



NAPTOSA PRE-BUDGET SPEECH STATEMENT

Whilst the Minister of Finance is busy today putting the final touches to his 2019 Budget Speech, NAPTOSA wants to reflect on our own hopes and concerns that we wish to see addressed. We do not envy the Minister this unthankful task of juggling the myriad of competing priorities, especially in light of our country's financial woes.

NAPTOSA has confidence in the Minister to link the national budget closely to the State President's State of the Nation Address and to therefore deal decisively with the burning issues of rising government debt (that must be mainly attributed to the past years of pilferage of public funds), the dysfunctional State-owned Enterprises (SOEs) and their debt implosion, the crumbling mining sector and the country's poor economic growth.

We trust that in dealing with especially the SOEs, it will not be a matter of pouring still more money down the drain, but that constructive proposals will be made that will require these organisations to curb their debt and also put in a real effort from their side to rectify their woeful situations, because up to now the impression is being created that they believe it is someone else's problem. Of all the SOE's, ESKOM remains the biggest threat to the future of our country. Even if some of the others have to sacrificed, it is important that ESKOM must be taken off life support. In this regard serious attention needs to be given to the problems at Medupi and Kusile power stations to get them up to full working capacity.

We keep seeing a widening gap between revenue collection and government spending, prompting government to borrow more. We, however cannot allow past borrowing to consume our future. The Minister is therefore expected to speak to the strengthening of our tax collection system. NAPTOSA would not want to see taxes raised, because many

of the past raises have not translated into visible and tangible improvements in the lives of the citizenry.

Fiscal discipline of government must surely be made a priority, not merely in statements, but at a very practical level. Politicians and public officials, at all levels of government, who make themselves guilty of unauthorised spending must be severely dealt with, as should those who fail to spend their budgets on the services that they are supposed to render to the public.

Attention must also be given to our social ills, because if not fixed, economic growth will continue to suffer.

In closing, we will look at the Minister to address the plight of the poor, judicious land restitution processes, the growing demands of students and above all to not lose sight of education as a continuing government priority.

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