

**SPEECH BY SPEAKER SHAHID ESAU
BUDGET VOTE 2: PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT
30 MARCH 2010**

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

The Minister for Finance indicated that the challenge to the Province is to do more with less. The members' demands for more and better services on the one hand, and a budget that reflects a nominal increase of 4,4% on the 2009/10 adjustment budget on the other, necessitated a reprioritisation of our budget to align it with the strategic goals of the institution.

Our budget for the 2010/11 financial year amounts to **R77,382 million**.

Our strategic goals provide continuity with previous goals, through its emphasis on excellence in service delivery, development of our staff and the importance of ensuring sustainability of operations.

I wish to highlight the following strategic objectives:

Oversight, Public Participation and Law-making

Effective committee systems and committee support is key if the important constitutional imperative of oversight and holding the government to account is to be effective. In this regard, all committee staff is receiving comprehensive training and mentoring for a three month period. A thorough assessment of skills will commence soon and the gaps will be

addressed by further training and development processes. Chairpersons and committee members will also benefit from training initiatives that are being developed especially in the fields of general oversight and the initiation and consideration of legislation.

The budget of the Standing Committees has increased from R1,7 to R1.826 mil – this excludes catering and advertisement costs . It is also deemed appropriate to mention that the filling of posts in this area is receiving priority attention.

In order to enhance service delivery and provide effective oversight, the WCPP needs to assess how effective and comprehensive its current oversight mechanisms are and to what extent it is playing a meaningful role within the broader society to deepen democracy and contribute to effective nation building. If Parliament's role were to extend much more meaningfully beyond current mechanisms for oversight the following should be explored:

1. To what extent should committees embark on more focused visits within the Province to assess service delivery and policy implementation particularly in the rural areas?
2. Whether the current scrutiny of departmental annual reports is systematic and robust enough to improve service delivery?
3. How relevant, pertinent and fundamental questions to Ministers are and conversely, how specific and appropriate Ministerial responses are?
4. How a more integrated and extensive public participation programme can assist Members in their oversight role by providing direct input on the quality of service delivery in the province?

A comprehensive and integrated public participation, relations and education strategy needs to be finalized and implemented to ensure that it becomes a key element of the oversight and accountability strategy mentioned earlier.

(regarding...)

Committee travel

Study visits by committees are important tools to capacitate members to be able to fulfill their constitutional functions. This includes overseas travel to jurisdictions in line with our parliamentary systems and committee work. These travels/visits however, will have to be properly planned and co-ordinated and should form part of the relevant committee's overall oversight function. Planning will have to be done well in advance, adequately motivated and conform to established criteria for study visits overseas.

Governance

To operate effectively, Parliament has set a strategic goal to enhance sound governance by establishing structures, processes and procedures as per legislation and relevant guidelines.

Governance of the Administrative matters and governance of political matters are receiving priority attention. Members will recall that I introduced the Parliamentary Service and Finance Management Bill that caters for the governance of administrative matters and the financial management. The establishment of a Parliamentary structure for governance of parliamentary business will also be presented to the rules committee and the House for consideration in due course. (currently, the process is under review)

Services to members and staff

A comprehensive Members' needs survey is in the process of being compiled where after specific Members' training requirements will be addressed by providing structured training in the identified areas. This will be complimentary to the committee training mentioned above.

I am contemplating establishing a training facility for Members, Staff and general stakeholders in collaboration with the provincial government. The focus of the curriculum will be on the constitution as far as it pertains to the different spheres of

government and their role in the structure of the state. A comprehensive skills audit for all parliamentary staff will commence during April, which will form the basis for training interventions and development.

The recruitment and retention of staff have been problematic mainly due to Parliament's current remuneration levels. A remuneration study has been concluded and an amount of R 1,2m has been budgeted partially implement the study.

Parliament has for the first time budgeted for interns at a nominal amount of R 193 500.

With regards to assistance to political parties/members have also increased:

- Constituency allowance (from R17,386m to R18,349m - 5.50%)
- Enabling Allowance (from R3,910m to R4,105m – 5%)
- Secretarial Allowance will increase with the compulsory saving of 2009/10

Catering

The budget for catering for 2010/11 year is R1.259 million. I am aware of members' dissatisfaction with the catering services. Parliament is however committed to provide high quality and appropriate catering services to its members and other stakeholders. A process to appoint a dedicated service provider is currently underway, which I believe, would contribute to a better catering service.

ICT

The legislative sector, like all other spheres of government, is under pressure to improve service delivery through maximising administrative and operational efficiency. The effective use of information technology is a key success factor enabling institutions to respond optimally to the demand for services. Amongst the key areas are website functionality upgrade, and organisational performance management system/ dashboard/ balance scorecard and a document management system.

During my budget address in June, I have said that certain concerns will receive priority attention. One of such is the ICT services, being one of our biggest challenges, with its slow and unreliable internet and email services. Over the last 9 months, since I took office, approximately R2.5m have been spent on ICT related projects which include:

1. **The implementation of WCPP's own network which includes but not limited to Email, File-Print and internet services.** We have elected to implement our own network, as opposed to staying on the SITA network. While the cost of implementing a network without SITA represented R2m discount, our internet bandwidth was ten-fold that of what SITA offered WCPP. This means that our internet capacity is 10 fold more, which means we will comfortably able to stream house sittings live, concurrently conduct multiple video conferences and send and receive emails instantly.

The network upgrade will form the foundation of some existing projects planned for the next financial year, projects such as Document Management Systems that will facilitate storing and retrieval of documents nearly instantly and our mobile computing initiative that will facilitate mobile computing from devices such as cell phones and laptops remotely will increase productivity of members and officials, which was not possible before.

2. **The upgrade of aged productivity software.** Our version of Windows and Office was more than 8 years old. (it has now been updated)
3. **Wireless computing** will be installed throughout the provincial parliament buildings, which means that we will be able to send and receive emails, access network resources without being physically connected to the network. (Wifi)
4. **Integrated communication** which facilitates e-communication in the form of instant messaging and file sharing in the House amongst members, and video

conferencing anywhere in the world. It is anticipated that an integrated communication project will reduce the cost of doing what we do. We have already realised cost savings, for example, we have conducted an interview, for a position advertised by WCPP, with a South African candidate living in Miami USA. Many forum meetings and workshops can now be facilitated through video conferencing. As part of our integrated communication system, some members already can send and receive emails directly to their cell phones, in real time.

5. **Regarding monitoring and evaluation**, which is critical in measuring this administration's performance, for this financial year we will roll out a Balanced Scorecard/dashboard which will monitor all facets that ought to be monitored and evaluated. (feed into performance management system for WCPP)
6. **Fax2Email** service was implemented where faxes are forwarded directly to the intended recipient's email account. This facilitates secure fax communication which can be tracked and securely filed.
7. On the Open Source front, we have implemented a **helpdesk system** used to log and track ICT related requests, but will be rolled out to all facets of the institution. This will track the performance and turnaround time of (any) requests.
8. We will be meeting with the website developers this week to work on an urgent plan to update the **website**.
9. Other areas that we hope to improve on is the **Hansard service**. The new service provider will commence on 1 April. The new contract makes provision for a digital service and we will produce less of the "blue book" Hansard and make it available to Members on disc. We will go through a trial process to ensure that the current Hansard be uploaded onto the website. This might not be plain sailing and Members must bear with us during this trial phase.

With reference to the Hansard service itself we will do regular quality assurance checks to ensure that the service is of a high quality and members are encouraged to provide us with feedback hereon.

With reference to the use of language we will soon make an appointment of an Afrikaans-English language practitioner. We are in the process of compiling a project schedule for the upgrade of this Chamber to ensure that Members will have all the tools in the Chamber to assist them with the execution of their functions. This project will include modern interpreting booths closer to the Chamber.

Deputy Speaker, please allow me to conclude by thanking, all the Members, the Secretary, the Senior Management Team (SMT) and all the hardworking and dedicated staff.

And in the words of **Nelson Mandela** to a joint sitting of parliament on 10 May 2004, (he said) 'A guiding principle in our search for and establishment of a non-racial, inclusive democracy in our country has been that there are good men and women to be found in all groups and from all sectors of society; and that in an open and free society those South Africans will come together to jointly and cooperatively realize the common good.'

I, Thank you.