

NFP General Budget Debate

Hon Speaker

Hon Premier,

Hon MEC,

Hon Members,

All guests,

“We must all ensure that public funds are spent wisely, transparently and towards the improvement of the lives of all our people. This means that we must spend scarce resources effectively, efficiently and economically”. Honorable MEC, these are your words during your budget speech in August this year. Unfortunately, you been failed by your own Cabinet colleagues as the financial reports reveal.

The various reports tell a story of a government that lacks the capacity and the will to take our province down the path of success. We are a province in crisis. The previous financial year was defined by poor financial management ability; overspending and in some instances under-spending were the order of the day.

We acknowledge that the world and our country is confronted with difficult economic challenges but we do not believe that this should translate in poor governance. In fact, this should

motivate government to use funds wisely. We also note your cost cutting measures which include eliminating non-essential posts, eliminating ghost employees and freezing budgets for non-essential goods and services. It remains to be seen if the cabinet will indeed make good on these commitments.

We must begin by welcoming and commending you on the bold step taken in terms of infrastructure development. The province has a massive infrastructure backlog; hence the Premier formed the Infrastructure Coordinating Commission. And yet, his own Cabinet does not seem committed to this objective.

In the past year, we watched as various departments collectively under-spent on infrastructure by more than R700 million. The R12 billion allocated for this purpose in 2015/2016 promises to create much needed jobs and to make sure that the province has the infrastructure it needs to become a world class destination which can attract investment. As a largely rural province, we need to spend more on infrastructure development because better infrastructure improves prospects for economic growth.

We further welcome that commitment to continue with various construction and maintenance projects as part of Operation KuShunquthuli and the African Renaissance Roads Upgrading

Programme , to focus on road infrastructure development in rural areas.

The NFP also welcomes the allocation of R32.9 billion to The Health Department. We understand that the bulk of this amount is for the delivery of primary health care to uninsured people of the province. We hope this will result in an improved public healthcare system and that many of the challenges institutions like Addington and McCord hospitals will now be addressed.

It is still saddening that 21 years into our democracy, we still have people living in shocking conditions without even the most basic of necessities. So we hope that the R3.585 billion, R3.776 billion allocated to the Human Settlements department will be directed towards giving our people dignity by providing them with decent housing.

We note that the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs only receives R13.7 million. We are concerned that this figure may be too little to create an environment that will help develop tourism in the province.

We applaud the announcement that the Department of Transport will receive R10 million in 2015/16 relating to the learner transport function. We all understand the challenges faced in school transport and some of the tragedies that have occurred and so we hope that this allocation will assist in

preventing these in future. We also hope that rural schools will receive a favourable share of this allocation.

We hope that the department of Sports and Recreation will be able to fulfill its mandate this year as far as building the sports development centre in Durban. But I have concerns about the amount allocated for this project. R30 million seems too bloated and perhaps that department could source more affordable alternatives in order to meet your cost-cutting measures.

MEC, we welcome your budget and we call on Provincial Treasury to be very firm on departments going forward, budgets must be spent and for the purposes for which they were intended. This is the only way in which we may overcome the negative effects of the budget cuts we will experience in the coming years.

Thank you.

Presented by: Hon VR Mlotshwa