Ntombi Mekgwe or other Members of the Legislature interfered with disciplinary processes or halted investigations into employees and the two MPLs is simply not factual and untrue.



Concerning the disciplinary process related to travel claims by 32 employees, its genesis was initiated and investigated by the institution. However, the cost of investigation and disciplinary actions using external service providers was found to be excessive, and far outweighing the possible overpayment that was still a subject of investigation. Therefore, GPL decided to use internal processes to deal with the matter.

It is also untrue that the employee who underwent a disciplinary process and was dismissed and subsequently reinstated after Mr. Skosana's departure. In fact, Mr. Skosana and Ms Mihloti Masuluke reinstated the employee on 31 January 2024, while Mr Skosana was still the Secretary to the Legislature.

News24 reported that two MPLs, Honourable Nomvuyo Mhlakaza-Manamela and Honourable Lesego Makhubela, have been accused of defrauding the Legislature of R500,000. This claim is factually incorrect, as both MPLs neither committed any fraud nor were subjected to any forensic investigation initiated by former Secretary Mr Skosana.

Hon. Mhlakaza-Manamela was scheduled to undertake an official trip to Cameroon but could not do so, due to ill-health. She was paid R34,000 as a stipend as opposed to the R72 415 as reflected in the article, and she has since informed the GPL of her willingness to repay the amount, with recovery processes currently in progress.

Hon. Makhubela was supposed to undertake a study tour to the USA but was unable to travel because his passport with visa was not available at the airport at the time of departure, as it was still at the US Consul. He was paid R43,457 in stipend, and the process to recover this amount is also underway. Hon Makhubela has also since informed the GPL of his willingness to repay the amount, with recovery processes currently in progress.

These factual inaccuracies in the article appear to be a deliberate attempt to damage the reputation of the institution and its stakeholders and appear to be carrying a sense of personal vendetta.

We categorically refute these unfounded and baseless allegations leveled against the GPL by News24. The failure by News24 to disclose any credible source in their article suggest that there could be an orchestrated plan directed at tarnishing the reputation of this esteemed institution.

These accusations are not only false but seek to undermine the credibility and integrity of an institution that has always upheld the highest standards of good governance and transparency.

The Gauteng Provincial Legislature is a well-respected and credible institution which plays a critical role in the governance of this Province. As a legislative body responsible for overseeing government departments in Gauteng, the GPL remains fully committed to its core mandate of ensuring that public funds are used effectively, efficiently and transparently. We work diligently to prevent any form of corruption or financial misconduct within the Province, and we are dedicated to making laws that promote good governance, fiscal responsibility and ethical conduct.

We have a primary responsibility to prevent fraud and corruption, and we find any suggestion that the GPL has acted in a manner which seeks to promote fraud and corruption to be without merit.

At no point has the GPL ever compromised or influenced any process that seeks to discipline any employee or MPL accused of any wrongdoing. Our processes and decisions are guided by transparency, accountability and the rule of law and we are fully committed to safeguarding the interests of the residents of Gauteng.

As a legislative body, we remain unwavering in our commitment to good governance and ethical leadership. We will continue to fulfill our oversight role with diligence, ensuring that the people's interests are protected at all times.

In conclusion, we encourage members of the media to guard against misinformation and verify facts before accepting unsubstantiated claims which are deliberately meant to defame and making unfounded accusations that aim to distract us from our important work. The GPL will continue to serve the Province with integrity, accountability and a strong commitment to upholding the law.

The GPL is further considering writing to the Press Ombudsman on the conduct of News24 journalist who reported inaccurate, unverified and sensationalized information with a potential reputational damage to the institution and its MPLs.

ENDS

ISSUED BY GPL'S MEDIA SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE ACTING SECRETARY TO THE LEGISLATURE, MR LINDA MWALE.

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