

SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE  
DEPARTMENTAL WELLNESS DAY  
BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE  
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Acting HoD for Finance, Mr Geo Paul

Head of the Provincial Treasury, Mr Ernst Van Wyk

All Senior Managers

Media

Staff of my Department

My talk this morning focuses on: Put wellness first in your life and the theme for our event is "You are what you do".

Talking to you about **wellness** reminds one of an age-old Chinese saying from 200 BC, that says: "The sages of old didn't treat the sick they treated those who were well... If a disease has already broken out and is only treated then isn't that like waiting for thirst before digging a well or waiting until the battle begins to make your weapons?"

We are also reminded by the words of the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta: "**Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin**". Let us begin today to put wellness first, ka gore go tsofala yo o ratang.

The notion of total wellness recognises that everything about us, be it a deed, thought, word, posture, affects our health in the sense of our physical, spiritual, and psychological functioning.

In opening my talk, I should like to premise it with the words of William Shakespeare who said: "**Self love, my liege, is not so vile a sin as self-neglecting**". **I dare suggest that** all of us can learn to start putting well being first right now. We don't have to wait for a life threatening, or quality of life-changing disease.

Today, many scientists, both natural and social, are concerned about improving quality of life. Genome researchers are concerned about finding links between our genes and metabolic functioning. Social researchers are looking at the conditions of life that keep us happy and well.

These are things about the "good life". **Good living** requires more than generally ignoring your health and occasionally running from disease. Good living has to include well being, an even higher standard of comfort, peace, and physical and mental capacity.

I want to say to you that you might easily agree with me that well being is important, but my question is, sitting here today, do you have achievable goals for achieving more well-being? Does your daily priority list any of these as important?

Allow me to tell you a simple story about transformation and learning the nature of truth through the simplicity of life. The Brazilian author, **Paulo Coelho**, in his book **The Pilgrimage** tells a story about his personal experiences along the historic Road to Santiago de Compostella, much of it revolving around a sacred sword.

The book is much about the quest for spirituality. Through his travails, his hardships and what all he has to go through in his quest for the sword, Paulo Coelho shows us that if we want something badly enough we labour for it.

Achieving wellness is a challenge, but could also be as easy as making it a lifestyle; one that would take a journey, a pilgrimage like Paulo Coelho in his book. Most importantly, self improvement is essential to a satisfying life.

Last year, when I spoke to you on Wellness Day, I made the following remarks and I quote "***It is therefore important that we are creating this physical activity and healthful living at a time when physical inactivity has been identified as contributing to premature death, disability, primarily through increased incidences of physical inactivity-related cardiovascular diseases, obesity and diabetes...If everything and everyone is unable to move, there will be no life at all. For us to continue living and fulfill our mandate and obligations to our people, we must be active, mobile, stress free and above all agile enough to climb the steps leading to our offices should the lifts break down...***

Overall healthy living is a key ingredient to wellness and that all of us also need to understand the responsibility for enhancing our own health.

Today's message is: Wellness is something you can cultivate yourselves and this cannot wait. If you have not committed to wellness, created health goals, and you are not striving to achieve them, then most certainly, you are just waiting for your health to disappear. Therefore, I urge you to apply interest in **your** self improvement to **your** well being, and do it with **discipline** and **persistence**. Sounds easy doesn't it?

Before I suggest how you may achieve optimal wellness, I should like to indicate the following outcomes of optimal health:

- Comfortable breathing;
- The ability to go into any reasonable environment without getting a cold or flu;
- A reasonable appetite, perfect digestion,
- The perfect bowel movement
- Good vision and hearing,
- Easy, restful, restorative sleep, staying asleep all night, and waking up refreshed and invigorated;
- Staying alert and energetic throughout the day;
- Emotional balance;
- Serenity
- Peace,
- Patience; and
- An open heart and mind

Sounds good doesn't it? Here are some examples of goals you can set for your self to achieve the outcomes I have just referred to:

- Pay attention to your eating habits;
- Exercise regularly at least 3 times a week;
- Get enough sleep, at least 8 hours; go ikhutsa go botlhokwa and
- Pay attention to your emotions, fokotsang go tenega.

The crux of my message to you today is: **Don't wait for a life-threatening, or quality of life-changing disease, before you make wellness a priority in your life.** Start today, to put wellness first and remember "You are what you do".

I thank you !