

SPEECH BY SPEAKER SHAHID ESAU
BUDGET VOTE 2: PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

26 June 2009

Honourable Deputy Speaker,
Honourable Premier,
Honourable Leader of the Opposition,
Honourable Members of the Provincial Cabinet,
Honourable Members, and
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour for me to participate in this budget debate today. I will address certain concerns that will receive priority attention during this financial year.

As is the case with all the executive government departments, the vision, mission and strategic direction of the provincial parliament have been determined during the tenure of my predecessor and the 2009/10 budget has been aligned with that particular strategic direction. As with any new parliament, the opportunity now presents itself to assess strategies and the direction the institution should embark on in the next five years. This will include looking at the successes achieved during the past five years and build on those successes but also have a serious look at our shortcomings and where we as an institution have failed to live up to what our Constitution expects from us. I intend doing so on a

structured basis with the optimum involvement of all the political parties in the House.

In broad terms, the following will guide our strategies going forward –

1. Sound corporate governance of the institution;
2. Enhanced cooperative governance with the other spheres of government;
3. The involvement, participation and education of the people of the Western Cape in our processes and work;
4. Effective oversight of the Executive;
5. Impartiality;
6. Empowering our Members to effectively fulfill their constitutional obligations, in particular –
 - To fully participate in the proceedings of the House
 - To represent and to promote the interests of their political party
 - To properly represent the interests of their constituents
7. Enhance international relations.

One of the biggest challenges that the institution faces relates to ICT services, in particular, slow and unreliable internet and e-mail services. It is therefore logical that this area should receive our priority attention. I have started to attend to this challenge by appointing an ICT manager who will commence employment during the course of next week. An additional allocation of R3,750

million has been added to our budget to provide for the implementation of a Virtual Private Network (VPN). This VPN is designed to deal with the slow and unreliable e-mail and internet services that we are currently experiencing. We have already commenced with the installation of certain cabling that will cause a physical separation with the provincial government Local Area Network. The VPN solution will be fully implemented during this financial year and we plan to introduce other innovations, such as wireless connectivity and opensource. The website was recently updated and it now has a warmer look and feel and greater functionality.

We have a videoconferencing facility and I am of the opinion that it is currently under-utilised. I would therefore like to invite Members to make greater use of this facility as it is more time and cost-effective to use this facility than travel to other provinces sometimes. I intend to expand the videoconferencing facilities to enable us to interact more with the municipalities in our province, in particular, the Speakers of these municipalities.

The Treasury committed itself (in writing) to fund an increase in respect of the Secretarial and Constituency allowances during the adjustments estimate process. The agreement is that these increases will be implemented with immediate effect, but that the funding will be provided later in the year. In this regard we attempt to keep the Constituency Allowance on par with that of National Parliament. The Secretarial allowance will be increased by 13% in order

to empower political parties represented in this House to carry out your representative work even better.

Deputy Speaker, there are several matters that were initiated before my term, but were never completed and I intend to bring these matters to finality. I have been informed that over several years discussions with various role-players have been held in a bid to have this legislature declared a National Key Point. I am pleased to announce that this process was finally concluded recently and the WCPP has been formally declared a National Key Point. This means that a certain security status has been accorded to this institution and certain security measures (with concomitant financial implications) will have to be implemented. This matter is also receiving our urgent attention. In a related matter, there existed a vacuum in that no one was formally designated as being in control of this parliamentary precinct. In the week, this matter was attended to and brought to finality.

Similarly, the Standing Rules are in need of amendment. Some effort was made in this regard before my tenure, which was not brought to finality and this is receiving my urgent attention. I have liaised with all parties and we have scheduled a workshop in August where we hope to finalise the rules review process.

An Oversight Model has never been settled for this institution and I intend to resolve an Oversight Model soon.

At the moment there is no legislation that comprehensively regulates the financial management of this Legislature. At present we comply voluntarily with the spirit of the PFMA. I will shortly introduce a bill which will regulate the financial management of the legislature comprehensively. It will also enable us to determine our own budget, a principle that is crucial to the separation of powers doctrine.

Deputy Speaker, once we bring some of these long outstanding matters to finality, we will be able to devote more time to our core mandate, one of which is to pass laws. During my tenure, I will consider passing more laws within our functional areas of competence as outlined in the Constitution. We must also start to ask some difficult questions about the laws that were passed. Is our legislation effective? Have we ever evaluated its efficacy or its impact? Should it be reviewed? I think that we need to develop a corps of competent legislative drafters in the province and promote the development of a legislative drafting capacity.

I am looking at forging bilateral relations or cooperation with bodies such as UNICEF, and promote international standards of best practice in this institution. In addition, we will work closer with vulnerable groups in our society

and promote their plight, groups that care for people with HIV/AIDS, FAS, substance abuse, disabled persons, elderly persons, women, children, the youth and refugees.

Other priorities for me will be the electronic upgrading of the Chamber in order to eliminate the excessive use of paper and thereby promote an eco-friendly environment; changing Hansard from analogue to digital and having faster turnaround times; a computerised time and attendance system for employees; Health and Safety issues; and Maintenance and Cleaning of this building.

The total receipts under this budget increased by R2.797 million or 4.26 per cent, if one compares it to the 2008/09 adjusted appropriation. Under programme one provision is made for the filling of additional posts and inflationary-related improvement of conditions of service for employees. I have already dealt with the increases in Members allowances that will be funded later. This relates to programme two. Under programme three provision is made for a slight decrease for parliamentary services. The reason for this is that last year there was a once-off allocation for standing committee activities that were funded by the staggering of the filling of vacancies. The budget does not provide for this allocation to be repeated during this year. Furthermore, in the last budget provision was made for a special AG investigation into the Department of Community Safety. A similar provision is not made for in our current budget.

Lastly, I wish to indicate that I intend to effect various savings on the budget and utilise these savings for much-needed services. I have already identified certain posts that the institution can do without. Secondly, I am sure that we will affect massive savings on catering and travelling.

In conclusion, there is much work that needs to be done, but I am confident that with the support of all of the Members and the officials, we will accomplish our objectives. Deputy Speaker, please allow me to thank you, all the Members, the Secretary, the Senior Management Team (SMT) and all the hardworking and dedicated staff.

Thank you!