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## **North West CFO, Mr Odame-Takyi fired while Premier suspends another....**

**Date:** Monday, September 13, 2010

Suspended North West chief financial officer, Kweku Odame-Takyi, found guilty on a litany of gross misconduct charges which- among others- prejudiced government of more than R673 million has been fired.

His sacking brings to two, the number of top officials fired in department of Public Works, Roads and Transport following that of former roads chief, Eddie Thebe.

Thebe was dismissed in June after he too was found guilty on similar charges of gross misconduct.

Hard on the heels of Odame-Takyi's dismissal, Premier Maureen Modiselle also raised eye brows at a joint press conference with an announcement that she had just suspended her CFO, Phillip Gumede.

She had given Gumede a 24hour deadline on Wednesday to give reasons why he should not be suspended following ``serious allegations'' of misconduct arising from an ongoing forensic probe into the spending patterns in the Office of the Premier.

Back to Odame-Takyi , who was also chairperson of the departmental procurement committee was found to have flagrantly breached government procurement protocols in 12 of the 15 charges (see attached copy of charge) he had to answer to.

He had pleaded not guilty on all charges during his disciplinary enquiry, chaired by Advocate Dabi Kumalo (Senior Counsel).

While the dismissal of Thebe and Odame-Takyi may have brought to near-closure, forensic investigations by auditing firm, PriceWaterHouseCoopers (PWC):

`` The real war is yet to begin... but we are combat ready to recoup from contractors and individuals, all the millions of rands paid to them erroneously, falsely, fraudulently and unlawfully," warned Mahlakeng Mahlakeng, provincial MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport,

He said a meeting with lawyers was arranged for this week ``to kick-start'' a legal process to recoup ``up to the last cent public funds looted''.

``We owe that (initiative to recoup monies) to our democracy and more especially the people of the province," said Mahlakeng.

He said he “felt betrayed” and expressed his anger at the fired officials whom he said were “expected to be the pillars of support and to lead by example”, by virtue of their seniority in government.

This was also in reference to the bizarre spending patterns- apparently before Mahlakeng took office- by the Thebe and Odame-Takyi.

This resulted in more than R525million budget for roads project was spent barely three months into the 2008-2009 financial years.

Meanwhile, Modiselle expressed shock, describing as “scandalous” acts of misconduct against senior officials, the growing trend she said was, “worrying”.

She likened habitual breaches of procurement prescripts by senior and junior officials in government to “an extremely toxic mix” for service delivery in the province.

“Very often, acts of gross misconduct in the public sector, point to nothing else but corruption and fraud,” she said.

Modiselle said government was “gradually closing-in” on officials and entities whom she said may have “acted in concert”, to either defraud and or “plunder” the state resources.

She said a meeting with her Commissioners of police was on the cards, “to establish the status of the investigation” into the fraud and corruption case reported to police by the Mahlakeng in January this year.

The case was informed misconduct charges against Thebe, Odame Takyi and the findings and recommendations by PWC investigation.

“We must begin to make it extremely difficult, as a collective, for those civil servants found guilty of pilfering rooted out, and face the full might of the law,” Modiselle warned.

She cautioned that if acts of corruption were made to appear “not punishable” in the province she would be failing in her duties.

\*Meanwhile, provincial departments were told to “speed-up and finalise” all pending disciplinary cases against their respective senior officials.

“It cannot be correct to continue paying substantial amounts in the form of salaries, including benefits to people sitting at home pondering for months what is it, they have to answer to,” Modiselle said.

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