



PEACE

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

SUNDAY EXPRESS 1-7^T JUNE 2025, VOL 17 ISSUE 8. PAGE 10.

MPs Must Hold the Executive Accountable—Not Individual Officials

By PEACE

A recent interaction between an Honourable Member of Parliament and a board member of the Lesotho Electricity Company (LEC), as reported in the *Sunday Express* of May 25, 2025 (page 4), has drawn attention to a growing governance concern: the blurring of roles between political oversight and institutional operations.

According to the report, the MP sought answers from a board member on operational issues at LEC, citing his right as a representative of the government and the people. While Members of Parliament are indeed tasked with oversight, the approach taken in this instance highlights a critical misunderstanding of how oversight should be exercised in a constitutional democracy.

Parliamentary Oversight: A Defined Mandate

Parliamentarians in Lesotho, as in other democratic systems, have three primary functions: representation, legislation, and oversight of the executive. The oversight function, while central, is neither unilateral nor informal. It is exercised through structured processes: primarily parliamentary debates, portfolio committees, question sessions, and formal inquiries.

These mechanisms are designed to ensure that the executive, including ministries and state-owned enterprises, can be held to account without undermining the independence and operational integrity of institutions or their personnel. When MPs bypass these formal channels and engage public officials directly, especially outside parliamentary platforms, they risk distorting accountability frameworks, politicising service delivery, and placing undue pressure on individuals not directly accountable to them.

Board Members Are Not Junior Staff

In the case at hand, the official approached was not a junior employee but a **board member**, a high-level appointee tasked with the oversight, governance, and strategic direction of a public institution. Board members operate within a clear chain of accountability, reporting to the line minister, in this case, the Minister of Energy, who is, in turn, accountable to Parliament. MPs must therefore address operational concerns about institutions like LEC to the minister through parliamentary channels, not through private or informal exchanges with board members or management.

This distinction is critical. Board members are not political actors; they are stewards of governance who must operate without fear or favour. Political interference in their roles not only



PEACE

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

SUNDAY EXPRESS 1-7^T JUNE 2025, VOL 17 ISSUE 8. PAGE 10.

compromises good governance but may also breach principles of fairness and professionalism expected in public administration.

Implications for Governance

When MPs engage directly with officials outside the framework of parliamentary committees, several negative outcomes can follow:

Undermined Ministerial Responsibility: Ministers are constitutionally and politically responsible for the departments and agencies under their portfolios. Sidestepping them weakens their authority and confuses the lines of accountability.

Politicisation of Administration: Direct political interference can lead to a culture of selective compliance and fear, where officials feel compelled to respond to political pressure rather than institutional policy or law.

Institutional Confusion: Public servants and board members may receive contradictory instructions or requests, leading to inefficiency, internal conflict, or inaction.

Erosion of Public Trust: When proper processes are ignored, the credibility of both Parliament and the civil service suffers. The public begins to perceive governance as personalised and fragmented, rather than rules-based and accountable.

A Call for Structured Parliamentary Engagement

This incident underscores the urgent need for Lesotho's Parliament to invest in structured orientation and ongoing capacity building for MPs. Members must be equipped with a solid understanding of their roles, powers, and the limits of their authority, particularly in relation to public institutions and officials.

Oversight must be exercised, but it must be done correctly, through formal sessions, written questions, and committee hearings where ministers appear with their senior officials to respond to matters of public concern. This approach protects all parties involved and ensures that governance is transparent, equitable, and legally sound.

It is equally important to uphold the professional boundaries that protect public servants and institutional leaders from undue political interference. By doing so, Parliament will not only strengthen accountability but also promote a stable and functional public administration.

Honour Lies in Process, Not Power



PEACE

POLICY ENGAGEMENT ACTION FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES

SUNDAY EXPRESS 1-7^T JUNE 2025, VOL 17 ISSUE 8. PAGE 10.

Members of Parliament are addressed as “Honourable” because of the dignity, responsibility, and integrity associated with their office. That honour is not demonstrated through the assertion of power over individuals, but through respect for democratic institutions, adherence to due process, and principled service to the nation.

In the end, Parliament must remain a forum for policy debate, a guardian of accountability, and a representative voice for the people not an alternative executive. For Lesotho’s governance to thrive, every public institution, from Parliament to parastatals, must operate within its mandate, guided by law, procedure, and mutual respect.