

# Perspectives on KwaZulu-Natal

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## **DA and IFP emphasise their working relationship at local government level**

The Democratic Alliance (DA) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) underscored their relationship at local government level when the leader of each party publicly instructed councillors to work together in all municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal.

The two parties co-govern eight municipalities in the province. The IFP has 1 300 councillors, while the DA has 200.

In speeches full of compliments about one another party leaders Mangosuthu Buthelezi of the IFP and Tony Leon of the DA emphasised that the parties were not considering a coalition. Said Leon: "The IFP and DA do not need to agree on all policies and on all issues. We are not the same. But we have similarities. We do not prescribe to one view - we, in fact, respect differing views."

Similarly, Buthelezi said that he was not suggesting that the IFP and DA should eliminate their differences or become one party. "We are two distinct parties and will continue to remain two distinct parties because we have two different functions to perform in the making of South Africa's history. I do not even suggest that all of a sudden our politics may become the same and our policies identical. But I do believe that henceforth we can work together as two distinct political organisations and that when differences arise, we can sit down with a spirit of goodwill to sort out these differences in a framework of mutual respect."

However, Leon said that the parties shared some similar points of view: "We are both parties of federalism and the rule of law; we both believe that the market economy, if freed to do so, can be used responsibly to assault the battlements of unemployment and poverty; we are at one of the need to provide anti-retroviral drugs to pregnant women with HIV; we share a belief that the skills flight can be turned around by urgently implementing the right policies."

Leon said that councils where the two parties govern together should be turned into "workshops of good governance" and "shining examples that government is creative in developing policy and systematic in implementing it".

KwaZulu-Natal premier and chairperson of the IFP Lionel Mtshali told councillors that a three-a-side task team had originally been established between the IFP and DA soon after the last local government elections in December 2000. "Its assignment was to explore opportunities for co-operation between our respective councillors in identified municipalities." He said that this team continued to mentor councillors in the eight municipalities where the two parties had been

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governing together and where there had been some teething problems. However, he emphasised the need for stronger co-operation between the two parties in the eThekweni municipality.

The party leaders took pains to emphasise that the latest meeting was being held to ensure that the decision taken after the 2000 elections was being carried out on the ground. They said that in some areas the councillors still behaved as if the agreement was not in place and in others the co-operation was "not the best it could be".

However, Buthelezi stressed that the future of the provincial coalition government with the African National Congress was not in jeopardy. He said that more than 20 000 people died during the war between the two parties in KwaZulu-Natal and efforts at reconciliation should continue.

Buthelezi said that last month's meeting was held to evaluate the progress made since the agreement was reached after the December 2000 elections. "We have come together to take stock of where we are in that journey and to ensure that on the strength of the political impulse of leadership that this high level meeting can provide, we can find ways and means to solve any issue which arises out of the co-operation amongst municipal councillors of the IFP and DA," said Buthelezi.

During his speech Leon described Buthelezi as "one of South Africa's most eminent leaders of the past 30 years" and said that the words 'Chief Buthelezi' were spoken with great respect in his household when he was growing up. Leon continued: "I salute you, Chief Buthelezi, and I salute the people you led for resisting the evil of apartheid the way that you did." Buthelezi similarly described Leon as "a man of courage and principles" and a "patriot".

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