

## ***Civics in transition***

# **The people's watchdog in PE**

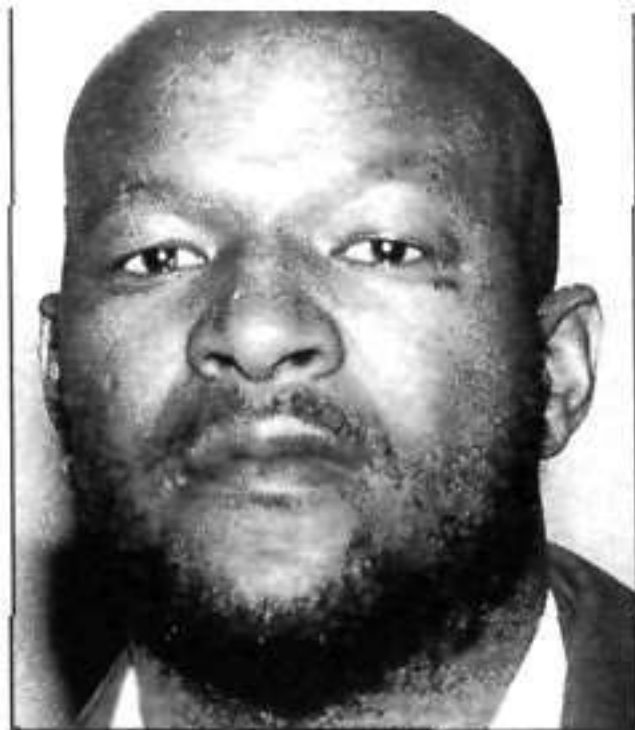


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**Are you satisfied with progress being made at the Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) with regard to defining guidelines for democratic, interim local government?**

We are satisfied, but a lot of work still has to be done. People are coming from different political cultures. How are they going to look beyond their party political differences and deliver goods to the rest of the country? How will the city be linked to regional and national levels of government? Will there be legislation preventing or forcing joint programmes between cities on local government?

On two levels (regional and national) how will people participate in decision-making and how are people on the ground affected? Also, irrespective of the national decision taken with respect to legislation on local government, the people must be given an opportunity to discuss it.

**Do you feel your civic and the Eastern Cape region are able to express themselves at the LGNF?**

We are fairly represented. But this does not mean we should bar ourselves from broader representation. Presently, the Port Elizabeth One City Forum does not have representation to the LGNF. The constitutional and institutional committees have been mandated to discuss the framework of the LGNF and to look at how we can fit in.

We in Port Elizabeth set the agenda for the LGNF by insisting that:

- all interested groups, government bodies, political organisations, civics and the business section should come together;
- the principle of sufficient consensus should apply when a decision cannot be reached because of differences or a stalemate;
- any dispute at the talks be taken back

**MIKE TOFILE, general secretary of Sanco's Port Elizabeth branch**

to the people to be discussed.

**Will your civic second people to the interim local councils?**

We will identify and recommend people for nomination, but we will not second any member. If we seconded anyone, that individual would have to report directly to Sanco, but we don't want one individual to be responsible but the whole interim council. The council will have to be transparent and will have to report back to everyone.

**What local government structures would you like to see in Port Elizabeth?**

We are interested in one city. If we talk of one city, there is no need for multiple local authorities. We want all the areas to be integrated to form one organisation of local government. This local government should set up its own administrative structures in line with the LGNF guidelines.

**Are you involved in the process of setting up democratic local government in PE?**

Yes, through the One City Forum. Negotiations started almost three years ago and organisations signed a declaration of intent. Presently it is agreed that an interim council consisting of a chamber made up of 40 constitutional representatives and 40 non-constitutional representatives be set up. Representatives will be appointed not elected. This will constitute the pre-interim phase. A structure for the interim period is still being negotiated and the final period will follow after elections under new constitutional principles.

**Is your civic still committed to**

**building 'organs of people's power', such as street and block committees, which in the past helped reduce crime levels?**

The police were not combatting crime in the townships, so we set up street and anti-crime committees. But the police do not want to recognise these. However, when it is convenient for them they refer matters to the anti-crime committees.

The anti-crime committees are an alternative in a situation where there is an absence of proper policing mechanisms. We have tried to hold workshops with the police but these have not materialised because of a lack of commitment on the part of the police. Sanco's legal and constitutional department is now calling all bodies interested in community policing to get together. The police are invited.

**What role should the civics play once a new political system is in place?**

Civics have always been the watchdogs of the people. We have always been a component of the liberation movement. We do not belong to any organisation, but our motto is to fight for the national democratic struggle. We will side with any party that wants to install a democratic system in South Africa.

After April 27, we will still be around. Conditions after the elections will determine what form we will exist in. We will, however, always remain watchdogs for the people.

After the elections, all the civics in Port Elizabeth should meet to form one structure and also to define the role of the joint civic.

— ECNA