

Opening session of DA Federal Congress 2023

1 April 2023

Remarks by Chris Pappas

*“There is hope for the cities, towns, villages and rural areas across South Africa.
That hope is the DA.”*

Good morning, democrats.

It is an honour to be speaking before you today at the 2023 Federal Congress of the Democratic Alliance.

Across the country DA governments are making history.

Like many municipalities across the country, uMngeni Local Municipality was a municipality limping along with broken system that were plagued by corruption, mismanagement, and maladministration. The municipality was on the brink of collapse, with millions of rands unaccounted for, and service delivery at an all-time low. The ANC had failed the people of uMngeni.

People were looking for hope.

The journey to win uMngeni started 18 years ago under the leadership of Greg Krumbock and in 2021 we won the municipality by just 42 votes. We had created history in KwaZulu-Natal by becoming the first DA led municipality.

Driven by the motto “we are doing this for sacrifice and not for status” we took the reins of power and immediately got to work. We started by conducting a thorough audit of the municipality's finances, assets, skills and capacity to deliver. The results were shocking. We found millions of rands misspent, severe price gouging, non-existent human resources management, a lack of policies and no direction or leadership. It was up to the 13 man DA caucus, my team, that I am very proud of, and the broader DA family in uMngeni and KZN to lead this municipality out of the darkness.

From day 1 we issued marching orders to the institution.

We sent a clear message of zero-tolerance for corruption. We put in place stringent measures to ensure that value for money spending becomes institutionalized by Establishing a Municipal Financial Disciplinary Board, reestablishing MPAC and recapacitating the Audit Committee. Based on DA best practice, we adopt policies to support our activities. We've been creating a culture of transparency and accountability, such as opening the tender process to the public and making randomising temporary employment opportunities.

South Africans are hungry for a government for a government that can get the basics right.

In the last 15 months we have managed to achieve the following, amongst others:

- Spend R24 million on specialized equipment;
- We have increased the number of households who have access to free basic services from 133 to 3005;
- We have doubled the roads budget from R11 million to R24 million;
- We have open a Municipal Traffic Department for the first time;
- Completed R6 million worth of projects left unfunded and decaying by the ANC; and
- Installed over 400 LED streetlights, installed solar lighting for informal settlements, increased waste collection to rural areas, have loadshedding-proof traffic lights and many more.

And, we have improved our audit outcome from qualified to unqualified

Through hard work and dedication, we are turning the uMngeni Local Municipality around. 27 years of destructive policies and cadre deployment is being painstakingly undone and replaced. We are rebuild communities.

We are determined to show that the DA difference is real and that the DA keeps to its promise by getting things done.

There is hope for the cities, towns, villages and rural areas across South Africa. That hope is the DA.

In each and every corner of our country we must continue to build a strong DA to deliver a better future.

Thank you.