
MONDAY, 7 APRIL 2025

PROCEEDINGS OF THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

The sign † indicates the original language and [] directly thereafter indicates a translation.

[Hybrid Sitting held with some members present in the House and some in virtual attendance through Microsoft Teams]

The House met at 10:00.

The hon Speaker took the Chair and read the prayer.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER: You may be seated. Good morning, hon members, and guests in the gallery. As has been our practise to date, the hon members will participate in the Sitting of the House both from here and the Chamber with the Presiding Officer and Table Staff, and via Microsoft Teams. Our Standing Rules have accordingly been amended to accommodate such hybrid Sittings.

Hon members, allow me to highlight some of the important directives in this regard. The quorum requirements for the Sitting of the House are provided for in the Constitution and the Standing Rules. Unless there is an indication

of unanimous concurrence, voting will be confined to members present in the House and on the hybrid system, or who are entitled to cast their votes as per the ATC issued on 11 August 2020. The hon members present in the Chamber and by Microsoft Teams have all the privileges and immunities imparted by law.

Hon members, if you are considered out of order by the Presiding Officer, your microphones will be muted and you will be called to order. The Serjeant-at-Arms will record all members' attendance, and hon members, when I request that you unmute your microphones, please complete speaking and then mute your microphones thereafter.

The media have also been granted access to the Microsoft Teams meetings as guests of the WCPP; however I wish to remind the members of the press that they may not use the chat room, or speak, or activate their cameras while the Sitting is in progress. Hon members, the Sitting Language Translation Services are available in the Chamber as usual and on Microsoft Teams via the respective channels.

Hon members, I wish to remind you that no interjections are permitted during these hybrid Sittings, and to this end I wish to draw your attention to Rule 40 of our Standing Rules. Hon members, good morning to the guests in the gallery, welcome to the Western Cape Provincial Parliament. I wish to remind the members of the gallery that you are most welcome, but you may not participate in the debate on the floor.

The Secretary will read the First Order of the Day.

The SECRETARY: Debate on Vote 10: Infrastructure – Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 2–2025]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Hon members, I recognise the hon Minister of Infrastructure, Minister Simmers.

† ‘n AGB LID: Hoor, hoor!

[An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!]

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: Thank you very much, hon Speaker, hon Premier, fellow members of the Executive, and also members of the Provincial Parliament, members of the Consular Corps present. Mayors, MAYCO members, private sector partners, future distinguished investors, current investors, staff of my Department and the Ministry, but most importantly the citizens of the Western Cape.

It is an honour for me to deliver to you today our Infrastructure Budget to shape our future together. Our province is a place of immense opportunity, rich in potential and driven by a vision to enable economic growth that will create job opportunities and empower our residents to seize these opportunities. An infrastructure development plays a central role to all of this.

Hon Speaker, Infrastructure is more than bricks and mortar. It is the enabler of economic growth, the driver of social development, and the key to unlocking new investment opportunities. We therefore envision an infrastructure that is resilient, that can endure the elements and withstand Budget uncertainties. An infrastructure that is sustainable, that provides alternative future-fit and innovative solutions. An infrastructure that is inclusive, that addresses the past injustices and grows an economy that benefits all for the future. But to make this vision real we must maintain what we have and lay the foundations to build strong, smart and sustainable infrastructure that connects, empowers and uplifts.

My five key ministerial priorities are:

- Partnership;
- Acceleration;
- Delivery;
- Finance;
- Innovation.

They demonstrate that we are committed to fostering an environment that encourages collaboration, reduces red tape, and ensures that investments in Infrastructure are both socio-economically profitable, but also impactful. But we do recognise that Government alone cannot meet the demands of our growing and dynamic region. That is why we place a strong emphasis on

forging strategic partnerships, partnerships with the Diplomatic and Consular Missions, partnerships with municipalities, partnerships with the private sectors, partnerships with investors, both local and soon to be international, but most importantly partnerships with the communities we all were elected to serve.

It is common cause that the country simply does not have the money, from a Government point of view, to keep up with the demands for services. That is why we are also seeking, as a Department, to contract in the form of pledges, front loading loans and blended financing, to name but a few of these mechanisms, through which we will leverage our Immovable Asset Portfolios in order to accelerate Human Settlements delivery, to ensure the maintenance and construction of roads; and to be quite clear, this also includes the gravel road network of our province, because we believe all of this will unlock economic growth and create jobs.

Hon Speaker, our strategy, our vision, our project pipeline, our Budget are all guided by the Western Cape Infrastructure Framework 2050. It is the beacon of innovation, sustainability and resilience that guides the Western Cape towards a future where infrastructure not only supports economic growth and development, but also contributes to the well-being of all residents and the health of our natural environment. Through collaborative effort and a shared vision this framework will help shape a Western Cape that is prosperous, inclusive and sustainable for generations to come.

Hon Speaker, to this end I am pleased today to table the Western Cape Department of Infrastructure's R27,9 billion Budget over the medium term, of which R9,83 billion is allocated to the 2025/2026 financial year. Of the nearly R10 billion Budget, R365 million is allocated to Administration which includes our bursary programmes, skills development programmes, enhancement tools, digital infrastructure and energy projects.

Hon Speaker, we are allocating R15,3 million towards the Masakhi'iSizwe Bursary programme, unique only to our Province, which has for the current academic year already awarded 151 bursaries to students studying within sectorial aligned fields, such as architecture, civil, electrical and mechanical engineering, mechatronics, quantity surveying, and other fields related to our sector. By empowering these young people, hon Speaker, we are looking to the future of Infrastructure in the Western Cape. We are not only equipping these individuals to step into specialised jobs, no, but we are also absorbing the necessary skills and knowledge to shape our future together.

In terms of our own staff of the Western Cape Department of Infrastructure, this financial year we will also be up-scaling 20 staff members who are on salary level 1 to 4 through our Professional Development Programme, to broaden their prospects within the Government and the Department they work for. Hon Speaker, included in this programme, I am also very excited to announce our investment of R14,897 million towards the Western Cape Infrastructure Implementation Plan, [Inaudible 0:10:46] commonly known as the Singular Project Pipeline, colloquially so you can all [Inaudible 0:10:52]

A Singular Project Pipeline will revolutionise infrastructure delivery in the Western Cape. It goes beyond this financial year. In actual fact it goes beyond the medium term. We are setting the Western Cape on course towards the future. The pipeline identifies and gives an overview of existing infrastructure pipelines, which includes national, provincial, municipal, and private sector projects, representing a cohesive set of projects strategically designed to attract investment and meet the needs of our province. The existing singular pipeline contains projects to the value of a gigantic R200 billion – that is the monetary value of our singular pipeline. This, hon Speaker, is how we will shape our future in the Western Cape together.

I also wish to announce that we are investing over R11 million in digital infrastructures that will transform the way we deliver infrastructure, how we attract investment, but also how we interact with our residents. As a department we are embracing cutting edge technology, like digital twins and artificial intelligence to revolutionise how we plan, how we fund, and how we manage infrastructure, and therefore we will soon launch a real time interactive 3D digital twin of the entire province. The first Provincial Government to do this.

An HON MEMBER: Wow!

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: This advanced tool will allow us to visualise key pipeline projects more effectively, helping to attract

investment and to secure funding with greater ease. By integrating AI driven analytics we will then be able to accurately forecast infrastructure needs, optimise resource allocation, and enhance decision-making ensuring that every rand is invested where it will deliver the greatest impact, in plain English, “the bang for the buck.”

I will also soon introduce you all to EVE, no not Eve from the Bible, the Western Cape’s EVE. [Laughter.] “EVE”, or it stands for: “Enhanced Virtual Experience”, hon Premier, is our decentralised AI powered assistant designed to enhance the residents’ interactions with my Department. We chose a decentralised model for its versatility and flexibility in handling various data types, but in addition to being cost effective, EVE as a model offers both robust capabilities in data analytics, automation and communication. EVE will be accessible through multiple platforms, including WhatsApp, email, and a dedicated mobile app. The first iteration or “Toddler EVE”, as I like to call her, will be ready for testing within the next two weeks. †Kom ons hoop maar EVA kan baie van haar [Lag.] [Let us hope EVE can ...many of her [Inaudible.] Laughs.]

Our Transport Infrastructure branch has launched an initiative to modernise and upgrade its IT systems and business tools. This effort aims to enhance our ability to collect, manage and utilise data effectively, enabling better decision making and more efficient spending across the province’s 30 000 kilometre road network. A key highlight of this programme is the development of a new public query app designed to improve service delivery

and community engagement.

This app will provide a user friendly platform for public engagement offering a centralised hub where citizens can report issues and share feedback related to our provincial road network. Our goal is to enhance operational efficiency by enabling that residents can log road related concerns directly from their mobile devices, while equipping our Western Cape Government officials with the tools, and yes, accurate information needed to track, manage and resolve reported issues efficiently. We believe this would improve our responsiveness and promote a more citizen centric approach to Infrastructure management. The app is currently in development and it is planned to be launched for public-use in November of this year.

In the energy space, hon Speaker, we are also allocating R38,462 million towards energy resilience. The Western Cape Government is actively advancing gas-to-power initiatives as a strategic response to our energy security challenges and the growing demand for lower carbon technologies. The development and promotion of a robust gas-to-power industry, holds significant potential to drive socioeconomic growth and job creation across our province. With abundant gas reserves, the Western Cape is well-positioned to harness both indigenous and imported gas supply options.

Current assessments indicate the potential to add up to 6,7 GW of new gas-fired power generation capacity, complementing the existing 2,1 GW capacity at Ankerlig and Gourikwa. Furthermore, gas-fired power energy, along with

associated natural gas supply infrastructure, presents major investment opportunities across the entire value chain, upstream, midstream and downstream, stimulating local economic growth and generating substantial employment opportunities.

We are also making significant strides in installing solar geysers in housing units at several of our housing residences across the province, targeting what is defined as indigent households who are our beneficiaries, and our efforts in this regard already has huge successes. Over the last financial year we have installed a total of 1 623 solar geysers at several of our human settlement developments. In Ebenhaeser, which is in Bitou, we have delivered 179 solar geysers; in George Metro Grounds 190, at Melkhoutfontein in Hessequa 300, at Railton in Swellendam 340, at Vredebes in Ceres 379, at Vlakkeland in Paarl 36, at Klawer in Vredendal 199, but we are not done yet.

Funded through the Asset Reserve Fund, our efforts will continue, and in this financial year through our own funding, we will install a further 196 solar geysers in the Metro Grounds, 40 at Melkhoutfontein, six at Vlakkeland, which is besides the 30 geysers which comes standard as part of the Military Veteran units that are completed there, and 110 is ready for implementation in Vredebes.

Hon Speaker, we are also looking to pilot something that is unique and will be unique to our human settlements approach, “microgrids.” In partnership with relevant stakeholders such as the private sector, we will leave a difficult

and a long way in empowering communities that otherwise would not be able to afford electricity, specifically given the most recent repetitive electricity hikes.

†Agb Speaker, dan ten opsigte van ons Openbare Werke-program, bewillig ons meer as R2,5 miljard vir instandhouding, tariewe, huurkontrakte, munisipale dienste en konstruksie. 'n Sleutelvennoot in ons Openbare Werke-omgewing is ons susterdepartement van Gesondheid en Welstand. Tesame met die Departement van Infrastruktuur, wat as die implementeringsagent optree, is ons besig om verskeie megaprojekte binne die gesondheidsektor te ontplooi.

Ek sien dus uit na die aankondigings wat my kollega, Minister Wenger, binnekort sal maak wanneer sy haar Departement se begroting ter tafel sal lê. Wat Openbare Werke-infrastruktuur betref, is 625 werksgeleenthede gedurende die 2024/2025-boekjaar geskep, en ons beoog om altesaam 2 255 werksgeleenthede oor die mediumtermyn te skep, met meer as 810 werksgeleenthede wat in die huidige finansiële jaar geskep sal word.

[Hon Speaker, then with regard to our Public Works programme we allocate more than R2,5 billion for maintenance, tariffs, lease contracts, municipal services and construction. A key partner in our public works environment is our sister department of Health and Wellness. Along with the Department of Infrastructure, that acts as the implementation agent, we are busy deploying several mega projects within the health sector.

I therefore look forward to the announcements that my colleague, Minister

Wenger, will make shortly when she tables her Department's Budget. With regard to Public Works infrastructure, 625 job opportunities were created during the 2024/2025 financial year, and we intend to create altogether 2 255 job opportunities over the medium term, with more than 810 job opportunities that will be created in the current financial year.]

Hon Speaker, for community based programmes, we are allocating nearly R80 million for the 2025/2026 financial year. This significant investment is aimed at ensuring that communities benefit directly from Infrastructure projects, through the creation of temporary job opportunities, and by equipping these communities with skills needed for long term sustainable employment, specifically being the son of an artisan, I am happy that R6,38 million is allocated for artisan development. R20,518 million for the National Youth Service, R4,781 million for contractor development, and R2,873 million for empowerment impact assessments.

Through the Expanded Public Works Programme, our Province aims to create over 313 000 work opportunities between 2024 and 2029, ten ons is goed op koers [and we are well on course.] Of these, 91 677 will be in the Infrastructure sector, directly supporting our Department's core mission. These opportunities are not only a vital source of income for many, but also a pathway to skills development with a strong focus on training and long term empowerment.

Hon Speaker, while I am eager to discuss our Human Settlements programme,

I must first address a significant issue that cannot be ignored which came up during Friday's Debate as well. I am referring to the unfortunate and misguided decision by the National Department of Human Settlements to reduce our 2024-2025 Human Settlements Budget by an alarming R300 million. I raise this issue now, *†en ek hoop die mense vat notas aan die ander kant van die Huis* [and I hope the people are taking notes on the other side of the House,] because during the 2025/2026 financial year, it will have an impact on our baseline over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework.

The National Department justified this cut by citing our expenditure on the Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grant, which they reported stood at 20%, and the Human Settlement Development Grant which they stated was at 41%. *†Agb Speaker, met alle respek, [Hon Speaker, with all respect]* this assessment is completely inaccurate. Firstly, these figures were taken from the second Quarter of the 2024/2025 financial year, and for the hundredth time, *†ek pleit amper op my knieë...* [I am almost begging on my knees.] How can data from the second Quarter of a financial year reasonably inform decision making in the fourth Quarter, where the Department has a full 12 months to spend its Budget, and in reality, *†laat ek die realiteit ook gee...* [let me give the reality too...]

By February this year, when these claims were made by the National Minister live on TV in the SONA Debate, our ISUPG already stood at 59%, and our HSDG expenditure already stood at 84%. *†Sy het êrens iets gerook wat ons nie gerook het nie, want sy het daai getalle heeltemal verkeerd gekry.* [She

has smoked something somewhere that we did not, because she got those numbers, completely wrong.] [Interjection.] Moreover, on the day that the Budget cut was gazetted, the Western Cape Department of Infrastructure had already actually spent 84% of the total Human Settlement Budget, against our original allocation. I need to emphasise “the original allocation.” So why would our Budget be cut when we were clearly on track to spend a 100% of our grant allocation? This decision defies logic and has had severe consequences.

As a result of the Budget cut, we were forced to operate with a reduced Budget, R300 million less to be quite specific, leaving invoices for work already completed and certified unpaid, amounting to R243 million at the time it was gazetted. R243 million! Hon Speaker, not only is it challenging to explain to the National Department that the decision was based on outdated and irrelevant data, but it is equally difficult to convey the devastating impact this decision has had on the people of the Western Cape, especially our housing beneficiaries and the SMME’s who are still waiting their invoices to be paid.

However, hon Speaker, the Western Cape Government is focused on serving its people and we are committed to protecting the interests of those we serve. That is why the HOD and I initiated, with the support of the Premier and Cabinet, the inter-governmental dispute, to safeguard our beneficiaries, to ensure future budget security, but also to ensure that data-driven decision making is at the heart of all critical Budget decisions moving forward in

terms of Human Settlements, and despite these challenges, hon Speaker, we are moving forward in this province.

†Ons kap dit maar nat al die pad. Hierdie Provinsiale Regering stel sy inwoners eerste en bewillig byna R6,4 miljard vir Menslike Nedersettings oor die mediumtermyn, waarvan R2,243 miljard in die 2025/2026-boekjaar toegeken is. R1,634 miljard word toegewys aan die ontwikkeling van Menslike Nedersettings, R325,7 miljoen vir die opgradering van informele nedersetting, R45 miljoen vir die versnelling van behuisingslewering, R55,324 vir batebestuur; en meer as R30 miljoen vir titelaktes.

[We are going along well all the way. This Provincial Government puts its citizens first and allocates almost R6,4 billion for Human Settlements over the medium-term, of which R2,243 billion is allocated in the 2025/2026 financial year. R1,634 billion is allocated to the development of human settlements, R325,7 million for the upgrading of informal settlement, R45 million for the fast tracking of housing delivery, R55,324 for asset management; and more than R30 million for title deeds.]

And talking about title deeds, hon Speaker, ownership is the cornerstone of our human settlements efforts, because it not just only restores dignity, it creates generational prosperity and wealth. I am therefore incredibly proud of the strides we have made, and we have done so in partnership with the private sector; which is why as part of our partnership, tomorrow will the Premier and I, with First National Bank, hand over the first 71 title deeds as part of our partnership, where we have utilised subsidised funding to ensure that the

outstanding loans of beneficiaries will be settled, the balance have been cancelled, and the title deeds were issued.

This intervention provides financial relief to beneficiaries, but also ensures they gain unencumbered original title deeds. But the 71 come from different areas, hon Speaker. In the City of Cape Town they are residents from Bellville, Blue Downs, Goodwood, Grassy Park, Khayelitsha, Kleinvlei and Mitchells Plain; as well as areas outside of the Metro, including Worcester, Pacaltsdorp, Riversdale, Stellenbosch and Wellington. I want to use this platform today to challenge the other banks to join our partnership, and to help us in shaping our future together, and to help us accelerate the delivery of title deeds in the Western Cape. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: It is time the banks, as the Premier would say, “steps up” to the call. But, hon Speaker, I am particularly excited about our housing delivery plans in partnership with the private sector, especially our inner-city mixed-use affordable housing projects. As it stands, I am proud to announce today, that not one, not two, but three inner-city housing projects are currently bankable and will go to market in this calendar year; not financial year, calendar year.

An HON MEMBER: Wow! [Applause]

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: They include – and thanks to Lindelwa and the team, she is sitting up there hiding – the Leeuloop Precinct Development ... [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Minister, before you continue, can I please just remind the members in the gallery that you may not participate in the proceedings of the House. Hon Minister, you may continue.

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: Thank you, hon Speaker. †Hulle is [Onduidelik.] [They are [Inaudible.]]

- The Leeuloop Precinct Development, which will yield over 850 housing opportunities, which is the first one – in fact, hon Speaker and members of the House, the tender to procure a developer will be advertised before the end of this month.
- The Founders Garden Artscape, it is a R1 billion high-rise mixed-use development, prioritising social development, it will also yield over 2 340 opportunities. That will go to market before the end of the Quarter of this cycle we are in.
- The Prestwich Precinct, which is a mixed-use development, including 310 residential opportunities, as well as retail and office space.

But that is not all, hon Speaker. Currently in the planning and approval space, are:

- The Amandel Place housing development in Belhar, it will yield 326

housing opportunities;

- The Oude Molen Precinct, another mixed-use development, including residential, retail, and office space, will yield 1 364 residential opportunities, 34% of these will be affordable housing including social housing;
- Then there is the Stikland mixed-housing development, it will yield 6 963 opportunities, of which 25% are allocated for social housing.
- Then there is a development in Grassy Park which will yield 319 BNG units;
- And as many of you know, we are in the process of working on the concept options for the Tafelberg development site in Sea Point, which we plan to present to all the interested and affected parties in May of this year.

Hon members, together these Human Settlements projects will bring private sector investment to the Western Cape, estimated at just over R1 billion. Another set of properties in the Metro, which are at the initial stage of enablement, or we are de-risking it, or we are doing an analysis for the best use and delivery mechanisms for them are:

- Plantation Road,
- De Novo,
- The Government Garage Precinct,
- The Mandarin Court;
- And our property in Hout Bay.

†Weereens, agb Speaker, dit is nie al nie. Van Langebaan tot Knysna, en weereens ek wil dankie sê vir Lindelwa en haar span, ons is tans besig met die evaluering van die ontwikkelingspotensiaal van 23 hoëwaardegrondpersele wat die Provinsie besit. Gesamentlik beslaan hulle 'n oppervlakte van 85 hektaar, en hulle het 'n geraamde waarde van R340 miljoen, wat weereens, ons plan is om die volle spektrum van maatskaplike dienste ook in te sluit by hulle optimale benutting. Die Wes-Kaapse Regering en sy vennote werk ook doelgerig saam om die toekoms van menslike nedersettings te help vorm en om bates só te gebruik dat dit tot die voordeel van ons gemeenskappe moet strek.

[Again , hon Speaker, that is not all. From Langebaan to Knysna, and again I want to thank Lindelwa and her team, we are currently busy with the evaluation of the development potential of 23 high value land parcels owned by the Province. Together they cover an area of 85 hectares, and they have an estimated value of R340 million, which again, we plan to include the full spectrum of social services in their optimal utilization. The Western Cape Government and its partners are also working together purposefully to help to form the future of human settlements and to use assets in such a way that it is to the benefit of our communities.]

Hon Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, our main focus as the Western Cape Government is growing the provincial economy to enable the creation of more job opportunities, and the role Transport Infrastructure plays in this regard cannot be overstated. †Ons bestuur letterlik die ekonomie saam met

my kollega hier langs my. [We literally manage the economy along with my colleague here next to me.] Through Transport alone, over 2 800 job opportunities were created since the fourth Quarter of the last financial year to date, and 980 full-time equivalent opportunities at that, which is why we are allocating the majority of our Budget towards this programme.

Hon Speaker, a massive R12,345 billion is allocated towards the Transport Infrastructure over the MTEF, of which R4,63 billion is allocated for the current financial year. For the 2025/2026 financial year we aim to create 3 247 job opportunities through Transport Infrastructure, and over the MTEF the figure is over 9 740 job opportunities, with a major focus on creating job opportunities for our young people. This allocation will go towards maintaining, upgrading and expanding of our road networks, making the movement of people and goods faster and more efficient across our province.

Hon members, in the Western Cape there are 7 349 kilometres of paved roads and over 24 800 kilometres of gravel roads, all of which are crucial to achieve our goals, and to enhance our Transport Infrastructure delivery, I am pleased to announce that we will be introducing a new provincial roads delivery model. Hon Speaker, in a time of fiscal constraints and uncertainties, this model will be an absolute game changer.

Through my Department, the Western Cape Government will have more control over our projects that will dramatically enhance delivery and ensure that we get value for our money. It will also allow us to identify and make

massive savings. To reap the benefits of this model therefore it needs to be rolled out as soon as possible. Therefore our district municipalities will actually receive their letters today once I have tabled my speech ...
[Interjection.]

† ‘n AGB LID: Hoor, hoor.

[An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear.]

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: ... giving them exactly one year's notice to prepare for this important shift. Rollout will also be done in different processes. The Cape Winelands District, Central Karoo and the Garden Route District Municipality will form part of Phase 1A (Process), while the Overberg and West Coast District Municipalities will form part of Process 1B.

I am also taking this opportunity, hon Speaker, to announce key roads infrastructure projects in the Western Cape, these include the Wingfield Southern Upgrade Scheme, the R300 Extension, and to the joy of my colleague, the improvement and upgrading of the gravel road network. The Wingfield project, which forms part of the Southern Growth Scheme, will be delivered over 12 implementation packages at a Budget of R11 billion. The first package was already completed in March 2024, and we all know it colloquially as the Refinery Interchange Upgrade. At R1,05 billion, the first phase of the R300 Extension which will link De Bron to Wellington, will also be unlocking the Phase 2, which will link Wellington to Melkbosstrand.

But why are these projects necessary, and I am going to use Wingfield as an example. Currently the peak hour average speed is 44 kilometres per hour. On a trip which should take 60 minutes to complete, Capetonian commuters spend 101 minutes. This equates to almost one month's working hours lost to travel time per commuter each year. If we abandon the Wingfield project, modelled peak hour speed in 2032 will drop to 14 kilometres per hour. †Ek draf amper vinniger as dit, maar oukei. [Lag.] [I jog almost faster than that, but okay. [Laughs.]]

This includes a modal shift towards public transport and a fully operational Metro Rail. But with this intervention, peak hour speed will increase to 51 kilometres per hour in 2032, and the benefit of this is significant, improved mobility leads to better access to jobs, schools, healthcare and recreational facilities. It improves safety and contributes to a more inclusive and connected region. Without these interventions congestion will worsen dramatically, even with improved public transport, which threatens the long term sustainability of our transport system and the well-being of our residents.

†Agb Speaker, 'n program waaroor ek besonders opgewonde is, en ons Minister van Landbou sal hiermee saam met my jubel en juig, is die verbetering en opgradering van 50% van ons grondpadnetwerk. Die eerste fase van hierdie projek fokus op die verbetering en opgradering van 5%, oftewel 1 200 kilometer van hierdie netwerk. Ons gaan, met my kollega, die

landbousektor as geheel, en in besonder met boere en gemeenskappe in vennootskap tree om sleutelroetes te identifiseer en te prioritiseer om hierdie belangrike onderneming uit te voer. Hierdie verbeterings sal nie net beter toegang insluit nie, maar ook plaaslike ekonomieë, veral die landbou-ekonomie, versterk en help om inklusiewe, klimaatsbestande gemeenskappe te bou.

[Hon Speaker, a program about which I am especially excited, and our Minister of Agriculture will rejoice and cheer with me, is the upgrading of 50% of our gravel roads network. The first phase of this project focuses on the improvement and upgrading of 5%, or 1 200 kilometres of this network. Along with my colleague, we and the agricultural sector as a whole, are going into partnership with especially farmers and communities to identify and prioritize key routes to execute this important enterprise. These improvements will not only include better access, but also strengthen local economies, especially the agriculture economy, and help to build inclusive, climate resilient communities.]

But more specifically, our key goals with this 50% are to:

- Ensure that every household, school, clinic, and business in targeted areas can be reached reliably and safely, in any weather, at any time;
- Lay the groundwork for future growth corridors, ensuring housing developments can happen, and integrated service delivery;
- Use these roads, construction and maintenance as a platform for employment, contractor development, and technical up-skilling,

especially for our youth and SMMEs;

- Build roads that last, with drainage, erosion control, and green design principles built in;
- Reduce inequality by improving connectivity between historically underserved areas and the urban economy;
- Position roads as the first step in attracting further private and public sector investment, in housing, retail, transport, tourism, and logistics.

Again, we are investing heavily in our Transport Infrastructure because the broader social and economic impact is shaping a future Western Cape that will be rich with opportunity; that promotes dignity and well-being, while also creating prosperous communities at the same time.

Hon Speaker, in terms of major procurements for this financial year, there are a total of 360 infrastructure projects at a value of R5.3 billion, of which 36 are high-value projects, at R4 billion.

- 4.37% of these projects are human settlements projects;
- 16.95% of these are health infrastructure projects;
- 23.81% are construction projects;
- 54.51% are maintenance projects.

Hon Speaker, as I conclude, I cannot fail to mention my Department's Corporate Social Investment efforts. What started out as 67 minutes on Mandela Day last year has now become almost institutionalised across our

entire Department. This initiative includes the donation of laptops, furniture, care packages, and much, much more, and I am proud to say to this House, hon Speaker, that this initiative is driven by our staff, many of whom give monthly donations out of their own pockets. That is how we are committed to this cause. [Interjection.] and I want to record that we should all thank them today for showing and bringing to life our Government's caring component. They really make me proud, they should make all of us proud, and I have invited a key team who go, they do not ask any overtime, Premier, do they do it over weekends even, to transport all of the stuff, to put up all the laptops and mobile facilities.

Chair, I want them to stand up, it is Wayne Amsterdam. †Op staan. [Stand up.] Glenville Naidoo, Chadley Brown, Brian de Wee, Mogamat Cooper, Dillin Golden and Yazeed Naidoo. Again Premier, they do not ask overtime, they do it out of their own pockets, and many a times they are the last people to leave afterwards. So please give them a hand of applause. [Applause]

We have managed to change the way Cloetesville functions. We have managed the way Malibu High School functions. We have assisted Mamre Primary, Pieter Langeveldt, Shiloh School, Soneike High School and Vergenoegd Primary. We have handed over in total 52 laptops, 79 desks and 93 office furniture items. But, hon Speaker, this actually goes beyond our mandate; it actually goes beyond politics and race. It speaks to what really matters, and that is who we as the Western Cape Department of Infrastructure are. Our efforts go beyond bricks and mortar, beyond roads and bridges.

Hon Speaker, I also want to thank my Head of Department, Advocate Chantal Smith, her team of DDGs and every official who actually came to listen to the Budget speech today, because they have made this Budget possible, but also, I am aware that once they leave here they will ensure that they jump straight into action with the implementation part of this Budget.

To my team in the Ministry under the leadership of Carmen Hartnick, †sy sit ook daarbo in blou, [she sits up there in blue,] thank you for aligning my vision with the work our Department does. I know it is tough work, †en ek is nie ‘n maklike mens somtyds nie [and I’m not an easy person sometimes,] but your efforts do not go unnoticed. I also want to thank my own family who are willing to offer me up to serve the people of the Western Cape, as I take my Oaths of Office very seriously.

†Maar laastens, die mense van die Wes-Kaap. Ek het vroeër verwys na vennootskap. Julle is die vennoot waar rondom dit alles wentel, en ons kan dit nie sonder julle doen nie, daarom is hierdie eintlik julle begroting. [But finally, the people of the Western Cape. I earlier referred to partnership. You are the partner around which it all centres, and we cannot do it without you, therefore this is actually your Budget.] Thank you to the people of the Western Cape for taking, and will be taking our hands, and to ensure that you help us shape our future together. Thank you very much.

† ‘n AGB LID: Hoor, hoor!

[An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!]

†Die SPEAKER: Baie dankie aan die agb Minister. [The SPEAKER: Thank you to the hon Minister.] Before I recognise the hon Lekker, can I just get an indication if you need the podium? In that case I recognise the hon Lekker.

An HON MEMBER: Excellent speech, [Inaudible.] support.

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): Thank you, hon Speaker. Today I rise not just in opposition, but in defiance against a Budget that is a symphony of betrayal [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Wow!

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): ... a manifesto of neglect and a blueprint for exclusion. The ANC rejects this Budget with the full force of our conviction, for it is a Budget that abandons the poor, enriches the privileged, and exposes the DA's true agenda to govern, not for all, but for a selected few. [Interjection.] At the helm of this sinking ship is MEC Simmers, a leader so weak, so devoid of vision; and his very presence in this role is an insult to the people of this province.

Under his watch the Department of Infrastructure has become a monument of incompetence. [Interjection.] While the MEC enjoys the life of leafy suburbs paid for by the very taxpayers he fails, the people of informal settlements

drown in squalor. Their suffering is documented in the Department's own report, yet it is not in its Budget. Hon Speaker, before us we have a Budget of broken promises and systemic exclusion.

Let us speak about what this Budget really means. The DA talks big numbers, the R30,9 billion of Infrastructure, but yet it does not tell you where this money actually goes. The truth is that over 90% of the Western Cape Education Budget's maintenance budget goes to White owned companies. What does that mean for Black businesses? It means they are locked out, it means they are given empty promises while the real opportunities go to those who are already wealthy. This is not an accident; this is the DA's plan in an economic system that keeps Black entrepreneurs poor, while White businesses get richer. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: I do not understand it.

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): The crisis does not end there. The demand for housing is growing while the Department fails to deliver. The housing backlog in this province has grown to 620 000 families. [Interjection.]

This is not just a number, that is 620 000 families living in shacks whilst you are staying in the leafy suburbs, hon member, ... [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes, [Inaudible.]

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): ... in overcrowded homes with no hope for a better life. Under the ANC Government we delivered 30 000 opportunities every year, but under the DA that number has dropped to less than 10 000 a year. [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): Even worst, this Government failed to spend R300 million meant for housing, money that could have built 1 149 homes for our people. [Interjection.] That money was lost because the DA does not care about the future of the poor people. [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): They would rather let funds go to waste than build houses for those who need them the most. [Interjection.] The man in charge is MEC Simmers. Under his leadership the Department of Infrastructure has become a place where money is misused while our people suffer. Millions meant for housing are being spent on private security. Am I lying? [Interjection.] From fencing empty land and protecting vacant rental disowned houses by this Department. Am I lying?

An HON MEMBER: It is true.

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): Millions are spent on legal battles in the Tafelberg

site, meant to keep poor people out of the City centre. [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): Indeed. Meanwhile, families in Silvertown and Ceres wait year after year for their homes they were promised. Cynthia Bless and her disabled son are still waiting for a room. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: [Inaudible.]... Indeed, yes.

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): It has been over five years after their subsidy was approved. There is no urgency, no plan and no shame. The MEC sits in his comfortable office while mothers and children sleep in the cold. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Hey!

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): Hon Speaker, all the delays and all the failures of this Department are blamed on civil unrest, construction mafia and on extortion. [Interjection.] The DA loves to shift blame for the problems in this province, but what are they doing to fix it, nothing. In this Provincial Government they have spent millions protecting farms. Why can't they protect construction sites? Why can't they make sure that workers are safe and projects are completed? [Interjection.] The truth is that the DA does not care about stopping crime in our communities; they only care about making

clumsy, lazy, lame excuses. [Interjection.]

Lest we forget, it is the same DA Government that started extortion and have sustained it through awarding lucrative tenders to companies with clear links to gangs, to whoever that ask now “what?” Go back to the pictures of the former MEC Daniel Plato sitting with a gangster at McDonald’s Adderley Street. The DA’s own studies showed that affordable housing could be built there ... [Interjection.] ...but instead of building houses for the poor, the DA is giving the land to the Department of Social Development. Why, because they do not want working class people in Sea Point and around other places to be given any opportunities, they want Cape Town to be a city for the rich. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): A place where Black families are pushed to the edges, far from the jobs, far from opportunities, and far from any chance at a better life. [Interjection.] The DA’s own vision for the Western Cape is clear. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: It is double standards.

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): It is the province where the rich live in comfort while the poor struggle to survive. Transport costs keep rising, rent is unaffordable, electricity prices are crushing families, even the middle class is

buckling under the weight of the DA's policies. This is not an accident, it is by design. [Interjection.]

The ANC rejects that it is anti [Interjection.] †Julle maak raas, man. [Gelag.] [You are noisy, man. [Laughter.]]

The SPEAKER: Order members! Hon member Lekker, speak to me.

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): This is not an accident, but it is by design. The ANC rejects a budget that is anti-people and anti-poor. We reject a budget that exiles the working class to the outskirts of the City, far from the jobs, good schools and dignity. We reject a budget that feeds White owned monopolies while starving Black entrepreneurs. We reject a budget that prioritises MEC Simmer's comfort over the cries of the homeless. [Interjection.] Hon Speaker, today I stand before you with a heavy heart speaking in simple words so that every grandmother in Philippi, every unemployed father in Gugulethu, and every child studying by candlelight in an informal settlement can understand the terrible truth that this Budget is a true betrayal of the poor by the DA Government.

As the cold winter winds begin to blow our people are preparing for their annual suffering. In just a few weeks mothers will once again be scooping dirty water out of their shacks. Elderly people will be carried through flooded streets on the back of volunteers, while families will spend months sleeping on a hard floor of community halls; and what is the DA Government doing to

help, they are cutting the money that should be used to protect the people. The facts are clear, hon Speaker, for all to see. The DA has taken R964 million from the Budget that should be helping our communities. They failed to spend R300 million of conditional grants, which is why the grant allocation for upgrading informal settlements has been slashed by 14% at the very moment when we need it the most.

This is not an accident, this is the DA showing us who they really care about, and it is not you, the poor and the working class of this project. Right now in the very building where we are supposed to hold the Executive to account, the DA cannot even fix simple problems like internet connection, the lifts that are not working; our staff on the 4th floor cannot print or scan because there are no networking points. This is due to shoddy workmanship of contractors recruited by this Department. The same contractors who failed to do their job properly here, are the ones supposed to build our houses and fix your communities. If they cannot repair an office, how can we trust them to protect our people from winter floods? [Interjection.]

The ANC says enough is enough; we demand that the DA Government gives back every cent they have taken from the poor. We demand an emergency plan to prepare for winter that actually works. We demand to see where the R1 billion in the Provincial Revenue Fund is really going. We demand that the failing contractors who keep getting rich while our people suffer be fired immediately. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: [Inaudible.]... budget.

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): To all those shivering in damp shacks tonight, to those dreading the coming rains, to those who have lost hope, hear me clearly, the ANC sees your suffering, we share your anger and we will never stop fighting for you. This heartless Budget must be rejected because it shows that the DA cares more about the potholes in rich suburbs ... [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): ... than about our children drowning in the township floods. Together united we will force the DA to listen. Together we will build a Western Cape that works for all its people, not just the rich few. The power to change our future lies in your hands. Hon Speaker, I must speak directly to our colleagues in the Patriotic Alliance and Al Jama-Ah through you. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: They are not here.

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): Week after week we have watched their presence through a virtual platform ... [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): ... it shows [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yeah, pity.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Ms P Z LEKKER (ANC): We have watched you stand with the DA in committees, in Sittings and now in supporting this poor Budget. Every time you vote with the DA, you betray the very people who put you here ... [Interjection.] ... the working class, the poor, the forgotten communities who believed you would fight for them. This Budget cuts funding for informal settlement, slashes housing programmes and abandons our people to suffer through another winter of floods and misery. If you support it, you are not making a political choice; you are signing your names to the suffering of thousands. The choice is yours. [Interjection.] Stand with the poor or stand exposed as traitors to the struggle. [Interjection.]

The ANC rejects this anti-poor Budget. Hon Speaker, this Budget is not just a failure, it is an affront, it is a declaration that the DA cares more for potholes in the wealthy suburbs, than the poor people sleeping in shacks. To the people of the Western Cape, the ANC sees you, we fight for you, we reject this Budget, and we will not rest. I thank you. [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Lekker. Hon members, the next Speaker is hon Petrus, he is on the virtual platform. Hon Petrus, I recognise

you.

Mr B PETRUS (PA): Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Speaker, I greet you, the Premier, colleagues, and the people of the Western Cape. I am speaking on behalf of the Patriotic Alliance. During our different debates and discussions we emphasised the importance of delivery of quality infrastructure that will enable economic growth opportunities and job creation. We believe in the empowerment of communities and upcoming businesses, where we roll out infrastructure projects.

†Agb Speaker, hier praat ons nie net van algemene werk en subkontraheurs nie, maar van volwaardige spesialiskontraheurs en hoofkontraheurs. Dit is tog immers ons mense wat die werk verrig. Baie van ons mense word uitgehou omdat hulle in baie gevalle nie toegang het op [Onduidelik] en finansies nie weens historiese diskriminasie, verwys na as deel van die nalatenskap.

[Hon Speaker, here we not only speak of general work and subcontractors, but of qualified specialist contractors and chief contractors. It is after all our people doing the work. Many of our people are kept out because in many cases they do not have access to [Inaudible] and finances due to historical discrimination, referred to as part of the heritage.]

Hon Speaker, we cannot roll out housing projects without supporting services, like clinics, police stations, parks, schools; and name it, human settlements. The PA supports a holistic human settlements approach.

†In groot ontwikkelende woongebiede soos Pacaltsdorp en Thembaletu, is ons mense vasgevang in verkeersopeenhopings weens net een toegangspad per gebied. Daar is nog woongebiede wat hieronder ly. Ons doen 'n beroep op die agb Minister Simmers om dringend te kyk na alternatiewe roetes waar nodig.

[In large developing suburbs like Pacaltsdorp and Thembaletu, our people are caught up in traffic jams due to only one access road per area. There are more suburbs suffering because of this. We appeal to the hon Minister Simmers to urgently look at alternative routes we needed.]

If extortion has a negative impact on the completion of a project, what is the plan and amount of funding that we budgeted to counter it? We must create more opportunities for people to participate legally in the system, and we must stop making it difficult for our people to participate. Hon Speaker, we have many concerns regarding this Budget Vote, but we support it. I thank you.

† 'n AGB LID: Hoor, hoor!

[An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, to the hon Petrus. I now recognise the hon Lithakong who is also on the virtual platform. Hon Lithakong? For the third time, hon Lithakong? Hon Marais, is that a point of order?

Mr G P MARAIS (FFP): Hon Speaker, I was thinking in the absence of the

hon Ms Lithakong, the hon member, whether the Minister is prepared to take a question from the Freedom Front Plus? [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Hon member that is not allowed in terms of the Rules. I follow a Speakers' List. Had you been on the Speakers' List, then I would have allowed you an opportunity, but you are not, and the hon Minister is not on the floor.

Mr G P MARAIS (FFP): Hon Speaker, I was under the impression that last week, I think it was hon member Stoffel who asked a question and she was not on the Speaker's List, to the hon Minister who spoke on the day.

The SPEAKER: Hon Marais, I have already ruled. The reality of the matter is the Minister is also not on the floor. So you cannot ask a member that is not on the floor a question. The next, the person on the floor should have been hon Lithakong and hon Lithakong is not available, so I move on and I recognise the hon Herron who is also on the virtual platform.

Mr B N HERRON (GOOD): Hon Speaker, thank you. Budgets are political statements, they reveal priorities, values, and who truly benefits from public spending, and the Western Cape's R9,8 billion Infrastructure Budget for 2025 should be a catalyst for transformation, yet it feels more like a betrayal of those who need it most. R2,2 billion is allocated for Human Settlements Infrastructure for the 2025 year, but the track record of this Government's housing delivery is shocking, and is the cause of the Department losing grant

funding, R500 million in 2023, and now R300 million in 2024. BNG housing has collapsed from 8 038 units in 2019, 6 247 in 2020, 6 191 in 2021, 5 380 in 2022 and 4 998 in 2023.

We welcome the hon Minister's announcement of housing projects in the inner city, but this Government is a government of announcements. The hon Minister is also aware that these sites were identified and announced for development over a decade ago ... [Interjection.] [Laughter.] ... and now they are announced again as if they are something new. The announcement should not follow the pattern of the Mayor of Cape Town that is announcing the release of public land for housing development, yet not a single housing development has commenced on any site announced. Also the hon Minister failed to say what portion of these developments would accommodate social and affordable housing residents.

The Transport Infrastructure Budget stands at R4,6 billion, yet investment continuously favours well developed urban centres, while historically underserved areas are left waiting for long overdue road upgrades. Instead of addressing these failures, the Department of Infrastructure has a reducing Budget over the MTEF, which becomes more and more suspicious when we see an increase in the reliance on private investment for public infrastructure. A R200 billion pipeline of bankable projects sounds fantastic, but what does that mean for our taxpayers? Private investors expect returns on their investments [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Herron, your time has expired, please conclude your sentence.

Mr B N HERRON (GOOD): Thank you. Private investors expect returns on their investments which could lead to sweeping privatisation. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I now recognise the hon Wessels.

Mr D J WESSELS (DA): Good morning, hon Speaker, members of the House and residents of the Western Cape. Hon Speaker, before I proceed with the matter at hand, allow me to extend heartfelt congratulations and thanks to the Minister of Finance, the hon Minister Deidré Baartman, for delivering a Budget that not only structures and is forward thinking, but is also grounded in the realities of our people. It is a Budget that will unlock opportunity, empower communities, and build resilience into the heart of the province's development. Hon Speaker, in many ways this Budget represents the cycle of life, an ever renewing process of planning, building, growing, and reinvesting; and it is through this cycle that we plant the seeds of prosperity, not just for today but also for the decades to come.

In contrast, hon Speaker, while the ANC and its partners appear to be dancing to the tune of a budget that will deepen the struggles of ordinary South Africans, most notably through the 1% VAT increase over the next two years, the DA will remain steadfast in its focus on delivery, efficiency, and long term sustainability. As the hon member Nkondlo joked last week, perhaps a

department of clowns should be open to accommodate some of the performances we have seen by the ANC at a national level, but in the Western Cape, hon Speaker, we will govern with intent, and we will govern with purpose, and the Vote 10 of the Infrastructure Budget is proof of that.

Hon Speaker, in the 2025/2026 Infrastructure allocation for Vote 10, R9,82 billion is allocated. This is a strong commitment for growth. In total, the Department of Infrastructure will oversee more than R23 billion in projects across the MTEF. The Western Cape Infrastructure programme remains one of the largest and most ambitious in the country. Hon Speaker, infrastructure is the foundation upon which opportunity is built. Every road we pave, every bridge we raise, every clinic or housing development we complete, it is not just infrastructure, it is a scaffolding of hope and human development.

Hon Speaker, on the road network for example in the 2025/2026 financial year, over R11 billion is being invested into transport of roads and infrastructure. Roads are not just for movement, they are the arteries for economic growth; and the Malmesbury Bypass, one of the flagship projects, will not only reduce traffic congestion, but boost logistics, commercial access and regional connectivity.

Likewise the upgrade of the Van Schoorsdrift Road is unlocking access to farms, communities, businesses, and remote areas. These are not just roads, they are the gateways to opportunity, and every kilometre of road we build

creates jobs, it attracts investments and it improves the movement of goods and people, they allow farmworkers to get to pack houses, children to get to schools, and entrepreneurs to reach markets.

Hon Speaker, this Government is often unfairly criticised for being anti-poor or focused on only improving the so-called leafy suburbs, however this narrative simply does not hold up to the facts. Through development of grants in informal settlement upgrades, we are investing directly to where it matters most, into the communities that need it most, and the R2,2 billion allocation for the upgrading of informal settlements, including areas such as Thembaletu, Silvertown, Vredendal Phase 8, Caledon, Villiersdorp, and the N2 Gateway TRAs, ensures that the residents gain access to these essential services, like water, electricity, sanitation and proper housing. These investments lay the foundation for dignity, for stability, for opportunity, for empowering the residents to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the broader cycle of the development and prosperity.

Hon Speaker, to ensure longevity and quality, we are embracing technology. The Department is investing over R87 million in digital tools, such as drone based assessments, digital twin modelling, the Smart Asset Management system, this is often, this is how modern provinces operate, we are data informed and we are future ready. In addition, hon Speaker, the Department will be investing into modern infrastructure management, through the emerged platform, an intelligent asset tracking system backed by over R75 million in funding. This ensures that every asset that is built is tracked,

it is maintained, and it is used optimally. We are even piloting AI tools to detect wear and tear, before major faults occur.

But infrastructure is not just about building things, it is about empowering people, therefore, hon Speaker, we are investing R246 million over the MTEF, in community based projects and programmes. This includes over 51 million into the Masakhi'iSizwe Bursary programme that will help our young engineers, our quantity surveyors, and build an environment for professionals in the sector. Over almost R15 million into artisan development, that will create skilled tradesmen who can maintain and grow our infrastructure base.

Hon Speaker, we are investing over R168 for enterprise development. This will help small contractors and emerging businesses to become sustainable partners in the Infrastructure economy. In line with the Growth for Jobs strategy, the Department through the EPWP, the Department will spend over R77 million to ensure that every job is tied to skills development. These are not just temporary jobs we are talking about; we are talking about work readiness, about accreditation and long term participation in the Infrastructure space.

Hon Speaker, let me now turn to Human Settlements, another crucial leg of this Budget. The Western Cape is investing over R5,7 million in housing and settlements over the MTEF. We are not just building houses, we are building communities. It is in these homes that neighbourhoods – where people form their lives, where families are born, where they grow and where they

contribute to the community. For instance, hon Speaker, projects like Conradie Park, which showcases this beautifully, this is a game changer project of mixed-use affordable housing right in the urban core, with integrated schools, clinics, retail spaces, parks and public transport.

Similarly the Mountain Ridge in Paarl and George Metro Grounds, represent a new generation of housing development. At the Metro Grounds we made history by handing over houses and title deeds on the very same day. This, hon Speaker, is dignity delivered without delay. Hon Speaker, every title deed delivered is a success story in the Western Cape. Through our Title Deeds Action Plan, we have not only met, but exceeded our targets, helping hundreds of families to secure legal ownership of their houses. Hon Speaker, this is how you create generational wealth and social stability. Hon Speaker, the ANC has so much to learn from DA governance in the Western Cape. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

Mr D J WESSELS (DA): A total of 5 000 new social rental units, over the MTEF will be delivered to the people in the Western Cape [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Wow!

Mr D J WESSELS (DA): ... provided that the National Government releases the catalytic grant funding. These rental units will serve those in the gap

market, citizens who earn too much for free housing, but too little for bonded homes. Hon Speaker, Public Works also received a healthy investment, R2,493 billion, to focus on the upgrading of State facilities that will deliver public value. Hon Speaker, this includes the upgrade to children and youth care centres, the refurbishment of the Elsenburg Agricultural Laboratories, and the installation of PV and battery systems in the Government buildings to ensure energy resilience.

Hon Speaker, let us now address the elephant in every boardroom and municipality, Energy! In the Western Cape we are no longer waiting for Eskom or the National Government. We are building energy resilience from the ground up. Earlier this year we had the sod-turning for the Riversdale solar plant [Interjection.] a ground-breaking project that aims to take the whole town off-the-grid and be self-sufficient. [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D J WESSELS (DA): Last week the Department broke ground on a 9MW solar project in George, in partnership with Solar Energy Africa. [Interjection.] These projects are catalytic, they enable municipalities to stabilise, reduce cost and support local industries.

Hon Speaker, just over this weekend we heard the President of the ANC say in a speech, “business does not dictate what happens in Government.” This sounded like the perfect recipe on how to come from 57% to 40% in one

term. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

Mr D J WESSELS (DA): Hon Speaker, this is why in the Western Cape partnerships are critical with the private sector, with municipalities and with communities. Infrastructure are not built in silence, it is built through a shared vision, on shared responsibility [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear! [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D J WESSELS (DA): For Education and Health Infrastructure, hon Speaker, ... [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D J WESSELS (DA): ... the 2025/2026 Budget will provide R7 billion for Education Infrastructure, of which R3,6 billion goes to upgrades, and just over R3 billion goes to new schools and new school replacements. [Interjection.] Over R4,4 billion goes to Health Infrastructure, including over R2,8 billion for the upgrades, and R589 million for new builds, this is clinics, this is hospitals, and this is specialised facilities.

Hon Speaker, the future also lies in creative spaces; it is why we are excited about the Provincial Archives redevelopment, and the Artscape Infrastructure upgrade, both already in planning stages. These will preserve our heritage, while supporting artists, educators and entrepreneurs.

Speaking in closing let me remind us all, when we build a road, we do not just lay tar, we open an economic corridor. When we build a home, we do not just raise walls, we restore dignity, and when we build a school, we do not just create classrooms, we create futures. This Budget of R9,82 billion investment into Infrastructure is a promise to the people of the Western Cape. It is a promise that we are planting now so that future generations may harvest the fruits. This, hon Speaker, is the cycle of life, planting, growing and thriving; and we in the Western Cape will keep this cycle turning with courage, with care and with competence, and it is with this background, hon Speaker, on behalf of the DA, that I support this Budget for Infrastructure, Vote 10. Thank you very much. [Applause] [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much to the hon Wessels. [Interjection.] Order members! Hon Minister, do you need the podium for your reply? In that case, I recognise the hon Minister of Infrastructure, Minister Simmers.

†Die MINISTER VAN INFRASTRUKTUUR: Dankie, agb Speaker, [The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: Thank you, hon Speaker,] and thank you to all the members for their inputs. I will actually start with the party that is busy dying in the Western Cape, it is called the ANC, you went from

12 [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Minister, please take your seat. Hon Marais.

Mr G P MARAIS (FFP): Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Speaker, now that the hon Ministers is on the floor, I wanted to know if he would be willing to take a question from the Freedom Front Plus? Thank you. [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order members! Order! Hon members! Hon Minister, are you prepared to take a question?

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: Hon Speaker, actually I cannot speak to parties that are busy dying at the moment, we just welcome [Interjection.] [Inaudible.]

An HON MEMBER: Just say yes or no.

The SPEAKER: Hon Minister, can you just answer the [Interjection.]

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: No.

An HON MEMBER: Just say no!

The SPEAKER: Hon Marais, the hon Minister is not prepared to take a question, and for that reason I will not allow it. Thank you.

Mr G P MARAIS (FFP): Thank you, hon Speaker, it is a pity.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Hon Minister, you may continue.
[Interjection.]

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: Hon Speaker, as I was saying I will start with the party that is dying the quickest in our province, it is called the ANC, you have gone from 12 to 8, but why have you been declining and why will you continue declining [Interjection.] and it is a pity that the hon Lekker was supposed to now be the messenger of her party, because what she said does not correlate to who she actually is, hon Speaker.

Hon Speaker, why do I say so? Napoleon Bonaparte once said that you must never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake. For the last 16 years the African National Congress has slowly but surely been making one error after the other. That is why you will continue dying as a party, that is why you do not have relevance in this province [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: Why, because you keep on harping on the same tune which does not actually buy or gain you votes, it is costing you more votes. [Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Minister, please take your seat. Hon members on my left hand side, I have allowed interjection and heckling, because that is the nature of Parliament and nature of debate and I will never stifle the freedom of speech and you are right to have your voice heard, but this constant commentary and direct engagement with the hon Minister is not allowed. You had an opportunity to make your submissions during the debate if you were on the Speaker's List. If you are not on the Speakers' List – it is now the hon Minister's opportunity to respond to those inputs made. If you have any additional comments to be made after this Vote, I am going to suspend for two minutes and you can engage the hon Minister outside of the Chamber. Hon Minister, you may continue.

The MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE: Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Speaker, the hon member says that my Department does not have vision because it has a leader that has no vision, but I think the ANC is stuck without a vision for more than 30 years now, and why do I differ with the member. Hon member, there is the Western Cape Framework 2050 which is the vision statement. Then they go even further, because the ANC can only dream, but you cannot implement, it works different in this Province, we crafted a strategy document which outlines the frameworks and the governance structure of making the vision become a reality. Then we took it a step further, it is called the implementation plan, or the Singular Pipeline, if you listened to my speech.

Hon Speaker, through you to the hon member, this speaks of a department

that has a leader or leadership that has a vision that wants to implement and wants to accelerate. It is not my mistake if your party is stuck in reverse gear, you will continue being stuck in reverse gear until 2029, when you will lose even more relevance in this province. [Interjection.]

You referred to security upgrades, hon member, if your party among others did not encourage land invasion, I would not have the need to spend human settlement grants in protecting land, in protecting buildings. [Interjection.] So I will encourage you as a dying party, do not drag your communities down with you, hon Speaker, stop encouraging land invasions, then I will not need to spend money on safety, on security [Inaudible.] [Applause] [Interjection.]

Then honourable, in terms of urgency, the Budget and the plan I have tabled today, hon Speaker, speaks to a province that accepts two things. I do not need to be heavily reliant on the National Government anymore, because they do not show urgency, they do not keep pace with what's happening on the ground, which is why the call for partnership with the private sector and investors. Because if we are to wait for your party at a National level, †dan gaan ons nêrens kom in realiteit nie. [Tussenwerpsel.] [then we are not going to get anywhere in reality. [Interjection.]]

You referred to how many housing opportunities we deliver per year vs. when the ANC governed. Let me just remind you of your own ANC former National Minister, Tokyo Sexwale, who appeared before the Standing Committee, the National Standing Committee of Human Settlements. He was asked by one of

your own members how many funds has the ANC spent to repair houses that were built in the last decade in the Western Cape, this is when you were governing this Province, when you so-called delivered 30 000 [Interjection.]

The Western Cape Government, when the DA took over, had to spend almost R1 billion, to repair houses which your party build. We do not do quantity, give our people quality, we could have used the R1 billion to address the housing backlog even more. So, hon Speaker, quantity versus quality. †Maar daar is die waarheid want leë blikke maak die meeste geraas. [But there is the truth because empty vessels make the most noise.]

[Interjection.] Hon Speaker, I do want to thank the hon member Bazil Petrus from the PA, indeed Human Settlements needs to be encompassing all elements when you do develop settlements, which is why the Department of Infrastructure was born, to ensure that it is a holistic development, and which is what you will see when we implement projects. We are talking about Swellendam for instance, what we see there is more than one housing programme, there are also other elements built into that programme as an example. [Interjection.]

In terms of GOOD input. Through you, hon Speaker, to the hon member Herron, if you listened to my speech and you will get a copy I believe after this, I would like you to read how I have broken down what is bankable, which means its implementation ready, it is going to bank, it is going out to tender, it has gone through all its processes, which I need to respect.

[Interjection.] Some of those processes are in the ambit of Local Government; I need to respect their time frames. So you will see in each of those projects that are bankable, that are going to market in this calendar year, in each one of those projects a percentage has been allocated for affordable and social housing. So please do look up the numbers, or you can write me a question and I will respond with the exact data for you.

In conclusion, hon Speaker, I do want to thank now our Standing Committee Chairperson. Our Department is a very, very, big department. †Jy moet die pyp nou lekker kan rook om die ding reg te verstaan, is die Afrikaans [You must be able to smoke the pipe properly to understand the thing right, is the Afrikaans] saying, and this is a very, very big Department. I do want to thank our Standing Committee Chairperson and their members, even the Opposition members that serve on there, who are really going out of their way to understand this Department, to understand this Budget, to understand the vision, to understand the strategy, and to understand, through you, hon Speaker, the implementation of where we are heading into the future. When I say shaping our future together, it even includes the Opposition in this House, who want to contribute constructively to where this DA-governed Western Cape is going. It is up to you if you want to walk this journey with us or if you want to lose even more relevance within our province.

To the members of the Diplomatic Corps and the Consular Corps, thank you for attending our session. To all of our visitors, Mayors, MAYCO members, our staff, thank you for being here, and to ensure that our Opposition, †wat

baie te sê het, [who has plenty to say, you must never forget this day, seeing that] you say we do not have a vision, shaping our future, put it on your desk, remember this day, because this day we were busy shaping the history and the future of the Western Cape. Thank you very much, hon Speaker. [Applause]

The SPEAKER: Thank you, hon members, thank you to the hon Minister. Hon members, that concludes the Debate on this Vote. I will now adjourn or suspend the House, not adjourn the House, I wish. We have got a long way ahead, hon members. We are going to suspend the House for two minutes to allow the guests of Minister Simmers to exit the Chamber, and to allow the guests of Minister Wenger to enter. The House is suspended.

The SPEAKER: Please be seated. Thank you very much. Hon Minister, before I recognise you, can I just get an indication if you are ready and if all your guests have arrived?

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: [Inaudible] new

The SPEAKER: In that case I am going to ask the Secretary to read the Second Order of the Day.

The SECRETARY: Debate on Vote 6: Health and Wellness – Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 2–2025]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I recognise the hon Minister of

Health and Wellness, the hon Minister Wenger. [Applause]

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: Thank you, hon Speaker, hon Premier, Cabinet Ministers, hon Chief Whip, hon Leader of the Opposition, hon members of this House, members of the Consular Corps, special guests, and most importantly residents of the Western Cape. It is my privilege to table the 2025/2026 Budget for the Department of Health and Wellness, a R32 billion Budget that marks the beginning of a new chapter, a chapter shaped by the lessons of the past, grounded in the reality of the present, and full of the possibility for the future.

To say our healthcare system has been under pressure would be an understatement. Since 2020, our health heroes have faced extraordinary challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic tested every part of our system, and just as recovery began, austerity followed. Posts were frozen, the Goods and Services budgets were tightened, and yet our dedicated teams ensured that not a single facility ran out of essential supplies.

We must thank our colleagues in the Provincial Treasury for their support during these difficult times. With fewer staff bearing the same burdens, waiting times, and the demand, especially in emergency centres increasing, and yet across our province, our doctors, nurses, and frontline workers continued to show up for our mothers, fathers, our children, our grandparents, our friends, and our neighbours. They carried us through a difficult chapter with heart and with humility. This speech and this Budget is

a tribute to them, our health heroes, who wrote this last chapter with courage.

Today, hon Speaker, we turn that page. This Budget is more than a financial plan, it is a statement of intent, it signals the start of a more hopeful, stabilised and resilient health system. We have unfrozen critical posts, enabling facilities to once again recruit the people needed to deliver care with quality and with compassion. This is the first step in restoring strength to our system. Over the medium-term we are investing over R100 billion to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare. We do this because we believe every resident of the Western Cape deserves the opportunity to write their own story, free from the burden of preventable illness, and supported in moments of need. For the 2025/2026 financial year we have allocated a total of R32 billion, for the 2026/2027 financial year, R33 billion, and for the 2027/2028 R34,8 billion.

More than 75% of the province's 7,7 million people rely on our public healthcare system. This is delivered through 561 service points across the province, with over 25 million patient contacts last year. This is a vast and dynamic system and every cent of this Budget has been planned with purpose, to maximise our impact for the greatest number of people. Our vision is to be a provincial public health system that is run well, and creates well-being opportunities for you, our residents, to live a long, healthy, meaningful and dignified life. At its core is our commitment to walking the life journey with every resident of the Western Cape. We will focus on ensuring that our children start well, our communities live well, and our elderly age well. This

holistic approach reflects our understanding that health and wellness are lifelong pursuits that require tailored interventions at every stage of life.

In this year's Budget we are prioritising our people and restoring critical staff. This requires a larger allocation towards employee compensation, with a R60,2 billion allocated over the medium-term. This however will place strain on our Goods and Services Budget, which is already underfunded and vulnerable to rising medical inflation. Over R30 billion has been allocated to goods and services over the medium-term. Balancing these demands is difficult but essential to delivering care without compromise.

Hon Speaker, there are also challenges beyond our immediate control, external shocks that continue to shape our fiscal environment. The termination of healthcare funding from the United States as a result of policy changes there, has ended a G2G agreement of an estimated R30 million, and terminated approximately R376 million to NPO partners in the broader HIV Aids Healthcare Ecosystem. While the Department is exploring what can be absorbed, what can be wound down, or continued within our constraints, there will be knock-on effects.

Hon Speaker, I must say the support that we have received through PEPFAR and the USAID has helped us make significant progress in the fight against HIV. According to a recent Human Sciences Research Council Report, the Western Cape has the lowest HIV prevalence in the country. We have also made significant progress in the fight against TB, however much more work

needs to be done. I am grateful for the years of partnership between ourselves and the US, and I think that we can demonstrate that the evidence based utilisation of these funds, impacted not only local health outcomes, but contributed to global health security and research.

Our long term strategy to reduce reliance on donor funding for core services has helped shield some of our most vulnerable services from disruption. Over the NTEF, in the District Health Services programme, we have allocated R6,3 billion to HIV and Aids, and in the Provincial Hospital Services programme we have allocated more than R1,3 billion to TB hospitals. Additional funds are also spent on TB and HIV from the general Budget.

But hon Speaker, we do not do this alone. Our efforts align with the broader vision of the Western Cape Government to build an educated, healthy and caring society. In the next chapter we build on that foundation boldly and deliberately. In my 10 months with the Department, I have seen both the complexity of the system and the immense care woven through it. I have also listened. I have travelled the length and breadth of the province and I have heard the concerns of residents and the hopes of families.

That is why in this term I will focus on:

- Expanding access to quality healthcare, which can be achieved through collaboration with the private sector;
- Accelerating our capital build programme so that we can build new

hospitals and clinics and improve existing facilities;

- Enhancing our role in violence prevention as part of the Western Cape Safety Plan;
- Reducing malnutrition in children to ensure that every child can start well.

Hon Speaker, in South Africa today, 27% of children under 5 are stunted, a figure that is as alarming as it is heart-breaking. In the Western Cape we have made encouraging progress reducing our stunting rate by 5,4% over the last six years, and today our provincial rate stands at 17,5%. This is a positive step towards our goal of reducing stunting to 10% by 2030, but the truth is, 17,3% is a most shocking statistic. We know how much more needs to be done and we know we cannot afford to lose momentum, because when a child is stunted, their potential is stunted.

We cannot wait. Every day we delay addressing malnutrition, we rob our province and our country of its gracious assets, our people. If left unchecked, the combined cost of stunting and obesity in the Western Cape could reach a staggering R947 billion in lost economic potential by 2040. These children are more likely to face developmental delays, to struggle at school, to drop out early, to live in poverty and suffer from chronic illnesses later in life. That is why I am especially proud to announce today a bold new pilot project that we will launch in partnership with the DG Murray Trust and the Department of the Premier. This initiative will target underweight pregnant mothers and low birth weight babies, because, hon Speaker, low birth weight

babies are three times more likely to become stunted. We are also currently in discussion with potential retail partners to support the delivery mechanisms for this pilot.

I would like to welcome the Deputy CEO of the DG Murray Trust here today, Ms Kentse Radebe. [Applause] On behalf of this Government, thank you for your continued partnership and support in this crucial policy area. The best way to prevent stunting is to address it before it begins, starting with maternal health and nutrition, and so together we are taking action.

Later this year we will launch a pilot project in Worcester, Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain, aimed at ensuring that these women and their young ones have a nutritious diet. Mothers will receive monthly support, from their first antenatal visit until their baby turns 6 months old, to offer food security and diversify diets to ensure their babies receive the nutrition they need.

But, hon Speaker, this support alone is not enough; they need care and connection. That is why each mother in the pilot will also receive concentrated care from specially trained community health workers. These workers will offer an enhanced care package, including growth monitoring, maternal and child health services, mental health support, breastfeeding counselling, and more. It is a holistic intervention, one that meets mothers where they are and walks alongside them through the most critical months of their baby's lives. The pilot will run until October 2026, and if successful will provide proof of concept we need to secure public funding and expand

the programme in future budget cycles.

Hon Speaker, this is about changing the trajectory of a child's life. It is about giving every baby the chance to start well and it is part of building a healthier Western Cape. To ensure our residents can live well, we will continue to strengthen the violence prevention efforts. Currently we have 12 dedicated safety coordinators, seven in the Metro and five in rural communities. They are working every day to prevent violence before it happens. Their focus is on family strengthening, building youth resilience and reducing substance harms, which we know are vital interventions to stop violence before it takes root in our communities. We are exploring how to scale up this important work so that we can deepen our impact, playing our full part in delivering on the Western Cape Safety Plan with some significant announcements to come in the second Quarter of this year, because safety is not only about law enforcement, it is about prevention, it is about health, healing and hope.

Hon Speaker, none of what we share today, none of the goals, achievements, or plans, would be possible without the people who give them life and the people who are stepping up every day. Behind every budget line there is a person, a health hero. Let me tell you about a few of them.

At Groote Schuur Hospital, Mr Ebrahim Cassiem has served for over 30 years. He has led environmental hygiene services with quiet pride and an unwavering commitment, ensuring cleaning, waste and pest control are not

only maintained, but that it excels. Under his guidance the hospital recently achieved 100% audit score for cleaning and 97% for waste management. His work, often behind the scenes, is a reminder that a safe clean hospital is as vital as any surgical theatre. Mr Cassiem, thank you very much. [Applause]

To support the essential work of administrators, we have allocated R1 billion in 2025/2026, and R3,1 billion over the MTEF.

In Matzikama, another kind of leader has stepped up, Dr Earlin Ockhuis. Let us give him a round of applause. [Applause] This is a doctor who is so much more than his title. In the face of chronic staff shortages he did not step back, he stepped up. He covered call rosters, mentored junior doctors and kept patient care going with relentless dedication. His story reminds us that leadership is not always about grand gestures, it is about consistency, compassion, and showing up. Thank you, doctor. To support district health services where heroes like Dr Ockhuis work every day, we are investing R13,2 billion this year, and R41,2 billion over the MTEF.

Now imagine meeting Athenkosi “Athie” Sobada. There we go, let us give him a round of applause. [Applause] He is an Emergency Care Practitioner whose reach extends beyond emergencies. In communities like Philippi, Langa and Nyanga, Athie builds trust, engaging with people as equals and listening before acting. For him every siren call is not just a response, but an opportunity to step up and build a resilient inclusive healthcare system from the ground up. Thank you, Athie. For our EMS services where health heroes like Athie are the first to arrive, and often the very last to leave, we have

allocated R1,4 billion in 2025/2026 and R4,5 billion over the MTEF.

Then there is Sister Janine Watson. [Applause] With three decades of service at Groote Schuur Hospital, when surgical theatres faced overwhelming pressure, and frozen posts left teams short-staffed, Sister Watson held the line. She trained, recruited, and stepped in to scrub in herself when needed. Her calm under pressure, her leadership through adversity and her unwavering standards have kept surgeries going and have saved lives. Thank you. [Applause]

To support tertiary institutions like Groote Schuur, Red Cross and Tygerberg Hospitals, we have set aside R8,6 billion in 2025/2026, and R27,2 billion over the MTEF. At the same time our regional hospitals, psychiatric and TB hospitals, and transitional care facilities, so vital for the continuity of care, will receive R5,1 billion this year and R16 billion over the MTEF. We are strengthening transitional care services and improving the link between regional hospitals, TB facilities and primary care, so that no one falls through the cracks. Our thanks to our transitional care partners who are here today.

To ensure our system is sustainable into the future, we are also investing in the next generation of healthcare professionals. R1,39 billion over the MTEF will go towards Health Sciences Training, including R211 million in bursaries, R422 million to train nurses, and R129 million for our College of Emergency Care, because the future of health depends on what we do today,

to prepare tomorrow's workforce.

Then there are people who make the healthcare system run, even when things break or the lights go out, or buildings flood. Cornel Badenhorst is one of those people. Are you here, Cornel? [Applause]

Oh, there you are. He is a technical expert with unshakable sense of purpose. He has quietly stepped up to solve problems that others could not, redesigning sewer systems, restoring failing infrastructure, and keeping facilities operating in the middle of a crisis. He is a true ambassador for ethical efficient use of public money and a reminder that not all health heroes wear scrubs. Thank you very much. [Applause]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: To back our support services and operations, we have allocated R2,15 billion over the MTEF, and as our province grows, so must our facilities. In the year ahead we will see 18 Infrastructure projects in planning, 68 moving into design or tender, and 43 handed over to contractors. 29 construction projects will be underway, including community day centres and clinics, in Ravensmead, Hornlee, Ceres and Weltevreden. Acute psychiatric units at Eerste River, Khayelitsha, and New Somerset hospitals, and major refurbishments at Alexandra, Tygerberg and Groote Schuur, including surgical theatres, emergency centres, and critical building systems. In total, Health Facilities Management will receive

a R1,39 billion in 2025/2026 and R4,4 billion over the MTEF, a 7,2% increase to support our ambitious infrastructure pipeline.

But fixed infrastructure is only one part of our mission to expand healthcare and improve access to services. Our clinics across rural areas of the Western Cape extends services to patients on farms and hard to reach areas through mobile units. These units offer preventative and chronic services to patients who live far from the nearest health facility. I am delighted to say that we are in the process of replacing all of our existing mobiles with units that were custom designed with input from our rural nurses. They will have fridges for medicine storage, generators and air conditioning, improving the experience of both the staff, and importantly, our patients. [Applause]

Hon Speaker, partnership is close to my heart and it is incredibly important to recognise our various partners. Some are in the gallery here today. Thank you for your continued support towards creating a healthier Western Cape. First to the district health councils chaired by the district mayors, thank you. To our various international partners and nations that support our work, thank you; and specifically to the Global Fund for your generous support this year. Thank you to the various trusts that support our work, including the Tygerberg Children's Trust, the Children's Hospital Trust, and the Groote Schuur Hospital Trust.

I want to specifically highlight an incredible pilot project undertaken by the Children's Hospital Trust. This project aims to strengthen care for children

who have suffered burn wounds, by upgrading infrastructure at rural facilities and additional paediatric training to provide immediate high quality care without children having to heal far away from their homes and their families. Work on this project is underway at three hospitals in the Cape Winelands, and I hope that it will eventually be expanded. To Ms Chantal Cooper from the Children's Trust, thank you so much for the wonderful work that you and your team do. Let us give them a round of applause. [Applause]

Hon Speaker, our important partnerships with our universities and higher education institutes and colleges go beyond education. It is about harnessing the expertise of our academic institutions, to shape and inform policies and craft responsive solutions to the healthcare challenges that we face. By combining research innovation and training, we are building an ecosystem that not only strengthens our healthcare system, but also uplifts communities and protects the most vulnerable. The Department also works with many NGO's and PBO's to expand access to healthcare. Last year, during an in-reach project in Beaufort West, the Department of Health worked with universities and NGO's to provide 94 cataract surgeries and 249 dental procedures.

Or for example Rotary International which has supported the Department through fundraising with equipment to enhance patient care. Stuart Hans [Inaudible] in the gallery, thank you very much for the support from Rotary. There are many other examples of organisations that work with us, innovate with us, and help us to expand access to good quality healthcare. Thank you

for your support.

[The Deputy Speaker takes the Chair.]

Hon Speaker, or Hon Deputy Speaker, this Budget is not just about allocations, it is about aspiration and it is about resilience, and it is about rewriting the story of public healthcare in the Western Cape with people at its centre. We honour the chapters that came before us, the hardship, the healing and the hope; and now with renewed energy, bold investment and unwavering focus, we are “stepping up.”

Last week I was delighted to announce the renewal of Dr Keith Cloete’s contract as Head of Department for another five years. [Applause] His continued leadership ensures stability, expertise, and a steadfast commitment to advancing high quality people-centred healthcare in our province. Thank you for your leadership, Dr Cloete; and indeed the entire TEXCO for your commitments, your leadership, and your hard work.

This next chapter that we will be writing together will be one of possibility and of progress, where a mother does not have to choose between food and care, where a baby is born into health and hope, where a nurse is no longer alone on night shift, and where infrastructure does not buckle under pressure, but rises to meet it. Let us write this chapter together, health workers, officials, partners, and residents, let us write it with courage, let us write it with compassion, let us write it with clarity of purpose so that those who

come after us will read it and will say, “here they cared.” I herewith table the 2025/2026 Budget for the Department of Health and Wellness. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Minister. I recognise, the hon Windvogel.

Ms R WINDVOGEL (ANC): Hon Speaker, hon members of the House, and most importantly the people of the province who are watching and waiting for leadership on this critical matter. The African National Congress stand before you today to reject this Budget in the strongest possible terms. This is not just a Budget that fails to meet the needs of our people; it is a Budget that abandons them in their time of greater need. At the moment when our health care system is under unprecedented strain, when our clinics and hospitals are crumbling under the weight of neglect, and when our most vulnerable citizens are being denied the basic rights to healthcare, this Government chooses to turn its back on the people it is meant to serve. The timing of this Budget could not be more critical. The health and wellness of our people are under severe threat, and yet this Government has presented us with a document that does nothing to address the crisis unfolding in our communities.

Last Tuesday I visited the Grabouw Clinic and saw for myself the struggles of our people, the struggles our people face every day. The healthcare system in Grabouw is in crisis. There is not enough staff, the buildings are falling apart, and emergency services are slow and unreliable. The clinic has 12 job openings that have not been filled for years, Minister of Health and Wellness.

Part of the building is unsafe because of structural damage, and the service patients receive is poor. †Ladismith het 'n pragtige gebou sonder personeel. [Tussenwerpsel.] [Ladismith has a beautiful building without staff. [Interjection.]]

Despite these challenges the Department's infrastructure payment and estimate have been slashed by over 20%. What does this mean about the rebuilding of the GF Jooste Hospital and other projects that were mentioned in the Budget speech? The MEC must stop making excuses and take action. We need leadership now to fix these problems. The current Budget does nothing to help the people of Grabouw. If we accept it, we are accepting long queues, broken infrastructure in our clinics, and second class healthcare for working class communities. The MEC must act immediately. Staff shortages must be fixed by hiring more workers and making sure they stay by improving their working conditions and pay.

Safety or healthcare workers, especially EMS – I see one of the EMS staff is with us today. Teams must be a priority. Emergency response times need to be faster so people get help when they need it. These problems are not just in Grabouw Hospital; like Tygerberg is also struggling with staff shortages and low morale. These people deserve better. The MEC must step up and deliver real solutions, not empty promises.

Hon Speaker, no amount of spinning will change the fact that the withdrawal of PEPFAR and US aid funding has devastating consequences for our

province. We are shocked that this Budget does not make provision to respond to the looming crisis. We were hoping to see the DA-led Government drawing more funds from the Provincial Revenue Fund and the Reserve to make up for the shortfall. Instead the Province, as has happened, the receipts from the Provincial Revenue Fund have been slashed by over 20%.

In a presentation to the Standing Committee, the Department laid bare the harsh realities we face. Financial pressures are escalating, the burden of disease is rising, and our healthcare services are buckling under the strain. We have seen outbreaks of foodborne illnesses and even rabies in seals, posing direct risks to human health. These are not isolated incidents, they are symptoms of a system in crisis, and yet instead of stepping up to address these emergencies, this Government has chosen to cut funding for the very service that could prevent such outbreaks in the first place.

This Budget fails to address the health crisis in our province, and it fails to address the warning that was clearly laid out in the Department's own Annual Report for 2024. [Interjection.] The report revealed that George Hospital was forced to close one of its four operating theatres due to so-called cost containment measures, that resulted in increased waiting times and longer delays for life saving surgeries. The same happened at Paarl Hospital where service was suspended during the last Quarter of the financial year. Tygerberg Hospital and the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital have seen such severe staff reduction that surgical operations have been drastically cut back.

These are not just hospitals; they are lifelines for entire communities. George and Paarl are regional hospitals that serve not only the immediate towns, but also the surrounding rural areas, where people have no other options for care. When these hospitals are forced to cut services, it is not just an inconvenience; it is a death sentence for those who rely on them. The situation is so dire that over 1 000 healthcare professionals, including 16 academic Heads of department, felt compelled to write an open letter to the Department. They described the devastating impact that these Budget cuts are having on our health system. These are not activists or politicians, these are the doctors, the nurses, and frontline workers, who have seen the suffering every day. They are sounding the alarm and yet this Government refuse to listen.

The Budget before us today confirms the worse, a net loss of 1 538 posts over the 2024/2025 financial year. The Department's own Annual Report acknowledges a low morale among staff. How can we expect our healthcare workers to continue providing quality care when they are overworked, underpaid, and undervalued? This is not just mismanagement; it is a betrayal of the very people who keep our health system running. TB remains one of the leading causes of death in our country, and yet this Budget allocate a mere 8,33% of Programme 4 funds to TB hospitals. With the additional loss of America's funding, our ability to trace and treat the TB patient is being severely compromised. This is not just a failure of planning; it is a failure of leadership.

The African National Congress †verwerp hierdie begroting omdat dit nie aan die mees basiese behoefte van ons mense voldoen nie. Maar hierdie begroting maak dit duidelik waar hierdie Regering se prioriteite lê, en dit is nie by die arm mense en die siekes of die kwesbares nie. Ons het 'n begroting nodig wat die dringendheid van hierdie oomblik herken. Ons het 'n begroting nodig wat befondsing aan ons klinieke en hospitale herstel. Ons het 'n begroting nodig wat ons gesondheidswerkers ondersteun en verseker dat hulle die hulpbronne het wat hulle nodig het om hulle werk te doen. Ons het 'n begroting nodig wat mense eerste plaas. Hierdie begroting doen niks van hierdie dinge nie, dit is 'n begroting wat ons mense in hulle tyd van grootste nood in die steek laat.

Ons verwerp hierdie begroting en ons sal aanhou veg vir die gesondheidstelsel wat al ons mense dien en nie net die bevoorregte paar nie. Agb Speaker, terwyl ek afsluit hoor ek die krete van ons mense wat deur die provinsie weergalm, van die stowwerige strate van Khayelitsha, tot die landelike dorpie van die Karoo. Hulle vra eenvoudige vrae wat hierdie DA-regering nie kan antwoord nie. Wie sal vir ons opstaan? Waarom moet ons ly vir die DA se leuens? Wanneer sal ons klinieke medisyne kry? Hoekom moet ons in lang lyne wag? [rejects this Budget as it does not adhere to the most basic need of our people. But this Budget makes it clear where this Government's priorities lie, and it is not with the poor people and the sick or the vulnerable. We need a budget that recognises the urgency of this moment. We need a budget that reinstates the funding of our clinics and hospitals. We need a budget that supports our health care workers and ensures that they

have the resources that they require to do their work. We need a budget that places people first. This Budget does none of these things, it is a budget that deserts our people in their time of greatest need.

We reject this Budget and will continue to fight for the health system serving all our people and not just the privileged few. Hon Speaker, while I conclude I hear the cries of our people resounding through the province, from the dusty streets of Khayelitsha, to the rural little towns of the Karoo. They ask simple questions that this DA Government cannot answer. Who will stand up for us? Why must we suffer for the DA's lies? When will our clinic receive medicine? Why do we have to wait in long queues?] To those, I want you to know, the Lord is your shade at your right hand, the sun will not harm you by the day, nor the moon by the night.

†Die ANC het hierdie krete gehoor, dit is hoekom ons die *NHI* in wetgewing aangeneem het, om kwaliteitsgesondheid vir al ons mense te waarborg, ryk en arm. Maar wat doen die DA? Hulle veg teen hierdie *NHI* met tand en mag omdat hulle hoop dat die Premier nie langs 'n plaaswerker gaan lê in 'n hospitaal nie. Hulle het 'n blinde oog gedraai wanneer arm mense ly en sterf in vervalle hospitale. Hulle wil liever voor hulle wit base buig as om vir ons swart gemeenskappe op te staan. Die tyd vir verskonings is verby.

Ons boodskappe is duidelik, ons tree toe wanneer ander terugtrek. Ons verwerp hierdie wrede begroting wat ons mense in die steek laat. Ons sal aanhou veg, klinieke met medisyne in elke gemeenskap, hospitale met genoeg

dokters en verpleegsters, ambulanse wat betyds aankom, *NHI* vir almal, geen uitsondering nie. Die ANC sal nie rus tot elke Suid-Afrikaner van Kaapstad tot Kuruman toegang het tot die kwaliteit gesondheidsorg wat hulle verdien nie.

Agb Speaker, voordat ek afsluit moet ek 'n oomblik neem om die onwrikbare toewyding van ons gesondheidswerkers te erken, wat ons mense bly dien ten spyte van groot uitdagings. Ek wil veral die onbaatsugtige pogings van Dr Cariem, Dr Cloete waardeur, wie se toewyding aan die gesondheidssektor ver buite hulle normale take strek. Hul gewilligheid om tydens krisis in te spring, selfs buite gereelde ure, toon die ware gees van diens en medemenslikheid wat ons gemeenskap lewend hou. Dit is hierdie helde wat die gapings vul wat deur 'n mislike stelsel gelaat word, en bewys dat daar selfs in die donkerste tye dié is wat weier om ons mense in die steek te laat.

Tog, alhoewel ons hulle opofferings salueer, kan ons nie die stelselmatige mislukkinge ignoreer wat hulle werk nog moeiliker maak nie. Personeeltekort, vervalde infrastrukture en vertraagde nooddienste duur voort omdat die DA-regering nie die politieke wil het om dit reg te stel nie. In plaas daarvan om ons gesondheidswerkers te ondersteun, draai hierdie Regering 'n blinde oog en laat ons dokters en verpleegkundiges sukkel met onvoldoende hulpbronne. Die ANC sal nie hierdie verwaarlosing duld nie. Ons sal aanhou veg vir 'n gesondheidsstelsel wat nie net die toewyding van werkers soos Dr Cariem en Dr Cloete eer nie, maar ook verseker dat hulle die gereedskap, personeel, die infrastruktuur het wat hulle nodig het om lewens

te red. Baie dankie.

[The ANC heard these cries, and that is why we adopted the NHI in legislation, to guarantee quality health for all our people, rich and poor. But what does the DA do? They fight against this NHI with tooth and power as they are hoping that the Premier will not be lying next to a farm worker in the hospital. They turn a blind eye when poor people suffer and die in dilapidated hospitals. They would rather bend the knee before their White bosses than stand up for our Black communities. The time for excuses is past.

Our messages are clear. We step up when others withdraw. We reject this cruel budget neglecting our people. We will continue fighting, clinics with medicine in every community, hospitals with enough doctors and nurses, ambulances arriving on time, NHI for all, no exception. The ANC will not rest until every South African from Cape Town to Kuruman has access to quality healthcare that they deserve.

Hon Speaker, before I conclude I must take a moment to acknowledge the resolute commitment of our healthcare workers, who continue to serve our people in spite of big challenges. I want to especially appreciate the unselfish efforts of Dr Cariem, Dr Cloete, whose commitment to the health sector goes far beyond their normal task. Their willingness to jump in during crises, even during normal hours, shows the true spirit of service and human compassion keeping our community alive. It is these heroes who fill the gaps left by an awful system, and proves that even in the darkest times there are

those who refuse to leave our people in the lurch.

However, we salute their sacrifices, we cannot ignore the systematic failures making their work even more difficult. Staff shortages, dilapidated infrastructures and delayed emergency services, continue because the DA Government does not have the political will to correct it. Instead of supporting our healthcare workers, this Government turns a blind eye and leave our doctors and medics with insufficient resources. The ANC will not accept this neglect. We will continue fighting for a health system that not only honours the commitment of workers like Dr Cariem and Dr Cloete, but also ensures that they have the equipment, staff, the infrastructure they require to save lives. Thank you.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Windvogel. †Ek sien nou die [I now see the] hon Stephens.

Ms D R STEPHENS (PA): Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Greetings to all the hon members and distinguished guests. I would like to acknowledge region's Budget Adjustment for Health and Wellness, especially, the allocation towards the Tygerberg Hospital and Groote Schuur megaproject. This is an important and welcomed step. However, I must emphasise that Karl Bremer Hospital which serves many rural and underserved communities in the Metro, also requires urgent attention.

While I appreciate the Head of Department's clarification regarding

emergency services at Karl Bremer, I strongly recommend that we prioritise the upgrading of Karl Bremer Hospital, and of all the day hospitals. Enabling these facilities to provide a higher level of care would ease pressure on emergency departments and reduce patient influx, especially over weekends.

Furthermore, hon Deputy Speaker, I must raise a serious concern. Many of our day hospital patients continue to experience poor treatment. They are forced to queue from as early as 4 AM, denied access to hospital grounds until official opening hours and often treated with a lack of dignity while security personnel wait inside their cozy comfort zone.

This is not how we treat people. We need to treat our people with compassion and respect. Hon Deputy Speaker, through you, I ask how does the Department plan to address these challenges and ensure that all patients receive the dignified care they deserve?

Allow me also to bring to the attention of the House a story of Mrs Valery Fredericks, the mother of Elfrieda Fredericks. A young woman living with cerebral palsy, a form of autism. Elfrieda is non-verbal and non-hearing impaired. She was previously and still is a patient at Alexandra Hospital where she received the much-needed respite care six weeks per year. This service has since been cancelled.

Mrs Fredericks is unemployed and cannot afford private care. She is a

mother doing her best under very difficult circumstances. She is not alone. Many parents and caregivers in our province face similar challenges. Hon Deputy Speaker, how can we as a department and as a government, step in to support mothers like Mrs Fredericks? How can we ensure that no parent is left to carry this burden alone and that every child with special needs receives the care and dignity they deserve? Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Stephens. On the virtual platform, I recognise the hon Lithakong.

Ms T LITHAKONG (EFF): Thank you so much, hon Deputy Speaker and let me also apologise for the glitches that I have encountered earlier.

Hon Speaker, eleven years after the decommissioning of GF Jooste Hospital in Manenberg, people in the Klipfontein areas and its surroundings, have not had a hospital leading to now. So, hon Deputy Speaker, the sad reality for our people is that the date for the completion of Klipfontein Regional Hospital keeps on shifting and being amended with each year passing, which has now been pushed back to 2031.

Somlomo. Hon Deputy Speaker, the people of Gugulethu are taken for a ride by this Department which keeps on failing to provide them with the promised much-improved hospital to replace the dilapidating KTC Community Centre, which is currently in a state of despair.

Hon Deputy Speaker, every time when this DA Provincial Government needs to do good to their promise, they then come with excuses citing things like lack of availability of land for the area to build these much-needed hospitals. This is so despite options being presented to them in the past.

The Economic Freedom Fighters have been calling for an improvement in the turnaround time in which patients need to be assisted in our available clinics and hospitals, without any success. The patient waiting hours, hon Deputy Speaker, in our hospitals continues to be long and the queues in our clinics do not seem to reduce, with some patients always turned away without receiving assistance.

The EFF has been calling for clinics to operate 24/7 in order to alleviate some of these pressures and our calls have been falling on deaf ears. We further called for the insourcing of cleaners, porters and security guards in all public clinics and hospitals in the province. The Budget has been used as an excuse to fail to implement some of these calls.

So, until then and until there is an undertaking by this Department to gradually implement these demands, the Economic Freedom Fighters, hon Deputy Speaker, will not support this Vote and I thank you so much.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon member. Also on the virtual platform, I recognise the hon Herron.

Mr B N HERRON (GOOD): Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker, this Health Budget prioritises infrastructure, staff pay, and facility upgrades and with one of two catches, if you live in the wrong area or need mental health support, you are left behind.

Allocated to Health and Wellness is R4,4 billion for infrastructure, however, R2,8 billion is dedicated to maintenance and upgrades, while only R589 million is set aside for new or replacement health facilities. With hospitals and clinics already struggling, this investment is inadequate.

The catalytic project at Tygerberg Central, Belhar Regional and Klipfontein Regional Hospitals will strengthen Metro healthcare. However, rural and peri-urban communities continue to face poor healthcare access, and this Budget does not close that gap. Targeted investments are needed for a fairer distribution of resources. The R19 billion allocated for employee compensation is essential to restoring staffing levels. However, without a strategy to retain workers, improve conditions and address burnout, the system will remain under pressure.

One of the most glaring failures of this Budget is its reckless neglect of mental health services. Despite rising rates of depression, anxiety and substance abuse, there is no dedicated funding or expanding services, hiring specialists or improving access to care. Mental health remains deprioritised leaving thousands without critical support and adding strain to overburdened hospitals and clinics.

The projected R405 PEP funding shortfall for 2025/2026 further weakens the system. Overstretched hospitals, longer wait times and limited healthcare access will continue. While R295 million earmarked for future Tygerberg Hospital upgrades, current funding gaps remain a concern. This Budget must be ...[Audio distorted – 2:11:06.] hon Deputy Speaker. Urgent investment and rural healthcare, stronger commitments to mental health and a sustainable workforce and infrastructure plan are necessary. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Herron. I see the hon Booysen.

Mr M BOOYSEN (DA): Hon Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge your presence. I greet my hon members of the House, I greet the professionals, I greet the people of the Western Cape. I greet you all in the mighty name of our Heavenly Father.

Hon Deputy Speaker, we are in the month of April and South Africa is world renowned for her commemorations in the month of April. None of us in here will ever forget the dawn of our democracy on 27 April 1994. Hon Deputy Speaker, we also have a day for fools in April and with no fail, on 2 April a foolish decision was taken in the National Parliament, and I am convinced, as of that day, hon Deputy Speaker and people of the Western Cape, going forward that day will become another commemorative day for the wrong reasons. That decision will haunt us and not just us, but the generation to come.

The African National Congress, every time when they make a foolish decision and when they are cornered, they blame it on a young democracy. What the DA displayed on that day in Parliament was the growth of democracy.

An HON MEMBER: Wow!

Mr M BOOYSEN (DA): When you work together, when you sit around the same table, you can differ. That is growth. That is political growth. That is the growth of democracy. What happens in South Africa? They cry foul. But there is a price to pay, hon Deputy Speaker, ...[Interjections.] for any decision. To the Democratic Alliance on this side, we are ready to pay that price. We have shown the world that we are growing democracy in this country.

Let me come to something that always bothers, especially that side of the House. Every time when a comment is made that there is an influx into the province, then there are people murmuring. Let me remind you folks. There is a saying in English that says that 'you have got to hear it from the horse's mouth'. Now, hon Deputy Speaker, allow the horse to speak.

I am from the Eastern Cape. In my instance, ...[Interjections.] in my families instance it is the truth. [Interjections.] I came to visit in the Western Cape 30 years ago and what I have experienced, I never went back. [Interjections.] My family is here. We are scattered all over the Western Cape. What was the

reason for that? It is better in the Western Cape.

I think the reason why people do not acknowledge this is because some of them are really born in the Western Cape, but we who are the beneficiaries from other provinces, the time has come for us to acknowledge, hon Deputy Speaker, that is why we are here. That is why my family is here. In some provinces, hon Deputy Speaker, you get depressed.

An HON MEMBER: Aye!

Mr M BOOYSEN (DA): In this province, you get lured into this province because of the successes of this province. That is why, that is why we must acknowledge when good is done.

Hon Deputy Speaker, let me come to the task at hand. Let me come to the business of the day and the business of the day ...[Interjections.] is to approve the Vote for Health and Wellness Vote 6.

Now again, hon Deputy Speaker, where I come from ...[Interjections.] where I come from, the offices of GPs over December: when you walk into those doctors' consultancy rooms, there are Christmas parcels, hampers and I could never understand. And I thought that aye, these doctors are, you know, patriots. I did not know, hon Deputy Speaker, but hopefully it is going to stop because there are now court cases all to find that those Christmas hampers, people are buying them through their medical aid cards.

An HON MEMBER: Wow!

Mr M BOOYSEN (DA): Now, hopefully it is going to stop. I have yet to go into a doctor's surgery in the Western Cape and experience such shenanigans. I have never experienced that.

Now, being in the Western Cape, hon members of the House, people of the Western Cape, it is indeed a privilege and an honour for me to present the first Main Budget Vote of the Department of Health and Wellness for the upcoming fiscal year in the 7th Parliament. This Budget, ladies and gentlemen, hon members of the House, is a testament to the DA-led administration's commitment to continuously improve the public health system and the wellbeing of our citizens.

It is not by chance that the Western Cape's living expectancy is higher in the Western Cape. It is not by chance. Hon Deputy Speaker, it is also not by chance that this Department is the best Health and Wellness Department not just in the Western Cape, but on the continent of Africa. Go and read the AG's report. Please clap hands. ...[Applause.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

Mr M BOOYSEN (DA): Hon Deputy Speaker, with a total allocation of just over R32 billion for the year 2025/2026, we are ensuring that no citizen is

left behind ...[Interjections.] in accessing essential health services. Thank you, hon Minister, for that. [Interjections.] Unlike the ANC's regressive approach, NHI is the next timebomb as part of the regressive approach of this country.

Hon Deputy Speaker, speaking of data and the foresight of this Department. This year, the Department plans to extend the COPC toolkit to 21 more sites, that is Community Orientated Primary Care, further demonstrating our commitment to delivering quality care where it matters the most. For this purpose, the Department will see an allocation of over R13 billion to address the burden of disease, including TB, HIV and Aids, and nutrition. But, hon Deputy Speaker, we are aware of the effects of the Executive Order by President Donald Trump and the withdrawal of the PEPFAR funds.

Now, some people made the comment that we are not aware of that, and we do not take that to heart but let me explain to the hon members. This Province, the Western Cape, has shown the world during COVID-19 on how we deal with challenges. The, what is it called? The Reserves. If one looks into the Budget, we have reserves, and I am convinced that out of those reserves we will deal and we will mitigate the effect of the withdrawal of the USAID. [Interjections.]

While the Department received ...[Interjections.] while the Department received an increase of approximately R1 billion ...[Interjections.] from the previous financial year, hon Deputy Speaker, an increase I am confident will

be prioritised in the most efficient way, possibly there remain challenges that are often unseen and unprecedented. But what do we do in this Province? When we become aware of those challenges, we step up.

An HON MEMBER: Ja! [Interjections.]

Mr M BOOYSEN (DA): Thankfully, thankfully under the leadership of a competent Department, this Budget has been crafted with a strong emphasis on fiscal discipline and efficiency. [Interjections.] Every rand allocated is aimed at maximising impact and ensuring value for money. [Interjections.]

Furthermore, I commend the Department's strategic focus which includes addressing service pressures such as waiting times, immunisation outreach, the adaptation of climate change strategies and population growth, and the expansion of services for vulnerable groups.

Now, hon Deputy Speaker, there are always complaints about long queues. Again, where I come from, there are not even queues because there are no facilities. [Interjections.] The difference in the Western Cape. I am staying in Hankey and Patensie. [Interjections.] Now, now, now, hon Deputy Speaker, in the queues in the Western Cape we all agree that one minute in a queue is a minute too long, but the difference in a queue in the Western Cape, there is hope at the end of the queue. [Interjections.]

Furthermore, I commend the Department's strategic ...[Interjections.] Hon

Deputy Speaker, hon Speaker, I also ...[Interjections.]

[The Speaker takes the Chair.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Booysen, please take your seat. Hon Deputy Chief Whip, is that a point of order?

The DEPUTY CHIEF WHIP (DA): Yes, hon Speaker. I do rise on Rule 39. There is a constant loud conversation of the declining party on the opposite benches ...[Interjections.], hon Speaker. Can you please rule on that? Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Deputy Chief Whip. Hon members ...[Interjections.] Order, hon members. [Interjections.] Hon members, there is an hon member on the floor. Can I please ask that you allow the hon member on the floor to make his input. It is a political debate, so we have allowed a lot of latitude for heckling, for interjections. However, please do not drown out the hon speaker on the floor. Hon Booysen, you may continue.

Mr M BOOYSEN (DA): Hon Speaker, I also recognise the Department's efforts in building a capable workforce. Thank you to the men and women in uniform, even those who are retired. We see your volunteerism.

With an allocation of R451 million for the training of nurses and staff

addressing attrition and support to EMS personnel. Additionally, hon Speaker, R1 billion has been allocated for the construction, maintenance and refurbishment of health infrastructure. This Budget allocates significant resources to the development, maintenance and upgrading of healthcare facilities across the province.

With a total project cost of R3,7 billion, all aimed at enhancing the public healthcare experience, as stated, hon Speaker by my fellow colleagues during the deliberations of the various Votes, this DA Budget is not just about numbers. It is about people.

Hon Speaker, as we deliberate on Vote 6, we must not forget the ANC's comrades lining their pockets during COVID-19. This country witnessed corruption, fraud and misappropriation of millions meant to aid the fight against COVID-19. What disturbs me most is not just the state of the healthcare facilities ...[Interjections.], but the conditions in provinces where I come from, where cadre deployment continues ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: You must go back!

Mr M BOOYSEN (DA): ...continues to benefit the politically connected, often through Digital Vibes or shall I say, 'da vibes'.

Once again, hon Speaker and hon members of this House, this Budget is not just about numbers. It is about people and certainly, not about rewarding

cadres. By investing in health infrastructure and services, we are creating jobs, stimulating local economies and most importantly, we are saving lives. Every new clinic, every upgraded hospital and every piece of modern equipment brings us closer to a healthier, more equitable society.

Before I conclude, hon Speaker, I wish to congratulate our HOD, Dr Cloete, you and your team. We are looking forward to a better and an enhanced relationship going forward.

In conclusion, hon Speaker and hon members, this Budget is a lifeline for millions of citizens who rely on our healthcare system. It is a call to action for all of us across sectors, across communities, to ensure that every citizen has access to the care they deserve. Let us reaffirm our commitment to building a healthier, stronger and more equitable society. Together, we can ensure that our healthcare system remains a beacon of hope and resilience. Once again, thanks to the men and women in uniform and thanks to the professionals.

I call on this House to support this Budget Vote. Let us work together to enable our children to start well, our working age population to live well, and our elderly to age well. This Committee supports the Appropriation of Vote 6. Thank you, hon Speaker. ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, to the hon Booysen. Hon Minister, before I recognise you, do you need the podium? [Interjections.] In that

case, I recognise the hon Minister, hon Minister Wenger.

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: Thank you very much, hon Speaker and thanks very much to the hon members for participating in the debate and in particular, to those hon members that had constructive proposals for us.

I think first of all, hon Speaker, we cannot discuss this Budget as if it has no context. It is not as if it is a matter of not allocating where people need it. Our resources are finite. We do not have an unending supply of funding to be able to cover everything. We have to cut our cloth according to what we have, and we do not overspend. We are responsible with our funding, and we do not rack up billions of rands in accruals and have to be bailed out, like our counterparts in other provinces.

Commented [MW1]: rack up billions

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: At the same time, we also have to acknowledge that public healthcare spending in South Africa has been declining year after year. As a country, the strategic priorities made by National Government has not been in Health. In fact, public healthcare expenditure per capita in South Africa was lower in 2023 than what it was in 2017. So, if the country is spending less on healthcare, it is a symptom of something broader in our country.

But in the Western Cape, we can be very proud that as a province of our overall budget, of the whole budget, the amount allocated towards Health is one of the highest proportions of all the provinces because in the Western Cape we do value, and we prioritise, Health here in the Western Cape.

There were a number of comments on infrastructure, and I agree that we have to add speed to our capital build programme, although it is also incredibly demanding under trying financial and fiscal constraints. So, we are working harder and smarter.

On Jooste, the decision was taken to build a larger regional hospital. Not one, but two regional hospitals and that we are working on very hard to accelerate as quickly as possible. The Klipfontein Regional Hospital will add a 640-bed hospital, ...[Interjections.] and the Belhar Regional Hospital will also add an additional 640 beds. So, those mega infrastructure projects are in the pipeline and are progressing as quickly as possible. Already, both projects are in concept design with construction expected to start in 2028 and 2030 respectively.

Let me then say that to hon Windvogel. I think she dusted off last year's Budget speech because it does not quite reflect the Budget reality as in the Blue Book for this financial year. Yes, we have had a very hard and difficult time, especially on the Compensation of Employees. We had to freeze posts. We had no choice.

South Africa was faced with a fiscal emergency that removed R6 billion from the Western Cape's Budget ...[Interjections.] and that affected Health very deeply, extremely deeply. At the same time, an unaffordable wage deal was agreed to which also meant that we had to pull up the handbrake on recruitment so that we could keep our budgets in check.

At the same time, the province has a rising population and our Provincial Equitable Share formula is not keeping pace. How can it be that we have the third largest population but yet, we only get the fifth largest budget? How can that be? I would encourage my hon colleagues ...[Interjections.] on the other side of the bench to take up the fight ...[Interjections.] for the Western Cape ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: ...so that we can get our fair share! [Interjections.]

Ms R WINDVOGEL (ANC): They are still next to you!

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: However, this year, as I mentioned in my speech, we are turning that page. [Interjections.] So, in this year, we are increasing ...[Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order! [Interjections.] Order! Hon Minister, you may

continue.

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: Thank you. We have increased our COE budget by 8,36% because we are prioritising our people.

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: We are making sure that we can fill those posts and catch up again. It is a good news story because we understand that it has been incredibly difficult in clinics and hospitals where our staff have had to do more with less. This year, we are changing that. We are bringing stability, and we are able to fill those frozen posts. So, it is good news, and it brings hope for our system. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: In respect of the academics. I met with the academics last year. We had conversations. We explained what was happening with the Budget. They understand it. Academia also face similar fiscal pressures, and we will again be meeting with those very same academics tomorrow. We have a good working relationship, and we support each other through these realities, and we work together in the best interests of our residents here.

Let me move on then to hon Stephens. Thank you very much for your

comments on Karl Bremer. We will take those back into our strategic sessions. We, of course, have to work within our Budget, but where we can get exponential gains is if we work with our partners; if we stretch maximum efficiency and we work with the private sector. There are many ways we can do that to expand access to care.

On NHI. If we do not have enough health funding for current needs, where is the money for NHI coming from? Perhaps, the hon Windvogel could enlighten this House because South Africa has not been brought into confidence in how NHI is going to be funded. What we do know so far is that our Equitable Share will be removed from the Western Cape and will be put in the NHI fund. [Interjections.] All our PES funding will be gone. [Interjections.] We will have no PES funding left. [Interjections.] It will be managed by the national fund. And our hospitals, Groote Schuur, Red Cross, Tygerberg, will become National Government components. [Interjections.] They will essentially be run through the National Government. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: A disaster!

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: It will fundamentally weaken provincial healthcare provision, and that is why we cannot support it in its current form. We fully agree with implementing universal health coverage, but there are other alternative ways to do that where we believe we can protect healthcare for our most vulnerable citizens.

To hon Lithakong, thank you very much for your comments. Just a note on Gugulethu. Gugulethu is set to receive two new healthcare facilities in the next few years: a new CDC and CHC replacement. The current CHC's renovation is set to start at the end of this year with an upgrade ...[Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order, hon members.

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: ...midwifery and obstetrics unit. [Interjections.]

To hon Herron, thank you for your comments. On mental health, we fully agree. There are large constraints and challenges within mental health, and we are focusing on mental health in particular, in rural areas. We are spending R279 million on acute psychiatric units across the province and that does include rural areas, for example, Caledon.

We are strengthening our mental health services through NPOs which is increasing by 56% and community-based care, including mental health, which will be increased by 4,5%.

Commented [MW2]: NPOs

That being said, I must acknowledge that the last few years have been very tough. They have been extremely difficult. There have been longer waiting times, and I would like to thank members of the public for their patience.

What I can say is that we are working to improve that, and this Budget helps us to do that.

So, to conclude, hon Speaker, let me express my thanks to the TEXCO management team, a group of people who truly value public service above self, who are consummate professionals and who lead the way in public healthcare. [Interjections.] Their combined efforts in a recent academic review mean that the Western Cape ...[Interjections.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Minister, please continue.

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: Their combined efforts in a recent academic review, mean that the Western Cape Health Department is a pocket of relative, bureaucratic ...[Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order, hon members!

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: ...excellence. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The SPEAKER: Hon members! Hon Minister, please take your seat. Hon members, there was a speakers' list. You had an opportunity to participate in this debate. It is now the hon Minister's opportunity to respond. Can I

please ask. Hon members, we have a long day ahead of us. Can I please ask for your cooperation, and can I please call on the Chief Whips on both sides of the House to please assist so that we can get through the Order of the Day.

My apologies for the interruption, hon Minister. You may continue.

The MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS: Thank you. So, I would like to thank the TEXCO senior management team. They are consummate professionals who lead the way in public healthcare. In a recent academic review, it was found that the Western Cape Health Department is:

“A pocket of relative bureaucratic excellence that shows the Western Cape to be a specific area within a large bureaucracy that demonstrates high levels of effectiveness and competence.”

Dr Angeletti du Toit, Dr Arendse, Ms Aries, Mr Carrick, Ms Champion, Dr Cloete, Dr De Vries, Ms Isaacs, Dr Kariem, Mr Kaye, Dr Nkosi, Ms Nkosi, Dr Parbhoo, Dr Perez and Dr Phillips: thank you very much for everything that you do for the people of this province. ...[Applause.]

To my mom, Marti Wenger, thank you very much for being here. Thank you for always being there for me for your care, your guidance and your mentorship. Thank you. ...[Applause.]

Dear Maria, what a special occasion to have you here as well. ...[Laughter.]

Thank you. And to my hon Cabinet colleagues and my caucus colleagues, thank you for being the embodiment of teamwork so that we can, together, get things done.

And finally, to my awesome Ministry team, each and every wonderful person that steps up and gives their all every single day. Thank you. ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much to the hon Minister. Hon colleagues, that concludes the debate on this Vote. I am going to allow the guests of hon Minister Wenger to exit the Chamber while we await the guests of hon Minister Maynier to deal with the next Order of the Day. Just for the ...[Interjections.] Hon Windvogel, I am on the floor and just as I allow you an opportunity when you are on the floor and not interrupting you, I expect the same.

Hon members, I will allow the guests of hon Minister Maynier to enter the Chamber. Hon Minister, if I can just get an indication from you when you are ready to proceed. In the interest of time, I am not going to suspend the House. Okay, in that case, hon Minister, if you are ready? I will then ask the Secretary to read the Third Order of the Day.

The SECRETARY: Debate on Vote 5: Education – Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 1–2025].

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I recognise the hon Minister of

Education, hon Minister Maynier. ...[Applause.]

The MINISTER OF EDUCATION: Thank you, hon Speaker. This year, we will spend R33,259 billion on Education, which is a 5,9% increase compared to last year's Budget, and the largest departmental budget in the Western Cape.

We are stepping up to tackle the most pressing challenges faced in education by improving learning outcomes; expanding access to education; creating secure school environments; and ensuring departmental sustainability.

The greatest challenge we must step up to tackle, of course, is poor learning outcomes. While our province performs better than others in international assessments of reading, of Mathematics and of Science, we still fall far short of international benchmarks. We need to act decisively to improve our children's scores, so that they leave schools with the skills and capabilities to take on further training, to move into jobs, or to create new jobs through their own businesses.

There can be no significant economic growth without a capable, qualified workforce, which begins with delivering basic education. This year, we will spend R322,3 million on our #BackOnTrack programme to improve learning outcomes in the Western Cape. This programme has clearly demonstrated success in improving learning outcomes.

A recent evaluation report found subject-specific recovery of an equivalent of up to 205 school days' worth of learning for children who had attended #BackOnTrack classes. What this means is that a year of learning has been caught up through the #BackOnTrack programme.

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF EDUCATION: In addition, they found subject-specific gains of up to 160 days school days for learners whose teachers had attended extra training as part of the programme. The report went on to say and I quote:

“The massive effect sizes encountered in this investigation were a surprise as some were much larger than the effect sizes typically encountered in education interventions.”

Moreover, our 2024 annual systemic test results show that our children's scores are getting back on track after experiencing severe learning losses during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pass rates for both Grade 9 Mathematics and Grade 3 Languages are now higher than they were in 2019, with the remaining grades and subjects catching up quickly.

So, I would like to thank every teacher, every tutor, every learner, every parent and every official that has participated in and supported the #BackOnTrack programme. Their investment of additional time and energy

into improving learning outcomes is what has made this programme such a success.

But, of course, hon Speaker, there is still much work to be done, and this year, 15 450 Grade 4 and Grade 7 learners from 223 primary schools will attend weekend #BackOnTrack classes. These classes will focus on Mathematics and Languages, taught by our expert tutors throughout the year.

In addition to these grades, 8 000 Grade 12 learners will receive academic support as they prepare for their matric exams this year. This will include weekend classes and revision camps during the Autumn, Winter and Spring school holidays.

Our teachers will also receive professional development support through the #BackOnTrack programme this year. In-person training, in the form of weekly sessions or holiday training, will be provided to 2 483 Grade 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 teachers, with a primary focus again on Mathematics and Languages.

Hon Speaker, this year, we will also spend R113,5 million funding school assistants through the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI). This will provide valuable job opportunities for 4 370 young people between the ages of 18 and 34 for six months, to gain experience and to gain skills that will help kickstart their career. Most of these assistants will help teachers in the classroom as Reading Champions, as curriculum assistants, eLearning

support and care and support assistants for special needs schools. General assistants will also provide schools with support for sport, for arts and culture activities, as well as for the maintenance of school properties.

Hon Speaker, the second challenge we must step up to tackle is the extreme demand for school placement. We are the fastest growing province in the country, and every year the number of learners in our schools is growing rapidly. Our on-time admissions window for Grade R, Grade 1 and Grade 8 in the 2026 school year is currently open, and we have already received applications for over 116 000 learners, and I would encourage parents to ensure that they apply before the admissions window closes on 15 April 2025.

While our admissions website is zero-rated and does not require data, we understand that there are parents who are not able to complete their applications online, and need in-person assistance. Our officials are ready to assist parents at our district offices and at pop-up admissions sites at malls, at schools and at libraries, and I really do encourage parents to take up this opportunity this weekend. And a special thank you to all the officials who are giving up their weekends to provide this service to our parents.

It is clear that the demand for school places in the Western Cape will continue to grow, and in order to provide sufficient spaces, we will need to build new schools and classrooms faster than ever before. So, this year, we will spend R2,862 billion on school infrastructure to expand access to education and to upgrade existing school buildings and facilities in the

Western Cape.

So far, our Rapid School Build programme has completed 15 new schools, in communities where demand for schools is the highest, including Delft, Atlantis, Lwandle, Wallacedene, Crossroads, and Darling. Our Rapid School Build programme has received a massive vote of confidence from the National Treasury, and we were the first department in our province to be allocated additional funding through the Budget Facility for Infrastructure. The R2,549 billion allocated to us through the BFI is being put to good use building new schools to accommodate the high demand for admissions in our schools.

Over the next three years, we aim to complete 29 new and replacement schools in the Western Cape. We are currently finalising the location of these schools, and four are already under construction in Lwandle, Wallacedene, Brackenfell and Malmesbury. And our Edu Invest partnership with Wesgro is supporting the private sector to open new schools in the Western Cape.

Hon Speaker, we are also expanding access to education for the most vulnerable learners in the Western Cape. This year, we will spend an additional R75 million on expanding support to learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Western Cape. As research progressively sheds light on the education needs of children with ASD, we will continue to prioritise expanding access to education for these learners and creating inclusive learning environments.

We have included the provision of additional classrooms for learners with special needs in our infrastructure programme, as the need for additional places in our special schools remains high. This year we are completing 25 additional classrooms at special schools, to create more places for our most vulnerable learners. We will spend an additional R73,9 million this year supporting Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities in the Western Cape.

Hon Speaker, the third challenge we must step up to tackle is, of course, the lack of safe and environmentally secure school environments. This year, we will spend R75 million on our Safe Schools Programme to create a safer learning environment for learners in the Western Cape. The programme supports the provision of 82 law enforcement School Resource Officers in high-risk schools, the subsidisation of holiday security at schools in areas where crime is high, school intervention and behavioural programmes, and of course, our Safe Schools Call Centre.

Last week, students across the country participated in a protest following the news of a deeply concerning assault at a school in the Eastern Cape. While this incident has occurred in another province, I urge anyone who becomes aware of an incident of abuse or assault in our province to report this immediately to SAPS and to our Safe Schools Call Centre on 0800 45 46 47 toll free for assistance.

A secure school environment also includes, of course, access to reliable electricity. This year, we will spend R70 million securing the energy supply to our schools in the Western Cape. In the past few months, we have been reminded that loadshedding is not a thing of the past and remains a clear threat to the provision of education in our schools.

We have allocated R40 million to provide solar PV systems at 40 schools this year, which creates a more sustainable supply of electricity for the school, while of course, reducing the school's electricity bill. And we have allocated R30 million to our successful lighting replacement project for 70 schools this year, which replaces high-energy usage lighting with efficient LED lighting in large no-fee schools.

This helps bring down energy costs for our schools, but more importantly, reduces our demand on the energy grid so that we can play our part in creating a more secure energy future in the Western Cape.

Hon Speaker, finally, we need to step up to deal with the risks facing our Department in the year ahead. We said that we would fight for our teachers, and that is what we have done. We are adding up to 477 growth posts to accommodate the new learners that have joined our schools this year. And around 2 100 posts open up each year due to resignations and relocations, so there are more opportunities opening up for teachers to apply for.

Hon Speaker, this year we will spend R23,737 billion on the Compensation of

Employees in the Western Cape. While we have received an additional allocation to cover the cost of employment this year, we still face significant risks in this regard. We will need to manage the risks across the year as placement of excess teachers is underway, along with the allocation of posts for growth.

Hon Speaker, we will also continue to implement the universalisation of Grade R, which we believe is an essential start to a child's school career and a vital part of the Foundation Phase. This year, we will spend R845,9 million to provide access to Grade R in the Western Cape.

We have been progressively expanding the provision of Grade R in our schools. We currently have over 72 000 Grade R learners in our schools and have built 124 Grade R classrooms in the past five years. We will continue to open new Grade R classrooms at schools and Early Childhood Development sites to provide more places in Grade R in the Western Cape.

Unfortunately, of course, the introduction of compulsory Grade R is an entirely unfunded mandate. We have not received any additional funding to expand the number of places in our schools for Grade R learners, or to fund additional teachers to cater for growing numbers.

Hon Speaker, despite our massive investment into school infrastructure, our school buildings remain at risk. This year, we will spend R1,328 billion on maintaining and upgrading existing school infrastructure in the Western

Cape. We have the oldest portfolio of school infrastructure in the country, and because of the extreme pressure for new schools and classrooms, the budget for maintenance and replacement of schools is limited. Moving funds away from maintenance and replacement schools to fund other priorities puts our schools, and our children, at risk.

In addition, the Western Cape has experienced an increase in extreme weather events which have caused severe damage to our schools which require emergency replacement.

Hon Speaker, underlying all of these risks is perhaps the greatest risk we face, which is continuing Budget uncertainty. We are currently in a holding pattern as we await the finalisation of the National Budget. Once the National Budget is finalised, any further funding will be allocated through an adjustments budget, and we will constantly monitor this situation in partnership, of course, with Provincial Treasury.

Hon Speaker, what I truly admire about the Western Cape Education Department is that despite the risks, despite the extreme pressure, despite the daily challenges that arise, our staff continue to step up. The past year has been an extremely difficult one for our sector.

It has been difficult for our principals, who have had to implement a reduction in the Basket of Posts. It has been difficult for our teachers who are under more pressure than ever, with bigger classes, fewer free periods,

and more marking. Our officials have working extra hours, picking up additional tasks, and doing their best to plan for the year ahead despite the significant uncertainty we face.

And yet, our staff members continue to prioritise the best interests of our learners here in the Western Cape. They are the everyday heroes in our sector, and their dedication and care for our children really shows and I believe they deserve a hand of applause. ...[Applause.]

I would like to thank our Head of Department, Brent Walters, and the Western Cape Education Department management team, our school principals, our teachers and our public service staff, and of course my team in the Ministry of Education, for the work that they have done this year.

We have a shared vision for the future of our children and for our province, and we will continue to do everything we can to deliver quality education for every learner, in every classroom, in every school here in the Western Cape. I thank you. ...[Applause.]

†Die SPEAKER: Baie dankie aan die agb Minister. [The SPEAKER: Thank you to the hon Minister.] I now recognise the hon Sayed, but before I do that, can I just get an indication if you need the podium? I now recognise the hon Leader of the Opposition.

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: Thank you very much.

...[Laughter.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Sayed. [Interjections.]

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: Hon Speaker, hon Premier, hon Education MEC, hon Chief Whip of the Official Opposition, hon member Bans, hon members of the Provincial Legislature, distinguished guests, some of whom have come from as far as De Doorns ...[Interjections.] and the viewers online.

Today's debate is about more than a budget. ...[Laughter.] It is about the future of our children and the soul of this province. Education is the cornerstone of a fair and thriving society. It should be the bridge between poverty and opportunity.

But under this Democratic Alliance-led Government, the only government that they are going to be part of in the country, it is becoming yet another divide. We heard the hon MEC speak about the emphasis on learner outcomes. We have no problem with that. We need to focus on learner outcomes. However, just like audit outcomes focus, it becomes another PR stunt. It does not equal to access to quality, free education for all.

As President Nelson Mandela reminded us:

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the

world.”

Yet, in the Western Cape, this weapon is being dulled by mismanagement, underspending and a refusal to build an inclusive education system for all.

Hon Speaker, the Western Cape, as I said on Friday, remains a tale of two provinces.

An HON MEMBER: Ja!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: One province well resourced ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Ja!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: ...well connected ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Ja!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: ...and well-funded. It has access to worldclass schools and safe classrooms. The other poorer, non-White and working class faces overcrowded schools, underpaid teachers and long, unsafe journeys to school.

The divide is not theoretical, it is a lived reality. It is lived every day by learners in Khayelitsha, Mitchells Plain, Gugulethu, Atlantis, De Doorns, Nduli, Vredenburg, Beaufort West.

And let us come to Beaufort West and the Karoo where the hon Chief Whip of the Official Opposition is from. The hon MEC spoke about special needs learners and the supports. That is non-existent in the Central Karoo. The hon Chief Whip came in now because the hon Chief Whip had to assist learners with special needs in the Central Karoo to get to school. Hence, the hon Chief Whip is now sitting in the Legislature and had to follow online.

Calitzdorp, Hex Valley, Swellendam and many other parts of the Western Cape. The DA continues, as they have done in all of these Budget Vote debates, to speak of progress, but its policies entrench exclusion. While elite schools thrive, the majority face cutbacks and neglect. This is a betrayal of our Constitution and the Freedom Charter.

But we cannot say that they have betrayed the Freedom Charter because they have never believed in it. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes, ...[Interjection.]

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: The PFP and the National Party never had the Freedom Charter as the cornerstone of what they stand for.

An HON MEMBER: That is so true!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: White elite schools. Clause 29 of our Constitution guarantees the right to basic education for all. The Freedom Charter declared the doors of learning and culture shall be open to all. Yet today, thousands of children in this province are still locked out. Hon MEC Maynier, can you honestly say that your Department is meeting its Constitutional obligation to provide access to education for all? Or are you more focused on PR and cutting of costs, rather than building an equitable system? The numbers do not lie.

Hon Speaker, during the 6th Administration, the Western Cape Education Department returned R36,5 billion in Equitable Share and National Grant allocations. It underspent the R829 million. It incurred nearly R122 million in irregular expenditure. There are no clear answers also, on the R1,2 billion IT tender scandal. The SITA directive to halt the tender was ignored. [Interjections.] The National Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies ...[Interjections.], the DA's Solly Malatse ...[Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: ...hopefully soon to be exited from Cabinet ...[Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Order!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: ...sadly today continues with this cover-up. We support the call made by the ANC and other parties in Parliament's National Assembly for a full SIU investigation.

Hon MEC, we expect a full explanation for your Department's disregard for SITA's instruction, and a clear commitment to cooperate with the Special Investigative Unit. The people deserve transparency, not spin. This is undermining Education from within.

This year, the Education Department in the Province plans to cut, as has been stated, 2 407 teaching posts, yet only 27 of those posts are in affluent areas. Yet, National Treasury, as the hon MEC has admitted, has increased the Budget allocation for the Compensation of Employees in this Province. What does this say about your priorities? You cannot deliver quality education without teachers ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Ja!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: ...especially in underserved communities.

An HON MEMBER: Yes, yes!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: Your party rejected the National Fiscal Framework, yet that framework ensures funding for teachers and basic services. You cannot have it both ways. Rejecting national support, while depending on national money to survive. Rejecting a budget, whilst want to go in every day as Cabinet Ministers to implement a budget saying you are committed to a GNU, but you reject its budget. Your party elected. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: You rejected the poor!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: We commend the National Department of Basic Education, and I must say, the Minister of Basic Education is the one Democratic Alliance Minister that does not play cheap political spin. Even on the pit latrines, indicated that this was a continuation of the work of the former Minister, unlike the others who play spin. [Interjections.] Soon, she will find a way to halve it or in Bossa. [Interjections.]

We commend the work of the Department of Basic Education and National Treasury for continuing their Basic Education Employment Initiative. Over 1,1 million youth jobs were created in the 6th Administration. Phase 5 will again support under-resourced schools with vital human resources. That is real inclusion in action.

But this is a budget, hon Speaker, that is not aligned with real needs. Yes,

the WCED receives the largest share of the Provincial Budget, R33,23 billion, but how is that money being used? There is no clear commitment to reducing overcrowded classrooms, expanding safe learner transport, addressing school safety and gangsterism. In fact, the hon MEC did not speak when he spoke about his infrastructure programme, he did not speak to overcrowded classrooms. Increasing educators in the areas that need them most. You can build as many schools and classrooms as you want, but if you fire teachers, that is worth nothing.

Hon Speaker, this is where the two Western Cape's collide again. In well-off areas, schools are safe. In townships, teachers are extorted by gangsters. What is the hon MEC's plan? Where is the urgency? In Lwandle, Nomzamo, Chris Nissen Park and Sir Lowry's Pass, the ANC together with parents resolved the learner transport crisis. We call on the hon MEC to continue and expand this particular initiative. Learners and teachers need each other. That is not radical, it is common sense.

An HON MEMBER: Ja!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: But instead, this Budget remains bloated with admin costs and the culture of arrogance and avoidance continues.

Hon Speaker, in December last year I stood here and rejected the Education Adjustment ...[Interjection.]

Mr D W BRYANT (DA): Sorry, hon Speaker. Just a ...[Audio distorted.]
Sorry, hon Speaker, I apologise for interrupting.

The SPEAKER: Honourable.

Mr D W BRYANT (DA): Just that noise is making it difficult to hear. I am not sure what that is.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Bryant for that. We will address that. Can I ask that the officials please address that and in the interim, I am going to allow the hon member to continue if it is okay. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Only if the hon Sayed is happy that you continue.

The SPEAKER: Hon Bryant, are you happy for hon Sayed to continue?
[Interjections.] Hon member, there is a question from an hon member. I can guarantee you I will make sure that you are safe first, hon member.
[Interjections.] If there are any concerns, I will make sure that you are protected. Hon Sayed, you may continue.

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: Thank you very much, hon Speaker. So, in December last year, I stood here and rejected the Education Adjustment Budget. I do so again today. Why? Because this Budget protects bureaucracy ...[Interjections.] not children. It ignores safety in the

most violent communities. It undermines the public education system by failing to resource it fairly.

In fact, this Budget was even silent on the BELA Bill or on the BELA Act. There is no strategy to even fund the implementation of that particular Act because the Democratic Alliance continues to reject it because they reject attempts to build and drive equal education in this country.

An HON MEMBER: Ja!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: We are told to be grateful ...[Interjections.] for R242 million in HR development, but what does this mean when schools are short-staffed and over-subscribed. The Premier's Office hires 1 000 staff while children cram into under-resourced classrooms. This is not planning, it is posturing. How is the hon Premier's expensive e-Centres assisting in their effort to address learner transport, to address extortion at our schools, to address the unplaced learner crisis?

In conclusion, hon Speaker, we reject this Budget with contempt. This Budget does not serve all learners. It maintains privilege for some and ignores hardships for the rest.

An HON MEMBER: Ja!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: It fails the Constitution,

fails parents, fails teachers and fails the youth of the Western Cape. We reject this Budget not out of petty politics, but out of principle because the people of this province deserve one Education system, not two. ...[Interjection.]

Hon MEMBERS: Yes!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: One future, not two. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION: One Western Cape. Not one for the rich and one for the poor. I thank you. ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Sayed. Before I recognise the hon Stephens. Hon members, I just want to inform the House that there is nothing to be worried about. That was an external service provide, so it is just the sound that echoed through the Chamber. It is not in the Chamber.

Hon Stephens, do you need the podium? [Interjections.] If not ...[Interjection.]

Ms D R STEPHENS (PA): No, Hon Speaker.

The SPEAKER: ...I recognise the hon Stephens.

Ms D R STEPHENS (PA): Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Premier and hon members, while we acknowledge the Region's Budget adjustments and the promise of learning opportunities for all children, we must also confront some pressing challenges.

There is still a significant shortage of special needs schools in the province. Children with special needs are often forced to wait years for placement in institutions like Jan Kriel, Paarl School and Eros. This clearly highlights the urgent need for more infrastructure to properly accommodate these learners.

Hon Speaker, beyond that, the Department must seriously assess the current educator to learner ration. The shortage of teachers is having a real and harmful impact on learners. Overcrowded classrooms, along with a lack of adequate learner transport is creating unsafe and ineffective learning environments.

These issues are further worsened by the socio-economic challenges many of our communities face: gangsterism, substance abuse, and the presence of drugs in and around our schools. These are not isolated problems. They are daily realities for far too many of our children.

Lastly, hon Speaker, we cannot ignore the ongoing crisis of food insecurity in our schools. Not all schools benefit from feeding schemes and we know no

child can focus or learn on an empty stomach. Thank you, hon Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Stephens. I recognise the hon Cassiem on the online platform.

Ms A CASSIEM (EFF): Thank you, hon Speaker. hon Speaker, a budget that does not speak to an increase to the number of teachers' posts and increase in building of classrooms made out of brick, and implementing an effective school placement system in this province is not the kind of budget that the EFF will support.

Hon Speaker, the education system in the Western Cape remains highly exclusionary when it comes to Quintile 4 and Quintile 5 schools, especially when you are not White. The Quintile 4 and Quintile 5 e-Paying schools are formally what used to be called Model C schools, and they are mostly in areas like Rondebosch, Cape Town and Camps Bay, among others.

But while these are schools which in the past were reserved for Whites only, to this day, hon Speaker, most of them still resemble only whiteness. There is often a biased approach from these schools, hon Speaker, that if they take the majority of African and Coloured learners, then these learners' parents will come with stories when they have to pay school fees. And therefore, they would instead prefer White learners in their admission process at all of these former Model C schools.

Hon Speaker, the result is that the majority of these African and Coloured learners are deprived of placement in their preferred chosen schools across the province and in turn, offered placement in township schools. This then begs the question as to why White learners are never offered placements in schools located in Coloured and African townships. And if the placement system is, in fact, colour blind to the fact that this process is done along racial and class lines.

Hon Speaker, this Department does not mind increasing mobile classrooms in township schools for purposes of placing more learners there. However, the same cannot be said about schools in leafy suburbs as these schools are full or oversubscribed and there is no effort whatsoever to add mobile classrooms for our Coloured and African learners at these schools or rather, to be accommodated there, hon Speaker.

Hon Speaker, it is not the fact, rather, that people from African and Coloured townships hate their surrounding schools, but rather the fact that years of colonialism and apartheid denied resources to be allocated to these schools. The result of that is these township schools still lack basic facilities, including those for sports and extra curriculum activities. The reality is that this Department, hon Speaker, is not willing to improve the situation in these African and Coloured communities, specifically, when it comes to schools, hon Speaker.

Therefore, in conclusion, hon Speaker, the EFF is not in support of this

Budget. Thank you. ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much to the hon Cassiem. I now recognise the hon Marais.

Mr G P MARAIS (FFP): Thank you, hon Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Hon Marais, can you please just switch on your microphone. There we go. Thank you.

Mr G P MARAIS (FFP): Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Speaker, on behalf of the Freedom Front Plus we acknowledge the work being done by the hon Minister Maynier and his Department. However, is the problem resulting in late applications understood? A child not in school is a child at risk. That is why the Constitution places a higher value on the rights of children, describes their right as of paramount importance.

Unplaced learners, even at the start of the second term of school, spells disaster. Late applications received for this year from the Western Cape region amounted to 30 784. Now, Prof Albert Einstein always emphasised understanding the problem. Spending more time on understanding the problem, not just on the solution. The solution comes afterwards.

So, the question remains: does this Department understand the problem? Does the Budget also make sufficient provision for resource packs? There

are children without resource packs for all their subjects, even as I speak. I would like to know from the hon Minister if he is confident that these matters will be factored into the Appropriations Bill and will be addressed.

In terms of learner transport, are we making efficient use of our learner transport system and are we getting value for money? †Daar is ouers wat vir my sê meneer, kan die bus maar nie die kinders neem van waar dit vanaf gekom het nie? [There are parents who say to me, sir, can the bus not just take the children to where it came from?] In other words, there is not enough transport logistics ...[Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Marais, please take your seat. Hon Masipa, is that a point of order? Hon Marais, please take your seat.

Mr N P MASIPA (DA): Hon Speaker, I just want to know if the hon member on the podium is prepared to take a question.

The SPEAKER: I will ask the hon member. Hon member, are you prepared to take a question?

Mr G P MARAIS (FFP): With all due respect, I only have two minutes to speak. No, thank you.

The SPEAKER: The hon member is not prepared to take a question, hon Masipa. Hon Marais, you may continue.

Mr G P MARAIS (FFP): Hon Speaker, in closing, children deserve the best treatment money can buy and this Budget must serve that purpose and address these recurring problems. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Marais. I now recognise the hon Christians.

Mr F C CHRISTIANS (ACDP): Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Speaker, we still have a long way to go when it comes to Education, but I want to, as the ACDP, congratulate the hon Minister and the Western Cape Education Department for strides made in Education.

Hon Speaker, just engaging with matriculants that wrote matric last year, benefitting from the programmes introduced by the Department. Hon Speaker, I specifically spoke to two learners and those learners did not have a chance to pass matric because of issues at home, because of a lot of matters. But they attended the #BackOnTrack programme every weekend. Every afterschool time they could go, they went. They came to me and said, 'hon member, we have passed.' And those are the success stories of the #BackOnTrack programme.

Hon Speaker, another thing that I just want to, and I have mentioned it previously, but we will have to look at solutions and the solutions I am here looking at Hillcrest High School in Retreat. Prof Jonathan Jansen went back

to the community and said, 'how can I help?' I think we must have an attitude to say: how can we help. When it comes to the Safe Schools Programme, how can we engage communities? How can we engage people to say protect our schools, protect our learners.

So, hon Speaker we can complain as much as we want to, but I believe we will have to come with solutions and assist the hon Minister and the Department to make a difference. Kids out there not in school, but in drugs and gangs are our children and we must make a difference. I thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Christians. I now recognise the hon Herron on the online platform.

Mr B N HERRON (GOOD): Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Speaker, every year as the Budget approaches, we hear grand promises about the Government's commitment to Education and ensuring that no child is left behind. But actions speak louder than words and deliberately defunding the Education sector by R2 billion in the current financial year and by R6,5 billion over the MTEF, tells us everything we need to know about the Government's priorities.

The decision is yet another painful reminder of the persistent underinvestment in Education. The additional R549 million allocated for learner growth over the next three years is simply insufficient to meet the growing demands of our Education system. If we are truly committed to

investing in the future of our youth, we must ensure that schools are equipped with adequate infrastructure, the teachers are properly compensated for their critical work and that there are robust support systems in place.

Unfortunately, this Budget fails to address these fundamental needs. This underfunding flows from the disastrous 2024 Budget which quickly went from being balanced to a crisis within months with a R3,8 billion shortfall over three years, and 2 407 teacher posts being cut. Yet, instead of addressing these issues, the 2025 Budget completely abandons the baseline and miraculously moves on as if the situation is resolved.

This Education Budget is like setting a house on fire and then being surprised when it burns down. By not fully funding Education, the Government is not simply neglecting its duties, it is actively sabotaging the future of our children. If this year mirrors the previous one, we could soon hear of another shortfall, likely similar to the defunded PES amount.

It is time for the Western Cape Government to stop making excuses and take real responsibility. The future of our children is at stake, and it is high time they received the funding and the support they deserve. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Herron. I now recognise the hon Van Wyk.

Mr L D VAN WYK (DA): Hon Speaker, hon members and the public. All 42

hon members of this House will agree on the importance of education and thus, how crucial this Budget is for the citizens of the Western Cape. As a province, we have set a target of becoming a R1 trillion economy by 2035. To achieve our bold ambition, we must invest in the most important foundation and educated and skilled workforce. This is why the Western Cape continues to prioritise Education with the largest slice of the Budget because growth starts in the classroom.

Hon Speaker, to make this a reality, the total Budget for Education is R33,259 billion for the 20205/2026 financial year and R102 billion over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. During the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 financial years, the Western Cape Education Department experienced stressful conditions due to the fiscal constraints that were imposed. This required considerable energy being expended to affect cutbacks, reduce expenditure to remain within the restricted available revenue.

However, the DA-led WCED stood steadfast in the face of adversity. As hon Minister Baartmans says, the Western Cape Government remains open. Our services will not stop because we prepare for the possibility of external shocks. At this point in the introduction, it is appropriate to outline why our country finds itself in its current economic and financial position.

Hon Speaker, this is undoubtedly the result of the ANC's mismanagement. Wasteful expenditure over the past decades on SOEs has resulted in ballooning debt that now consumes 22,5% of national revenue. These choices

by the ANC were the cause of the fiscal constraints that flowed in 2023/2024. As a result, Education and Health, as the two biggest social services' budgets, bore the brunt of these cutbacks.

Hon Speaker, imagine the devastating impact that the 1% VAT increase over the next two years, will have over the people of South Africa. This increase, which is being indorsed by the ANC, Action SA, IFP, PA, GOOD, Rise Mzansi, UDM, PAC, Al Jama-ah and BOSA will place an unbearable strain on families making it even harder for parents to provide their children with the necessary funds for transportation, school fees and essential school supplies like clothes and stationery.

Food prices will also rise meaning many parents will not have enough money to pack lunches for their children and we know a child cannot learn on an empty stomach. This is why the DA rejects the VAT increase in its entirety, while the ANC celebrates the VAT increase ...[Interjections.] that will worsen the suffering of citizens.

However, the DA has a plan to support the parents of learners in the Western Cape. The WCED is budgeting to spend in excess of R1 billion on the School Nutrition Programme, benefitting 563 000 learners every day and on scholar bus transport for 68 000. These initiatives are designed to ease the burden on families and ensure that learners have access to the resources they need to succeed in their education, despite the challenges posed by this VAT increase.

Hon Speaker, in light of this, it is clear that the ANC deliberately chooses to punish our learners by denying them the best possible education and the skills needed to thrive in the workforce. This is not surprising as the ANC has shown time and again that their focus is not on Education that drives economic growth.

On the other hand, the DA-led Western Cape Education Department has the vision, strategy and Growth For Jobs plan to foster a prosperous economy and provide our youth with the opportunities they deserve.

We therefore need to give credit to hon Minister Maynier, the Head of Department of Education and their teams for stepping up and for the work that has been undertaken to stabilise the finances and right-size the WCED. Their efforts have ensured that affordability and sustainability are achieved within the financial model to operate this huge Department. Thank you for your efforts.

In the 2024/2025 financial year, the WCED has had 1 542 public ordinary and public special needs schools under its management, with approximately 1,2 million learners having accommodated almost 114 000 learners from other provinces and countries. Expenditure on Education has grown on average by 4,9% per annum in nominal terms, for the period 2021/2022 to 2027/2028.

Hon Speaker, we must ask ourselves why do so many parents place their trust in the DA-led Western Cape Education Department to educate their children?

I believe the answer is clear. Where the DA governs, we govern well. We boast the highest numeracy and literacy rates in the country. For the past four years, the top matriculant in South Africa has come from the Western Cape. We also produce the highest pass rate in Mathematics and Physical Science nationally.

In the Budget before us today, it is pleasing to note that the increase of R1,862 billion from the revised estimate for 2024/2025 represents an increase of 5,93%. We desperately needed this increase to provide for cost-of-living increases and increased goods, services and infrastructure resulting from the growing learner base.

Hon Speaker, the WCED is a large and vital operation with 44 586 posts planned for the 2025/2026 financial year, more than 42 000 of which are educators. The Compensation of Employees is the single largest investment amounting to R23,737 billion, which represents nearly 72% of the Department's total Budget. This significant allocation reflects our commitment to maintaining a competent and capacitated workforce because quality education begins with quality teachers in every classroom.

Despite the efforts to ensure affordability, the Department remains focused on its key strategic priorities for the next five years: strengthening learning foundation, improving learning outcomes, and building infrastructure and partnerships. These principles in many ways summarise the educational challenges being tackled by the WCED.

Examples of the work underway to establish strong learning foundations include the expansion of access to the Early Childhood Development Programme. With an increase of 8,8% in 2025/2026, as well as the strengthening of existing language, reading and Mathematics strategies through additional learning programmes for both teachers and learners.

The #BackOnTrack programme has already proven its value, as explained by hon Minister Maynier. The Western Cape is the only province in the country to offer such a programme to its learners.

To ensure quality education for learners in the Western Cape, a key priority for the WCED is enhancing educator professional development to improve their performance which in turn, will boost learning outcomes. Additionally, new teaching methodologies are being tested and implemented to achieve better results for learners.

Hon Speaker, in South Africa we face the harsh reality that the reading and numeracy abilities of our young learners, fall below the low benchmark of many countries around the world. While the Western Cape performs better than the national average, this remains a significant concern. To support teachers in the Western Cape and improve learner outcomes, R114 million will be allocated to implement the employment initiative for teacher assistants. This initiative has a threefold impact. It creates jobs, supports teachers and benefits learners.

The WCED has been the first province in South Africa to engage the World Bank for an education sector analysis. The insights and recommendations from this report have been instrumental in shaping the policy priorities outlined in this Budget. These priorities focus on addressing key challenges, such as overcrowding classrooms, empowering school management teams and governing bodies, and fostering supportive environments that motivate both teachers and learners.

Additionally, the Budget highlights investments in innovative education reforms, including expanding public-private partnerships and utilising online and blended learning to improve teaching quality. While implementing these strategies, the WCED aims to create more effective, high-performing schools that can meet the growing demands of the Western Cape education system.

The Budget for Education infrastructure for 2025/2026, is R2,861 billion which includes R1,037 billion for maintenance and repairs, and R477 million for upgrades and additions. This does not include the additional R2,5 billion that has come from the BFI for the 2024/2025 to 2026/2027 period. However, the biggest challenge remains budgetary uncertainty, which complicates sustainable planning. A balance must be struck between addressing learner enrolment growth and maintaining or replacing outdated infrastructure.

Hon Speaker, the DA believes that learners in the Western Cape deserve safe,

well-maintained schools and classrooms that comply with all necessary standards to ensure an optimal learning environment. To help reduce overcrowding in the classrooms across the Western Cape, the WCED deserves to be congratulated for launching Edu Invest in partnership with Wesgro. This innovative public-private partnership initiative aims to attract investment for low-cost private schools, addressing overcrowding and improving access to quality education.

Efforts are being made to ensure safety in schools through the Safe Schools initiative which takes a whole of society approach to promote safety and prevent violence. This initiative includes partnerships with SAPS, law enforcement and other relevant stakeholders and will provide training for parents, educators and learners to address issues such as substance abuse, bullying and gang related activities.

Additionally, an allocation of R29 million has been set aside for the deployment of school resource officers at selected vulnerable schools to enhance safety and support for the school community.

Hon Speaker, the Education Budget before us today is carefully crafted for affordability, tackling ongoing challenges while addressing the constraints placed on the WCED in recent years. This Budget invests in quality education for every learner in every classroom and every school across the Western Cape, creating skilled citizens who will drive economic growth and opportunity.

On behalf of the DA, I support the Budget for Education in Vote 5. Thank you. ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much to the hon Van Wyk. I now recognise the hon Minister Maynier. Hon Minister, do you need the podium? Then, I will recognise you. You can continue.

The MINISTER OF EDUCATION: Thank you, hon Speaker. I would like to begin by thanking the hon Ferlon Christians for recognising the value of the #BackOnTrack programme and the role that it played in supporting two learners to pass matric in 2024. The #BackOnTrack programme works and provides hope for learners in poor communities across the Western Cape.

Hon Speaker, to the hon Brett Herron, we are prioritising Education here in the Western Cape. Education has the largest departmental budget in the Province at R33,259 billion. Our Budget has increased by 5,9% this year, which is a higher increase than the overall Provincial Budget at 4,7%. We have added about R4,93 billion to the baseline over the past three years to deal with the growing demand for Education.

We have the largest learning recovery programme in the country which research shows has shown an improvement in learning outcomes in our province. We are building more schools faster than ever before through our Rapid School Build programme that has received support, as I mentioned,

from National Treasury.

To the hon Donita Stephens. I could not agree with you more about the importance of special needs education. Which is precisely why, as I mentioned in my speech, that we are allocating an additional R75 million on expanding support for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Western Cape. Which is exactly why we will be completing an additional 25 classrooms at special schools to create more places for our most vulnerable learners and which is exactly why we will be spending an additional R73,9 million supporting learners, particularly with profound intellectual disabilities here in the Western Cape.

Which brings me, hon Speaker, to the hon Khalid Sayed, the hon Leader of the Opposition, whose remarks prove one thing. That although he may be a leader, he is not a reader. He asks whether we are expanding access to Education in our province.

Well, it is precisely to expand the access that we will be spending R2,862 billion on school infrastructure; why the Rapid School Build programme has already completed 15 new schools in communities where demand is highest, including, as I said, in Delft, in Atlantis, in Lwandle, in Crossroads and in Darling. And which is why, which is why we aim to complete 29 new and replacement schools here in the Western Cape over the next three years. ...[Applause.] [Interjections.]

Hon Speaker, we have of course been hit by the Budget cuts from National

Government, but what I said is that we have reprioritised and that is why we are working hard to expand the Basket of Posts again by up to 477 posts. Of course, these Budget pressures are shared pressures in every province in our country, but we have done things differently.

We have put learners first. We have not cut nutrition. We have not cut transport. [Interjections.] We have not cut transfers to schools. [Interjections.] We have not cut subsidies to independent schools and most importantly, we have not cut spending on special needs, which appears to be exactly what other provinces have done across South Africa. [Interjections.]

Now, hon Speaker, the hon Leader of the Opposition implies that we are not responding to the needs of the learners in our poorest communities. But what the hon Leader of the Opposition does not recognise is that this year we will spend R622 million providing school meals to over 537 000 learners in our schools.

While the National School Nutrition Programme does receive, of course, a National Conditional Grant, this grant does not cover the costs of food inflation. So, we use funding from our own Provincial Equitable Share to top up the grant, this year by R71 million. Without our additional investment, our children would not be receiving a sufficient standard of meals. [Interjections.]

What the hon Leader of the Opposition fails to recognise is that this year we

will spend R674 million transporting learners to and from schools in the Western Cape. Every school day nearly 69 000 learners benefit from our Learner Transport Scheme, which is overwhelmingly allocated to rural areas where the distances from farms to schools is vast, and there is no form of public and commercial transport available.

What the hon Leader of the Opposition fails to recognise is that this year we will spend R89,3 million on fee exemptions for learners whose parents are not able to pay school fees in the Western Cape. Many parents, as we all know, have faced a loss of income in this tough economic climate and we offer them the opportunity to have their children's school fees paid in part or in full.

And most importantly, hon Speaker, what the hon Leader of the Opposition fails to recognise is that this year we will spend R296,9 million on additional, additional no-fee schools in the Western Cape. These are Quintile 4 and Quintile 5 schools that would ordinarily be fee-charging, but in fact, serve learners from poor communities. So, we have provided additional funding from our resources for these schools to operate on a no-fee basis.

Despite the extreme Budget challenges facing our Department, we will continue to prioritise this funding to learners who need it most in the Western Cape.

Hon Speaker, in closing, our Department of course, is under enormous

pressure, but we know from experience that there is hope and that we can achieve excellent learning outcomes in the toughest of circumstances.

I think of an example of a school that is demonstrating excellence in the face of extreme adversity. They had 121 candidates for the 2024 matric exam. Every learner wrote Maths, every learner wrote Physical Science. They achieved an overall matric pass rate of 98,3% and a bachelors pass rate of 74,4%. They achieved a Maths pass rate of 98,3% and a Physical Science pass rate of 80,2%. They achieved 136 distinctions, including 19 distinctions for Maths. More distinctions for Maths than Milnerton High School, than Protea Heights Academy, than Claremont High School and even Pinelands High School. And that school, that school, hon Speaker, is COSAT, a no-fee school in the middle of Khayelitsha. ...[Applause.]

It can be done, and we will do everything to ensure that this is the reality for every learner in the Western Cape. I thank you. ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Minister and hon members. That concludes the debate on this Vote. Hon members, before I suspend, I wish to inform you that the House will now be suspended for 45 minutes. We will resume with the Fourth Order of the Day at 2:30 PM. The House is suspended.

[House suspended at 13:46.]

[Business of the House resumed at 14:30]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please be seated. Hon members, I will allow the Secretary to read the following Order.

The SECRETARY: Debate on Vote 3: Provincial Treasury – Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 2–2025]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I see the hon Minister.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Hon Deputy Speaker, Premier, online, and my Cabinet colleagues, hon members of this House, Officials of the Provincial Treasury and our Government, residents of the Western Cape. Hon Deputy Speaker, today I table before you the Budget of the Provincial Treasury, amounting to R1,14 billion over three years, of which R359,75 million will be allocated for the 2025 financial year - the smallest Departmental Vote of the Western Cape Government.

Our Budget consists of four main units: Administration, Sustainable Resource Management, Asset Management, and Financial Governance. But if you allow me, hon Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak more transversally about our work that the Provincial Treasury will embark upon this year.

Since 2019, the Provincial Treasury has concentrated on enhancing governance for the attainment of tangible results and efforts were geared

towards establishing itself as a foundation for effective service delivery. The next phase of our journey is becoming an enabler and reliable partner, actively collaborating with the key co-ordinating ministries - the Department of the Premier and the Department of Local Government, to support our Government and municipalities with a co-ordinated approach towards service delivery.

Hon Deputy Speaker, as the saying goes, “if we want to go fast we must go alone, but if we want to go far, we must go together.”

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: That is what the Innovation Cluster is about. It is about teamwork and as one of the Innovation Cluster departments, it our job to support and enable departments and municipalities so that together we can deliver growth and jobs for our residents. In order to achieve this, I would like to ask this House today, invest in our Province by investing in our Treasury.

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: I would like to start off, hon Deputy Speaker, with culture and our people. Hon Deputy Speaker, due to the nature of our work, the “Treasurers” of our Government in this particular Vote is our biggest strength, and this is why our biggest Budget item in this Vote is

Compensation of Employees. You will see an increase of Compensation of Employees of R42,6 million to R240,5 million in 2025/2026. This is mainly to make provision for the impact of the cost-of-living adjustments, but also for filling of critical vacant posts. This also makes up the bulk of the R53,5 million, an increase you will observe within our Vote for this year. To put this into context, hon Deputy Speaker, CoE will comprise 67% of our total three-year departmental allocation for the Vote.

But filling vacant critical posts will not be enough, as our Department competes with salaries in municipalities and with the private sector. We must therefore prioritise capacity building, innovation, and well-being, to foster a motivated and high-performing team. So, how are we going to achieve this?

Hon Deputy Speaker, at the end of the day, most people want the same things in life. We want a roof over our head, dignified work, access to electricity and water, quality healthcare and education, and we want to be home for dinner, and in order to support our team to live lives they value – to be in time for that soccer game, to attend the ballet recital, to be fully focussed on being the best “Braaimaster” that they can be, we must make some changes.

Key components will include targeted professional development, youth development through internships and bursary programmes, an integrated approach to talent acquisition to attract external talent, strategies to prioritise work-life rhythm, technological integration, and creating a culture that values lifelong learning and adaptability. We are going to become obsessed with

filling critical vacancies as this will be the first step.

Our next step will be to use technology to alleviate the treasurers' workloads so that they can focus on the important strategic matters, matters in our society that require nuance and context. Let AI deal with the admin; let us deal with the vision and the strategy. Hon Deputy Speaker, while we will not be able to achieve this overnight, by working as a team we can get our treasurers home for dinner. Hon Deputy Speaker, if you believe you have what it takes to be a treasurer for the Western Cape Government, know that we will allocate R7,5 million for our external bursary programme over three years to attract talent to our Treasury.

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Further, through the work of our Supporting and Interlinked Financial Systems unit, we will upgrade our legacy systems and work towards a fully Integrated Financial Management Platform. At the heart of our Evergreen Legacy System strategy will be our Provincial Treasury Data Warehouse, which will consolidate data for improving reporting capabilities and supports evidence-based decision-making, driving economic and financial growth.

In order to thus get our officials in the Treasury, in our departments and even at times in our municipalities, home for dinner, we will allocate R39,3 million over three years towards upgrading and enhancing our

Evergreen Legacy Systems, including support towards our eProcurement System and Procurement Planning Automation Toolkit; supporting Application Transformation Readiness, which will include funding

* missing floor audio

... to implement our Supply Chain Management reform; and support and enhance our Provincial Treasury Data Centre.

Hon Deputy Speaker, as you know we are heavily reliant on the National Equitable Share and Conditional Grants, and given the fiscal constraints that we are in as a country, the Western Cape will explore new revenue sources, enhance our current revenue sources, and explore alternative and blended financing models, particularly for infrastructure projects. We can do this because we have positive balance sheets, quality financial statements, clean audits, and strong checks and balances.

Hon Deputy Speaker, we are a province you can invest in. In order to explore Alternative and Blended Financing models, we will establish an Alternative and Blended Finance policy framework. To implement this work we will allocate R 4,9 million in the current financial year to establish a panel of experts to evaluate infrastructure project proposals; and allocate R3,5 million over the MTEF to appoint dedicated capacity to explore alternative revenue sources for the Province.

We will further collaborate with the National Treasury and the World Bank to establish a Blended Finance Risk Sharing Platform, or a Credit Guarantee Vehicle as it is called, which aims to mobilise private capital by de-risking critical projects in the energy, transport and water sectors, before expanding to areas within our social sector. To further Enhance our Revenue Sources, we will work with the National Treasury to make use of the Budget Facility for Infrastructure and technical assistance from Infrastructure South Africa for provincial departments and municipalities.

We will leverage the amended Public-Private Partnership regulations from the National Treasury to accelerate infrastructure delivery and attract private investment, and hon Deputy Speaker, our pledging guideline for the departments already went out last Friday with a step-by-step guideline for how departments can utilise pledging and how exactly it works, and we will work with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to undertake research on the impact of international tourism and the ...

* missing floor audio up to here.

... possible related international tourism tax revenues, as the hon Minister Meyer last week indicated to this House.

Hon Deputy Speaker, it is important that the Treasury's work is based on data and evidence. It is also important for residents to know how Government spends the people's money and what we base our decisions on. It is about

trust! For this we require credible data and evidence. We will thus continue to innovate through our Provincial Economic Review and Outlook, the PERO, the Municipal Economic Review and Outlook, the MERO, and Budget documents.

But hon Deputy Speaker, the Provincial Treasury recently added a new publication, having launched our first-of-its-kind Local Government Budget Review publication, a transparent and data-driven snapshot of the financial health of all 30 municipalities in the province for the 2023/2024 financial year based on pre-audited outcomes. This publication focusses on revenue collection, on infrastructure investment, and the efficient use of grants and subsidies. We hope to continue building on this work in the coming year and will allocate R7,3 million towards innovation in our research publications.

To foster trust and to ensure that we are responsible in the way we spend the people's money, we will further allocate R3,08 million for expenditure reviews over the next three years. We continuously conduct expenditure reviews and will continue to find ways to become more efficient and more innovative, making the people's money stretch a little bit further.

Hon Deputy Speaker, it is important that we make it easy to do business with Government, therefore over and above the funding we are allocating, to enhance technology linked to our procurement systems and reforming our Supply Chain Management, we will allocate R600 000 towards a SMART Procurement Conference this year, so that we can make it easier for you to do

business with Government. We will further continue to publish and enhance our Public Procurement Disclosure reports which we publish on a quarterly and annual basis.

But Deputy Speaker, the current National Public Procurement Act is an obstacle for residents of the Western Cape doing business with Government, with its proposed centralisation and stripping away of provincial powers, threatening provincial procurement systems and having the potential to skyrocket our costs. We will therefore launch a Constitutional challenge, hon Deputy Speaker, against the Public Procurement Act because we believe no one should ever be excluded from participating in our provincial economy. [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: When are you going to [Inaudible.]

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Hon Deputy Speaker, the principle of fairness is important, and I would like to highlights some of our Budget items related to our Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board and gambling and racing taxes. This is the second biggest Budget item you would have observed in the Treasury Vote, with an increase of R25,4 million over three years to increase capacity for the Board. You will also see it under the main transfers. It is important to note that the last time capacity for the Board increased was about 15 years ago, and over that same period, the Board has tripled the gambling and racing taxes it has collected for the Province.

With the increase of online sports betting, it is thus important to ensure that our Board is capacitated to collect these taxes for the provincial fiscus. We are forecasting that the Board will collect more than R3 billion in taxes for the provincial fiscus over the next three years. It is therefore an investment for the future of our fiscus. It is further important that our Board members are fit and proper to serve on the Board and to ensure that we adhere to Legislative prescripts, we will allocate R120 000 per annum for probity assessments as part of the Fiscal Policy Unit in Provincial Treasury, so that anyone who applies to serve is vetted accordingly.

Our Fiscal Policy Unit, in supporting this principle of fair taxation, we will allocate R2 million in research, within the gambling sector, to ensure that economic development is balanced with the potential socio-economic impact for our residents.

Finally, we will lobby the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the National Parliament to expedite the Remote Gambling Bill, to regulate illegal online gambling, to protect our residents against the harms of the industry, and for the corresponding taxation to flow to provinces.

Hon Deputy Speaker, to support Financial and Corporate Governance, we will conduct provincial and local government accounting training, particularly on accounting topics such as Annual Reports, In-Year Monitoring, GRAP and the Modified Cash Standard Systems. We will further continue to support internal audit and risk management research, as well as support departments

and municipalities with their audit and accounting queries.

Hon Deputy Speaker, we need strong municipalities to be able to deliver services to the residents of our province. We will thus support 12 municipalities through our Western Cape Financial Management Capability Grant with projects amounting to over R63 million over the next three years.

- We will allocate R2 million to appoint a mSCOA Project Manager over the 2025/2026 financial years;
- We will allocate over R6 million for the Municipal Financial Recovery Services Grant to support municipalities requiring financial interventions;
- We will participate in the National review of the Local Government White Paper and possible Legislative amendments, and
- We will allocate R1,182 million for a Revenue Master Class to support municipalities with work on revenue enhancement and generation.

Over and above the continuous accounting, auditing, economic and procurement support that we offer to municipalities, the following municipalities will benefit from R18,6 million allocation through the Municipal Financial Capability Grant in 2025/2026 financial year. Hon Deputy Speaker –

- Cederberg Municipality will receive R2,5 million for the installation of smart water meters;

- Matzikama Municipality will receive R1,2 million for Asset Management system support, and R1,48 million for replacement of induction meter projects;
- Overstrand Municipality will receive R240 000 for a feasibility study for a Credit Control and Debt Collection Unit, and R432 000 for long term financial planning projects;
- Hessequa Municipality will receive R250 000 for indigent management, R600 000 for asset verification, and R200 000 for long term financial planning projects;
- Oudtshoorn Municipality will receive R160 000 for developing a cost reflective tariff setting tool, R800 000 for smart meter replacement, and R100 000 to support internal audit;
- Overberg District Municipality will receive R1,42 million for revenue enhancement and optimisation, R1,3 million for tourism enhancement, R750 000 for a feasibility study for the holiday resort ownership restructuring, and R300 000 for a feasibility study for the establishment of a crematorium projects;
- Saldanha Bay Municipality will receive R2 million for the installation of smart water meters;
- Kannaland Municipality will receive R500 000 for a Municipal Performance Management Data System and its roll-out;
- Beaufort West Municipality will receive R495 000 for a comprehensive cost of supply study and revenue optimisation within a changing energy landscape;
- Central Karoo District Municipality will receive R400 000 for capacity

for the Budget and Treasury staff on accounting and annual financial statement preparations, and R500 000 for long term financial planning projects;

- Prince Albert Municipality will receive R800 000 for long term financial planning, R700 000 for revenue enhancement and indigent system verification, and R1 million for installation of water and electricity meter projects; and
- Laingsburg Municipality will receive R540 000 for revenue optimisation and enhancing water management.

Hon Deputy Speaker, as a Provincial Treasury, we will continue to fight for our fair share for our Province because we believe in fairness. Trust is important to us, so we will “Step Up” to ensure that residents understand how Government spends their money.

We will innovate by diversifying our revenue sources and using technology to get our officials home for dinner so that they can live lives they value, and we will focus on value-for-money by making it easier to do business with Government.

We will continue to support strong financial and corporate governance. We will do all of this, hon Deputy Speaker, because it is our job to support and enable departments and municipalities so that we can together deliver Growth and Jobs for our residents.

I would like to thank our wonderful Treasury team, led by our Head of Treasury, Ms Julinda Gantana, and our senior management in the box, for your leadership ... [Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: ... your unwavering dedication and commitment that our Treasury will be innovating in ways that we have never seen before. Our Departmental Officials, all 336 on the establishment, a little bit less because we are going to focus on those vacancies, for your hard work to bring these programmes together and for stepping up towards a more revenue-focussed Treasury.

A special thank you to our CFO Ms Annamarie Smit for making sure that we stick to good governance principles *ten dat ons eie boeke klop* [and that our own books add up.] To my Ministry team led by Dr Grant Caswell, thank you and Ms Marshalle Frederiks and Mr Lenku-Vince Oosthuizen, for your strategic advice, guidance, and many, many robust legal, economic and fiscal debates that we have on a daily basis.

To every treasurer, whether in person here today or online, of our 336 establishment, the smallest Government Department in our Province, and the smallest Treasury in our country know that the reason we are a province people can invest in, is because you are a Treasury we can invest in, and it is my hope, hon Deputy Speaker, that this Budget Vote reflects that.

[Interjection.]

Hon Deputy Speaker, I hereby table the Provincial Treasury Vote and hope that the House supports it. I thank you. [Applause]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Minister. I recognise the hon Nkondlo.

Ms N D NKONDLO (ANC): Hon Deputy Speaker, members of this House and citizens of the province. Allow me to first congratulate the hon member and Professor Mbombo, by receiving a Black Excellence Award from the Black Management Forum last week Friday here in Cape Town. [Applause]

Let me further plead to her to speak to the self-proclaimed horse next to her, that SA belongs to all who live in it, Black and White, [Laughter.] and segregation laws were done away with, and while we celebrate “Freedom” this month, just to remind her, and so we are citizens with full rights to reside and own properties anywhere in this country of ours, from the Eastern Cape to the Western Cape, to Limpopo, to Northern Cape, no one is a horse by exercising their citizen right and the choice of freedom of movement. [Interjection.]

Hon Deputy Speaker, Budget reflects choices about what Government will and will not do, and thus the writing is on the wall of this Budget being a budget to sustain the first economy, that is predominantly White and

masculine in character, a Budget that drives the legacy of apartheid towards economy, one for the rich, that is male and White, with sprinkles of the Black proxies, as detailed in “Black Skins, White Mask” by Frantz Fanon, while it systematically keeps to the fringes the Black majority in poverty and squalor through a “racialised” capitalist economic growth agenda.

That is why through this Budget this Provincial Treasury could not save the SMME Booster Fund targeted to the most vulnerable sector of this economy, which has spent nothing even close to a billion, whilst on the other hand the hon Minister and all her colleagues will be boasting about the billions of rands that are going towards Infrastructure fund, that will benefit the big construction companies to whom evidence is available of their mischief, not to adhere to the very subcontracting provisions prescribed in the regulations for this industry, let alone the meagre wages they pay to construction workers in the name of jobs, and their behaviour of appointing illegal foreigners as witnessed in the George collapse building. An industry that brazenly breaks rules, undermines Government policies and regulation is punted as the saviour of our economy and the messiah for jobs.

The leadership of this Provincial Treasury is also an interesting point to note, that the DA pursuing its third term since 2009, and interestingly it had five MECs to date in this Portfolio, with the second term being so unstable, with three MECs in five years, from MEC Ivan Meyer, to MEC Maynier, then to MEC Wenger. What does this tell you about leadership of public finances and their importance in this DA-led Province? Is there a relationship to be drawn

from the leadership changes in this Department and the challenges in the Administration where CoE budgets had been surrendered repeatedly, whilst delays in filling vacancies became the order of the day, leading to stress in the workforce and workforce exits that had been recorded in this Department, a phenomenon that draws concerns from the SCOPA in the previous financial year around their annual report. [Interjection.]

We were told by DOTP that this Department is just a little above the threshold of 20% on CoE, below the Provincial Department's average which is sitting at above 30%. DOTP further told us that in their work of streamlining human resources, they are also looking at efficiencies in structure, which in any way is what must preoccupy us all to find the best men and women for the job, and in this case in protection of the public finance and equitable distribution of public resources. We wonder, with the upcoming local Government Elections of 2026, in this term, if we will not see a reshuffle of the MEC, and we are sitting in anxious anticipation. This Department spoke of Blended Financing models as a future consideration to, I quote from the book:

“... to cushion provincial fiscus against unpredictable national fiscal framework and to facilitate sustainable service delivery.”

Whilst we welcome the CoE increase of 21,5% and given the flat structure this Department of Treasury is having, it is important also to ensure that we manage the increasing budgets around consultants, because these are very

important, you know, in ensuring that we do not hollow out a state capacity, but instead built in into the State, the capacity to actually oversee this private sector that is actually going to be delivering services and goods for the public. It is important to also note that on page 104 of the Blue Book we are told of the Provincial Treasury, open quote in the book it says:

“We explore research into a new revenue stream.”

Another announcement which I must make mentioned, from what the hon member Herron correctly characterised, this Government is a “Government of Declarations.”

An HON MEMBER: Yes.

Ms N D NKONDLO (ANC): That it was in 2021 under the hon MEC Maynier’s budget, the “Budget of Hope”, when he declared the Fiscal Futures project, and then his Budget Vote further emphasised that the Fiscal Futures project will build on many years of fiscal sustainability research done by Provincial Treasury to identify future risk and respond to the rapid changes in the national and provincial fiscal landscapes. It seems in 2025 we are still continuing in doing research over a little of research that gets to be done by this Department.

Again in their public stance and [Inaudible] from this Government of Declarations, has become the new norm in the public financing and budgeting

process of this Province, as they talk less, they talk more with less action or results, regurgitating with money in millions and billions. The only constant introduction was the basis of spend, it is the same, just new terms gets to be changed. Again the hon MEC Maynier in 2021 told this very House, under what he termed, “Efficient Infrastructure Investment”, that in his speech he said, and I quote:

“The new project preparation facility which was announced in the Main Budget will assist departments and public entities with project preparation cost, so they can create a fair visible pipeline of Infrastructure projects...”

And the R23,8 million was allocated then to the new project preparation facility as a first tranche. He further told the House then that:

“... under this Provincial Treasury Department a technical support panel for Infrastructure financing is currently in the final stages of development, with final terms of reference being at an advanced stage.”

If that was the announcement in 2021, why in 2025 on page 107, hon MEC of Finance, that R4,392 million has been reallocated from the 2024/2025 financial year to the current ... [Interjection.] ... for the purpose again of the appointment of a panel of experts to technically assist and evaluate project proposal for Infrastructure funding opportunities, including Infrastructure Pipelines. So from the project preparation facility of 2021, with the technical

support panel that was in its final stages, including two TORs, the Department again announces another appointment in 2025 of another technical support panel for the very Infrastructure project. Who is fooling who?

This Department is supposed to play a clear role in ensuring departments and municipalities to provide policy direction, facilitate and enforce the management of provincial financial systems and Supply Chain and Moveable Asset Management systems within the provincial and municipal spheres, and to promote accountability and financial governance within department entities and municipalities. [Interjection.] However, when you look at the under-spending of the City of Cape Town in Human Settlements, you wonder if this Department does actually do its job, for the Informal Settlement Upgrading Partnership Grant, the Metro was allocated R592,9 million for the 2024/2025 financial year, and now we are told that the total available funds was reduced by the National Treasury due to poor performance.

In the year just before the Local Government Elections we were supposed to see an increase of resources on financial governance, especially to deal with what the Department calls political instability risk as defined by the Department, but also the phenomenon of coalition governments that is becoming a new norm, even in this well-governed Province. The slight increase in financial governance programme from R46,35 million to R49,252 million in 2025/2026 should be reconsidered.

Our municipalities are in need of financial oversight. More money should be spent on making sure that our municipalities have the right systems in place for fruitful expenditure. However, there is a 59,35% decrease in the MFMA coordination. The mismanagement of funds creates a risk for the poor and the allocation of funds creates a risk on the whole province, but more importantly it affects our citizens, it derails service delivery and the inability of Government to operate.

The Provincial Treasury sits at the centre of governance within this Province, and when things are going wrong at smaller municipalities like Saldanha Bay Municipality recklessly mismanaging R2,5 million during the 2023/2024 financial year, or when police investigate dodgy tender processes in the City that involve members of Council, because you are at the core of governance, financial governance in particular, we will be asking you some questions, Provincial Treasury. Dealing with financial misgovernance in some municipalities in this fiscal changing and politically fluid environment, is something that must preoccupy all of us.

Perhaps we should start bringing to the fiscal discourse a discussion about reimagining and reconfiguring South African provinces, considering the energy and water constraints we are experiencing as a result of climate change, guided by natural resource and catchment management areas. Should we not reposition local Government role and revenue consideration at local level? Should we not be thinking beyond ourselves as supposedly project managers between – as this sphere of Government, between National and

Local Government, and start to live through to the notion of local sphere as closer to the people and where services are happening?

We are not convinced that this Budget enables equality and inclusivity of growth development of Western Cape, and so as the ANC we reject this Budget. I thank you, Deputy. [Applause]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Nkondlo. I see on the virtual platform, the hon Petrus. Hon Petrus?

Mr B PETRUS (PA): Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker and colleagues, I greet you all and all the people of the Western Cape. I speak on behalf of the Patriotic Alliance. Hon Deputy Speaker, we support fiscal discipline, but we will not support selective distribution of funds and resources to our communities. The Patriotic Alliance will keep on fighting and campaigning for sustainable growth, jobs and opportunities, for upcoming businesses and service providers in the townships. The role of Treasury is crucial to achieve it; this must be an all integrated approach including municipalities through the strengthening of the local economic development units.

Hon Deputy Speaker, safety was identified as a key factor for economic growth. You talk about extortion, but do we have the capacity to neutralise

it? What is your plan and amount budgeted to fight extortion, which you have identified as a risk, and what is the financial impact of economic crime on the Budget and economy of the Western Cape? This Government must introduce more new markets, also to upcoming businesses. We will support your efforts in achieving this. It is also important that we spend more on human resources and capacity. If we do not have the manpower we will not be in a position to effectively deliver to the people of the Western Cape.

Hon Deputy Speaker, understand we cannot continue without consequences, we all have a collective responsibility to see that services are delivered to the people and we agree with performance-based budgeting. Despite our serious concerns about this Budget Vote, the Patriotic Alliance supports the Vote.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you so much, hon Petrus, I see on the virtual platform, the hon Cassiem.

Ms A CASSIEM (EFF): Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker, while some of the key functions of this Department includes the allocation, as well as the management of fiscal resources to other provincial departments and municipalities, what is concerning, hon Deputy Speaker, is the lack of action from this Department when those who have been provided with this fiscal resources fail to either fully utilise them or to utilise them properly. Hon Deputy Speaker, it is also not clear what sort of advice this Department renders to these other provincial departments, as those departments still fail to provide the much needed key services, such as the

provision for housing, building of infrastructure, as well as classrooms and hospitals among others.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the results of such failure in service delivery means that those departments will now return some of those unused allocated funds back to National Treasury at the end of the financial year, whilst conditions of our people in the Western Cape continue to be worse of. Hon Deputy Speaker, under the Department's watch, we have seen municipalities such as Beaufort West, Theewaterskloof and Kannaland, experience financial difficulties, ranging from being unable to handle and properly use their own finances, as well as incurring huge debt bills to national entities such as Eskom.

The question then arises, hon Deputy Speaker, as to why there are no pre-emptive measures from the Department to municipalities in this province to guard against these pitfalls. Hon Deputy Speaker, the Department has been failing over the years to effectively use its allocated Budget to make sure that it renders its duties effectively as provided above. So as the EFF, hon Deputy Speaker, we are not convinced that this particular tabled Budget will be used for a good purpose and we therefore reject it. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Cassiem. I recognise the hon Johnson.

Mr P JOHNSON (DA): Hon Deputy Speaker, today we consider a Budget that embodies not only fiscal responsibility, but also a firm commitment to innovation, growth, and resilience. In the face of a challenging economic climate, the Provincial Treasury has adopted bold, forward-looking strategies to ensure that every rand is spent with maximum efficiency and impact.

Through initiatives such as the Alternative and Blended Financing, alongside the Fiscal Futures project, we are laying a solid foundation for sustainable development and expanded economic opportunity in our province. Continued investment in the capacity-building of staff within the Department and its entity, the Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board, it is already bearing fruit. This Budget further affirms the Department's commitment to supporting local municipalities, ensuring legislative compliance, and ultimately delivering the best possible services to the residents of our beautiful province.

Hon Deputy Speaker, people and innovation continue to be the primary drivers for the Provincial Treasury in fostering an environment where good governance flourishes, municipalities receive support, and public resources are effectively utilised for lasting impact. By promoting transparency, enhancing fiscal resilience, and strengthening collaborations, the Provincial Treasury ensures that every decision is made with integrity and in the best interest of the people of the Western Cape.

For this reason, the Provincial Treasury recognises that people are this

Department's biggest strength and should be invested in continuously. The Budget allocation reflects the priorities of people and innovation. Of the total allocation, 67% has been earmarked for the Compensation of Employees. This marks a more than 20% increase compared to the 2024/2025 Adjusted Appropriation. The Provincial Treasury is committed to filling critical vacant posts, reducing the workload of current staff, ensuring their well-being, and enhancing the Department's capacity to deliver on its core services and responsibilities.

When it comes to supporting local governments, the Provincial Treasury has launched several capacity-building initiatives to assist municipalities and provincial departments. These projects are designed to acquire, enhance, and retain the necessary skills, the knowledge, tools, equipment, and other resources to ensure that the Department and municipalities adhere to the PFMA and MFMA Legislation, thereby promoting sound financial governance. More than R22 million will be allocated to municipalities to enhance their financial management capacity and provide financial support aimed at improving overall financial governance. This will be achieved through interventions by the Provincial Executive and the Provincial Government.

Hon Deputy Speaker, I would like to bring attention to the Fiscal Futures Tool. This tool is a game-changer for the Provincial Treasury, transforming how we predict and respond to fiscal challenges. This tool was specifically designed for the Western Cape Government, enabling us to forecast key

economic trends, such as GDP growth and revenue fluctuations, and assesses the impact on provincial finances. Its real value lies in its ability to inform data-driven decisions. During the last financial year, the tool played a pivotal role in navigating fiscal consolidation, allowing us to model different scenarios and adjust budgets proactively. Beyond short-term adjustments, it strengthens long-term planning by identifying risks and opportunities in an uncertain economic climate.

Critically, the tool also helped us anticipate national budget trends, ensuring that our funding strategies remained aligned with broader fiscal shifts. This is not just about better budgeting; it is about building resilience, driving reform, and securing the Western Cape's financial future.

Hon Deputy Speaker, nearly R30 million will be allocated to the Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board, with the rest of the Budget designated for operational costs. The allocation to the Western Cape Gambling and Racing Board reinforces the Department's commitment in the capacitating of people and enhancing of revenue, the Medium-Term Estimate for the 2025/2026, from casino taxes and horse racing taxes, amounts to an excess of R1.3 billion, more than paying for itself.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the Provincial Treasury will also establish an infrastructure panel of experts to assist with Alternative and Blended Finance initiatives by evaluating infrastructure projects. This is a proactive measure in addressing national fiscal constraints by diversifying its financing

mechanisms for infrastructure development. By turning to alternative financing options, such as PPPs Public-Private Partnerships, and collaborating with global financial institutions, the Western Cape Government is aiming to ease budgetary pressures and ensure major infrastructure projects can still move forward.

An amount of R4.4 million has been reallocated from the 2024/2025 financial year, to 2025/2026 financial year, to conduct an economic analysis of the potential tax implications under the proposed new legislative framework for casinos. This funding will also support the appointment of experts to provide technical assistance and evaluate project proposals for infrastructure funding opportunities, including those within the Infrastructure Pipeline. I urge members of this House to read page 26 of the summary booklet for more information on this innovative initiative.

Hon Deputy Speaker, together the investment in the capacitation of people, the Fiscal Futures project and the support provided to local municipalities, and the Alternative and Blended Financing initiatives, the Provincial Treasury demonstrates its commitment to innovation, resilience, and growth. These initiatives represent a Government that is not only addressing current challenges, but also looking ahead with a clear vision for the future and considering innovative tools. Through thoughtful planning, proactive management, and a strong dedication to sustainable development, we are ensuring that the Western Cape continues to prosper, even in challenging times. In this regard, the DA fully supports this Budget. Thank you.

[Applause]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I recognise the hon Minister.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. My colleagues are teasing me because I brought my red pen with today. Okay. Hon Deputy Speaker, I will try my best to deal with, or respond to as many of the items as possible, the majority of which did not have to do with Vote 3, but I will do my best to get to all of them.

In terms of the Budget sustaining a White economy, this is not true, hon Deputy Speaker, 59% of all procurement in the Western Cape Government goes to Black-owned businesses and we do that without excluding anyone from the provincial economy, and you will find that in the previous financial year's Public Procurement Disclosure Reports, which is public information... 80% of our Budget also goes to our social sector that we have tabled in the House, that includes Education, Health, our Social Services and our housing and community amenities. In terms of the wording which was "infrastructure mischief", if there is any allegations please submit these for investigation, I would hate for people to also be accomplices in terms of the National Legislation.

In terms of the George collapse and the building, to my knowledge this matter is still with the African Police Service, and the hon Premier and hon Minister Simmers have already spoken to this matter in the House.

In terms of CoE Budget surrendered and vacancies, this was also raised in the SCOPA meeting, and a commitment that we made last year at SCOPA was that we are going to focus on filling out critical vacancies, but also capacitating our Department, and hon Deputy Speaker, in this Main Budget what we attempted to do is to show how we are going to thus use the Budget in order to address these resolutions that we received from SCOPA, and this is what this Budget is focused on, is capacitating ourselves.

In terms of the CoE Budget surrendered, last year in the Adjustment Budget, we did indicate to the Committee and to this House when we tabled the Adjustment, that we are asking to surrender but that we get our money back into the Main Budget, so the realignment of that CoE that you will see was when we asked last year for Treasury just to give the money back in terms of the respective budget. So that is that realignment that you will see.

In terms of consultants, this is a bit of a mixed bag, because some research is really much on a very niche industry. There are very few consultants for example in South Africa that does research, for example around the gambling and racing industry that has access to respective data and evidence, however we also, for example, as a new innovation last year, we wrote the Provincial Economic Review and Outlook in-house for the first time last year, so as much as we use consultants, we also do our best to write a lot of our research internally as well, for example this Local Government booklet that I showed you was also written in-house by ourselves.

In terms of the Fiscal Futures, I did suggest to the Committee when we were before them last week, yes, to call us before the Committee so that we can show the Committee how we are using the Fiscal Futures Tool. I alluded to some of the work that the Fiscal Futures Tool is already doing, in the main speech when I indicated that we are now able to forecast national growth, and how we are using that type of information in our budgetary processes.

In terms of the Infrastructure Preparation Facility, that is a little bit different to the infrastructure panel, however hon Deputy Speaker, we are more than willing that once our Alternative and Blended Financing Framework is done, which it is close to done, you can see some of the preliminary information on page 28 of the summary booklet and more information in the OPRI. We are more than happy to come before the Committee to go into detail as to what exactly Alternative and Blended Financing means, and it is not just loans, it is not just grants, it is also corporate social responsibility, it is also philanthropic financing, it is also grant funding, it is quite a bag of different finance mechanisms, and not every department, and not every sector is necessarily going to use the same financing mechanism for their industry, for example. But we are more than happy to do more in-detail information for the Committee should they wish for that.

In terms of municipalities and allocating municipalities more money, hon Deputy Speaker, I did speak quite a bit on funding that we are going to give to municipalities. I went into detail also per municipalities. This is also

separate from the grant funding that DLG gives municipalities, this is also separate from the grant funding the National Treasury gives municipalities, and what we also try to do is we try not to duplicate the funding that we give to municipalities. For example, if National Treasury is going to give you water metres, then maybe we will help you with funding for electricity metres, but there is no reason for us to duplicate funding in this regard for example.

In terms of allegations regarding the City, please do report this to the National Treasury and CC us, and please also include the respective evidence, as the City is classified as a metropolitan in terms of national legislation in this regard.

In terms of energy and water constraints, I went into detail on the Financial Capability Grant a little bit earlier in the main Budget Vote speech that was earlier now today, and much of this funding is also going to go for funding towards energy and water programmes and revenue enhancement within municipalities, and this is over and above the energy projects that the Government is doing on page 126 of our OPRI, you will see, hon Deputy Speaker, that there is an annexure, there is Premier working on the Western Cape Integrated Resource Plan, the Demand Side Management Programme, the Education Department is working on led lighting, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning is working on the Green Economy Ecosystem Support...

The Premier's Department is working on Municipal Pooled Buying, Infrastructure is working on Municipal IPP Procurement in Stellenbosch, Infrastructure is working on project preparation facility, Local Government is working on pilot renewable energy solutions in municipalities, Local Government is working on specialist service providers, Health and Wellness is working on PV systems in provincial health buildings, the Western Cape Education Department is working on solar PV in schools, Infrastructure is working on grid and transmission infrastructure upgrade planning, Local Government is working with municipalities on their EMP's.

Economic Development and Tourism is working with the Western Cape Just Energy Transition Investment Plan, the Premier is also working on additional capacity, Local Government is working on additional capacity, also specifically regarding water, and wastewater, load shedding, and Western Cape Education Department is also working on additional capacity for support and implementation, and then there is also additional money that is in the Reserves because the Energy and Water Council is currently relooking some of their programmes to include water, in the previous what we called Energy Reserves specifically.

In terms of Human Settlements, we support the Department of Infrastructure with their work on the Inter-Governmental Dispute because we do believe that the data at a National level is incorrect, and we will support them in that work. On the decrease on the MFMA Budget in the book – so hon Deputy Speaker, I am just going to quickly go through this because it is actually an

accounting shift, it is not that it disappeared; it is just an accounting shift.

So the Grant Budgets used to be centralised under the MFMA coordination. So this year it has been allocated to the respective managers, it is in capacity building in Programme 4, and the rest, either the MFMA Group 1 or 2 is depending on the Director responsible for the respective grants. So it is not that the money has disappeared, or the programme has disappeared, or that we are not doing it anymore, it is just really an accounting shift from one unit to another, we are still doing the work, so there is no actual decrease in terms of service delivery in that regard.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the hon member Petrus asked us how much of this Budget goes to our Safety and Economic Development programmes, just under R4 billion of this Budget goes to safety, it is R3,95 billion, and just over R43 billion goes to our Growth for Jobs programmes. You will also find these in the respective clusters, so why you will not find the direct programme in the Provincial Treasury Vote, which deals with Provincial Treasury matters, finance matters, you will find this often in some of the other departments, like Economic Development, like Agriculture, and so on.

In terms of extortion, my colleague in Police Oversight and Community Safety already spoke to the extortion programmes last week, but I encourage you to please engage the Department and the Minister on these items.

In terms of new markets for economic development, my colleague the hon

Minister Meyer, Economic Development, Agriculture and Wesgro spoke to these last week, I do encourage the member to engage those particular committees more on these programmes, and how you can participate. One of their programmes that I absolutely love is the Export Accelerator programme that is Economic Development and Wesgro and Agriculture, because what happens is that programme actually helps SMMEs to understand what they need to do in order to scale so that they can access new markets in terms of exporting. So please do engage these departments through their respective committees or the respective Minister. I am sure that they will be more than happy to assist.

In terms of Human Settlements, I have already dealt with that, that we support the DOE with the IGD. In terms of the support to Kannaland, so I know that I only dealt with what we support in Kannaland with, with the Financial Capability Grant, member Cassiem, in terms of the R500 000 we are giving them for Municipal Performance Management Data System and rollout, but however if you are a municipality that is under financial intervention, you also then qualify for the Financial Intervention Grant which is over R6 million for this programme that we are budgeting for the next three years, to be able to help municipalities to be able to get out of their interventions, and to support them while they are in it, but we are also currently working with Kannaland. I know that previously Kannaland did not agree to the financial recovery plan between National Treasury and ourselves, the Provincial Treasury, but they have agreed now and we are working with National Treasury, Provincial Treasury, and Kannaland, to make sure that we

have a financial recovery plan for them in place.

But hon Deputy Speaker, I just want to end off by saying that what we really tried to focus on in this particular Provincial Treasury Vote, you know sometimes we refer to ourselves as “Treasury” and sometimes we refer to us as “Finance”, but what we really try to focus on for the Department in this Vote, is how we are going to make sure that we capacitate our people so that they do not burn out, so we are able to alleviate their workloads, and in order for this we are really capacitating in terms of filling the critical vacancies, making sure that we have development programmes in place, making sure that we have work-life rhythm policies in place, making sure that we use technology in order to alleviate workloads of people.

We are also saying to ourselves that we have done so well over the years in terms of understanding, expenditure, spending patterns, we need to now reshift towards focusing on revenue, because this is now a new sector that we need to understand, we need to understand how we are able to [Interjection.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Minister, are you able to take your seat? I know that you have indicated that you are concluding, but we have a point of order to be raised. I see the hon Petrus.

Mr B PETRUS (PA): Thank you. Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker, we are busy with the Budget here, can we have [Interjection.] [Inaudible.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Petrus, do you have a point of order, if so if you are able to raise that point of order.

Mr B PETRUS (PA): Yes, hon Deputy Speaker. Can we have that amount that was budgeted for economic crime extortion?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Petrus that is not a point of order. I will encourage you to submit any additional questions via the Parliamentary processes. Hon Minister, back over to you. [Interjection.]

Mr B PETRUS (PA): Hon Deputy Speaker?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have already taken your point of order which is not a point of order. The hon Minister will conclude at this particular time. [Interjection.]

Mr B PETRUS (PA): No, no I did not say it is a point of order, hon Deputy Speaker, you say that.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon Minister, please conclude.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE: Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker, I know that sometimes it can be a little bit confusing because when we tabled the Main Budget, so on 27 March, I was Treasury actually, because

now I am tabling on behalf of the whole Western Cape Government. But today actually, I know I call everyone “treasurers” and you know these are some of the colloquial words that we use, but today we are Vote 3, the Provincial Treasury Vote, how are we going to spend money within the Department, and not necessarily what Safety is going to spend on Economic Development. However, I will repeat some of the figures I indicated a bit earlier on our safety programmes, and hon Deputy Speaker, you can also find this in the summary booklet that we sent everyone and tabled, it is also a new innovation, in case anyone wondered about the extra publications that we are doing, of the full Budget of R269,5 billion over the MTEF.

We are spending money on Growth for Jobs, Safety, Educated, Healthy and Caring Society, and Innovation, Culture and Governance, and you will find that Safety is just under R4 billion in terms of the programmes, you will find that Growth for Jobs is just over R43 billion for their respective programmes, and this is a bit of a summary in this booklet on what respective programmes are based on. You will find some more information in the OPRI, you would have also found more information in the respective departments’ book, and I have given information on that, and my request is that if you have specific questions for a particular Minister based on their portfolio, please do submit it to them. I am sure my colleagues, we will be able to send through more information to Parliament if need be.

In terms of just the Vote for the Provincial Treasury and how we are going to capacitate ourselves in terms of Provincial Treasury, we obviously, hon

Deputy Speaker, I was saying that we are going to be more revenue focussed, we are going to focus a lot more on technology in order to be able to alleviate workloads, but also when it comes to financing mechanisms and things like taxation, it is a big topic in South Africa, so for us what is very important is the principle of fairness and we have highlighted for example the work that we are going to be doing with Gambling and Racing, how we are going to bring that principle of fairness in.

But we also want strong municipalities, and we have really, we have looked at some of the information that municipalities have been sending through and how we can collaborate across different Government departments, to be able to support our respective municipalities.

Hon Deputy Speaker, I want to thank again just our Treasury, and also the Chairperson and the respective members of the Committee, for always for their robust questioning, and also for their ideas, their suggestions. We always try to find a way to improve even more and more upon our work and we really hope that you will see in this Budget Vote, how the Province Treasury really is stepping up so that we are able to support departments and municipalities, so that together we can all deliver for growth and jobs. Hon Deputy Speaker, I hope that this House will support the Vote. Thank you.
[Applause]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Minister. That concludes the debate on this particular Vote. Officials that are in the officials' bay will

exit at this particular time. We have guests arriving for the Department of Mobility. Thank you, HOD, and all the officials for your attendance.

I will note the Secretary to read the following order.

The SECRETARY: Debate on Vote 8: Mobility – Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 2-2025].

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I recognise the Minister.

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear! [Interjections.]

†Die MINISTER VAN MOBILITEIT: Agb Adjunkspeaker, agb Premier in sy afwesigheid, Kabinet kollegas, Leier van die Amptelike Opposisie, agb lede van die Huis en almal in die Huis, veral *Team Mobiliteit*. *Molweni, goeiemiddag, good afternoon.*

[The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: Hon Deputy Speaker, hon Premier in his absence, Cabinet colleagues, Leader of the Official Opposition, hon members of the House and all in the House, especially *Team Mobility*. *Molweni, goeiemiddag, good afternoon.*]

Freedom Month is significant to our country's young democracy. It is a time to reflect on the gains of the past 31 years while looking at opportunities that lie ahead, specifically the importance of accessible and equitable transportation for all our residents.

Hon Deputy Speaker, mobility is a basic human right and the lifeblood of the Western Cape's economy.

It is indeed how we get to work, schools, hospitals, places of worship, connect with our loved ones and how we move goods from production to the market.

During the 2025 State of the Province Address in my hometown, Beaufort West, the hon Premier made a clarion call to everyone to step up. As the Department of Mobility we are doing exactly that. With this Budget we are stepping up for the economy and for all residents of our beloved province.

An HON MEMBER: Hear-hear!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: I am therefore humbled that we have been entrusted with a R3,2 billion Budget for the 25/26 financial year to advance mobility. †Baie dankie aan agb Minister Baartman en haar span. [Thank you to hon Minister Baartman and her team.]

We are indeed putting our money where our mouth is.

This Budget is a testament of this Government's commitment to enhancing mobility across our province, promoting inclusivity, supporting economic growth and ensuring that we continue to build a just and equitable society for

all.

Hon Deputy Speaker, as we continue to grapple with the mobility challenges faced in our province, our delivery plan is underpinned by our vision of connecting people, goods and institutions.

One such key challenge is indeed congestion. Cape Town is now positioned as the 9th congested city in the world, with commuters losing an average of 94 hours per year due to congestion. This is why everything we do is geared towards changing the current landscape.

We are indeed elevating the need for an efficient public transport system and in the process of finalising our draft Provincial Land Transport Framework. The PLTF serves as a strategic guide for land transport planning and has a long-term view to address the province's unique mobility challenges.

In the coming weeks we will be embarking on a public participation process to invite comments from our residents and partners. While the PLTF process is underway we need to address the current challenge in public transport.

Public transport deeply influences our daily lives and is indeed very close to my heart. A functional public transport system is not just a convenience, it is the cornerstone of economic growth, social inclusivity and sustainability.

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: Hon Deputy Speaker, a functional public transport system encompasses passenger rail as the backbone while supported and complemented by bus services, the minibus taxis, e-hailing taxis and non-motorised transport. All these modes of transport are vital for daily commuting.

It is for this reason that the bulk of our Budget is geared towards public transport solutions for our commuters.

The George Integrated Public Transport Network continues to be a trailblazer as the first and only IPTN in a non-metro area.

The GoGeorge bus service conducts nearly 21 000 daily passenger trips and covers 75% of households in George. This is indeed an outstanding achievement. Therefore we are committing an additional R83 million to advance the rollout of phase 4A of the project. This is the remaining route that will connect Thembaletu to the CBD area.

Due to the success of this particular service the National Department of Transport has made an indicative investment of a further R250 million to advance the project. [Interjections.]

This service is more than just transport, hon Deputy Speaker, it is a catalyst for economic growth and job creation in this region. By investing in

infrastructure and services like GoGeorge we are laying the foundation for a thriving economy that serves the needs of our communities.

An HON MEMBER: Where is Beaufort?

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: Hon Deputy Speaker, if you recall during my reply in the SOPA in my hometown, Nebowa, hon member Bans made a clarion plea that we do need to focus in Beaufort West, especially in the Central Karoo.

As a government that is responsive [Interjections.] and it is one of our values for this particular Government, we are responsive. We do not look at who you are, what colour of T-shirt you wear, but we look at the needs of our people.

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: Now focussing on the Central Karoo, one of our underdeveloped districts in our country. R4 million will be allocated towards the Intertown Rural Transport Solution, hon member Bans. [Interjections.] This solution seeks to strengthen collaboration with the minibus taxi operators to connect citizens to social, education and health services.

†n AGB LID: Nou praat jy!

[An HON MEMBER: Now you're talking!]

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: For the 25/26 financial year R1,3 billion has been allocated by the National Government from the PTOG to manage and monitor Golden Arrow Bus Services.

The bus service carries around 230 000 passengers per day from townships such as – listen quietly – Mbekweni, Wellington, Khayelitsha, Gugulethu, Nyanga, Mitchells Plain, [Interjections.] Elsiesrivier, Eersterivier, Strand, Grassy Park, just to name a few, to access socio-economic opportunities to a subsidised rate. [Interjections.]

Hon Deputy Speaker, the minibus taxi industry continues to operate throughout the Western Cape and provides approximately 1,5 million passenger trips per day. The industry's financial operating model is not economically viable, which leads to many challenges, including the rampant violence and intimidation tactics amongst operators.

It is against this background that my Department has set aside R9,2 million to directly support the industry through a financial agreement.

Most importantly, hon Deputy Speaker, R2 million of this funding will be used for training interventions, conflict resolution initiatives, including mediation and professionalisation programmes.

Since its inception the Minibus Taxi Task Team has been making remarkable progress.

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: The engagements at times are robust, but it is a step in the right direction. Transforming the industry into a safer and more efficient transport option for commuters is pivotal.

Hon Deputy Speaker, now turning my attention to passenger rail, the backbone of public transport. I beg for your indulgence as I am going to talk about the backbone of public transport.

Passenger rail is vital to the public transport system of the Western Cape, serving as a lifeline for countless residents and a foundation for sustainable urban growth.

It offers an affordable mode of transportation, especially for low-income communities, connecting them to economic opportunities, education and essential services.

I am therefore encouraged by how PRASA's Recovery Plan is faring. The recovery plan focusses on restoring and improving passenger rail services, particularly on the Central Line, which has been severely affected by vandalism, cable theft and illegal encroachments.

Most notably, hon Deputy Speaker, is the recent testing operations at the Khayelitsha branch line. This morning PRASA carried out testing operations to Chris Hani with passengers for the first time. We are indeed encouraged by the stride that is made, regardless of where you come from, as the focus is on our commuters. When you do well we clap hands, when you do bad we hit you.

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: Once the testing operations are approved by the Rail Safety Regulator we will see the entire Khayelitsha branch line running from Chris Hani to Cape Town. This is a great win for the province and mostly for the residents of Khayelitsha who were left with limited public transport options for more than five years.

In my recent engagement with PRASA I have been advised that the full operation of this strategic line is imminent.

The next line on PRASA's Recovery Plan is the Kapteinsklip line that runs from Mitchells Plain. †Ons kyk na almal. [We look at everyone.]

When both lines are fully operational this will be an astounding win for commuters.

While we continue to advocate for the devolution of passenger rail to a capable local state, we are working together with PRASA to get passenger rail to its former glory. We are not going to abandon our call for devolution of passenger rail. We forge ahead, but when you are doing well we work with you, but we are still looking forward into a devolution of passenger rail to capable states. [Interjections.]

Hon Deputy speaker, I am delighted to announce that we are currently in discussions with PRASA to formalise our working relationship through a memorandum of understanding.

Hon Deputy Speaker, strategic partnerships are essential to address challenges and improve the mobility system.

Non-motorised transport remains a focal area for the Department. NMT is particularly significant in the rural areas, like Beaufort West, as it complements existing public transport options.

Our successful bicycle distribution programme continues to change lives across this province and most notably in rural areas such as Malmesbury, Beaufort West, Merweville, Nelspoort and Overstrand. We are therefore making a further investment of R1 million towards this programme to distribute 400 bicycles to the most deserving schools, Neighbourhood Watches, NGOs and small businesses.

Hon Deputy Speaker, for the Western Cape economy to thrive and grow at an acceptable rate we need an efficient freight and logistics network.

To support freight and logistics, R8 million has been allocated over the MTEF to the Freight Rail Revitalisation Framework. R2 million will be allocated in the 2025 financial year.

I am therefore excited to announce that in the current financial year we will be embarking on a process of developing a business case to revitalise Overberg Freight Rail. We are stepping up for the economy.

The business case is a very strategic initiative aiming at revitalising freight rail, focusing on connecting the agricultural region of Caledon with the Belcon Inner Terminal in Bellville and the Port of Cape Town. This corridor is critical for the movement of agricultural commodities, including barley, canola, wheat and other grains, which form part of the backbone of the Overberg's economic activities.

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: Last week both the hon Premier and hon Minister Meyer welcomed the recent strategic move by Minister Creecy to initiate the first phase of the Requests for Interest. This process congruently supports the strategic intent of Operation Vulindlela and Transnet's vertical separation process.

This is a positive step in rail reform at actualising the commitments made in the Roadmap for Freight Logistics and the White Paper on National Rail Policy. It sends the right signals to the economy on the much-needed efficiencies in the logistics network.

Hon Deputy Speaker, as the Department of Mobility we will indeed take our rightful place in this process by being at the forefront of all developments.

Hon Deputy Speaker, road safety remains a critical concern as we are losing too many lives on our roads. Hon Deputy Speaker, we know the impact of losing lives on our roads on our economy. We spend billions of rands every year in this country due to road fatalities, particularly pedestrians and children remain our most vulnerable road-users.

As a signatory to the UN Decade of Action with the objective of reducing road fatalities and injuries by 50% by 2030, we need to do more and we need to do more and more.

To complement our world-class 24/7 traffic law enforcement service, we will continue to roll out Road Safety Ambassadors Programme with an allocation of R2 million for the 25/26 financial year. The Ambassadors will continue to be deployed in the identified hotspot areas where most pedestrian fatalities are indeed recorded.

This project is an example of communities taking responsibility for their own road safety while providing job opportunities to young people.

Hon Deputy Speaker, I have to convey and share my disgust and disappointment that we had to withdraw some of our Road Safety Ambassadors last year due to extortion.

So I would really call on all residents of this particular province, as road safety is not only a responsibility of Government, but is the responsibility of everyone.

So when our Road Safety Ambassadors are confronted with extortionists in our different areas where we find a lot of pedestrian fatalities, that they own up, they stand up and they protect these young children.

Hon Deputy Speaker, our Provincial Traffic Team will be allocated with R46 million for fleet operational costs and associated services. A further R57 million will be allocated for Provincial Traffic for specialised skills and technology.

As a data-driven government we will allocate R113 million towards the award-winning Integrated Transport Hub. The Integrated Transport Hub is a sophisticated technology and system engine that supports service delivery.

With over 30 projects carried out by the Hub we continue to strengthen all

elements of mobility and delivery, including public transport, freight and road safety.

Before I conclude, the Western Cape Government Motor Transport (GMT), our trading entity, does not receive any equitable share from the fiscus and is therefore self-funded. The GMT total budget estimate for 25/26 is R1,7 billion.

From this allocation R60 million will be utilised to develop a pipeline for electric vehicle infrastructure. This partnership supports the province's commitment to enabling new energy vehicle adoption within the government fleet, beginning with a focused roll-out at selected sites.

As a government leader in systems and applications GMT will allocate R50 million towards the development of another regional HUB envisaged for Vredenburg in the West Coast. It is rural indeed. †Soos hulle altyd sê ons fokus net altyd in die Metro, maar ons wys hulle ons is orals in die provinsie. [Tussenwerpsels.] [As they always say we only focus in the Metro, but we show them we are everywhere in the province. [Interjections.]]

Both programmes will be rolled out with the [Interjections.] Department of Infrastructure. Me and Mr Simmers will be rolling out this particular intervention.

This allocation supports the Just Transition process of decarbonising our

Government fleet.

Hon Deputy Speaker, I am proud to announce that we have completed the feasibility study of introducing electric minibus taxis and ready to pilot this programme at an operational setting. Once again we are stepping up for the economy and our residents.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the Budget presented today reflects the goals of our Government in ensuring that we create a mobility ecosystem that is responsive to the needs of the people, while also laying the foundation for the future.

Through strategic partnerships and bold investments in public transport, freight and road safety, we are laying a foundation for a mobility system that works for everyone.

My heartfelt appreciation goes out to the hon Premier and my Cabinet colleagues for the support and holding my hand while I navigate this dynamic portfolio. †Ek moet sê dit is glad nie maklik nie. Jy sink of jy swem, en ons is baie bevoorreg dat ons huidiglik swem. [I must say it is not easy at all. You sink or you swim, and we are very privileged that we are swimming at the moment.]

†'n AGB LID: Lekker swem!

[An HON MEMBER: Enjoy the swim!]

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: To my Chairperson, [Inaudible 1:22:06] behind me, who at times during the portfolio meetings is always accused of being the shop steward of the Department, I want to thank you for your leadership ...[Interjections.]

an HON MEMBER: Yes!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: ...and for the manner in how you conduct your business during our meetings, and to the entire Standing Committee for Mobility, thank you for the robust and yet constructive engagements. Thank you very much for that.

I also want to take a moment to thank each and every official for the Department of Mobility under the leadership of the acting HOD, Mr Darryl Jacobs, for their hard work, commitment and perseverance. I know whenever I speak to the Department, hon Deputy Speaker, I say to the Department, "We do not have time, we do not have time," so the public out there is waiting for us to deliver services.

There are people that are highly dependent on us and I want to encourage and thank the Department for heeding that call of understanding that we indeed do not have time. We need to render a service, we need to make sure that the majority of people in this province are able to use public transport. I am deeply grateful for everything that the Department does under your

leadership, acting HOD.

To my incredible Ministry Team, †hulle is nogal so jonk, vars [they are so young, fresh.] Thank you very much for holding my hand. Thank you very much at times for taking the responsibility to be in Mobility. For understanding my vision, for being people-orientated, to understand that whatever I do, I do not do because it is politics, I do it because of the residents of this province.

For far too long people have been looking for affordable, efficient and safe public transport. It is our vision that one day we will be able to deliver that to the residents of this province.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family, who is not here, for being able to look after my kids at home while I am all over the province making sure that the residents of this province are safe, that everybody that come into our province comes to a province where we have seen a decline in terms of road safety.

Each and every month we see that trend continuing, see a decline. So there is something that we are doing right. It would not be possible if it was not because of my wife, who is able to look after my kids whenever I have to leave home while they are asleep and return while they are asleep.

Hon Deputy Speaker, with those I would want to table my Budget. Thank

you very much. [Applause.]

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. We [Inaudible 1:25:12] to the virtual platform. I recognise the hon member Ngqentsu.

Mr M B NGQENTSU (ANC): Hon Deputy Speaker, hon members, the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Whip of the ANC, people of the Western Cape, my dear comrades, [Interjections.] and also the hon MEC for Mobility.

I think, hon Deputy Speaker, it would be important for me to give the hon MEC for Mobility an advise free, to say do not mimic Mmusi Maimane because you may be booted out of the DA.

Hon Deputy Speaker, as we gather today to debate and adopt the 2025/2026 Budget Vote 8, [Interjections.] Mobility, we are reminded of the powerful words of Solomon Mahlangu who, before his execution [Interjections.] on 6 April... [Incomplete.]

Mr D W BRYANT (DA): Sorry, hon Deputy Speaker, a point of order.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon member Ngqentsu?

Mr M B NGQENTSU (ANC): 1979 by the...

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just hold on for me online. I see the hon member

Bryant.

Mr D W BRYANT (DA): Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker, it sounds as if the speaker is in a room with other people and we are hearing different voices. It is hard to pick it out. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon members, I can confirm that during the engagement I personally had to mute one of the participants online. Once again I would want to caution those that are online, you are not allowed to unmute. You are not allowed to unmute.

I again see the hon member Ngqentsu.

Mr M B NGQENTSU (ANC): Thank you very much for giving clarity to a person who wanted perhaps to tarnish my image. [Interjections.]

Hon Deputy Speaker, I think I must repeat to say today we are reminded of the powerful words of Solomon Mahlangu who, before his execution 6 April by the brutal and vicious barbaric apartheid regime, he had this to say, I quote and close quote:

"My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom.
Tell my people that I love them. They must continue the fight."

Today we must ask ourselves what fruits have been borne from the sacrifices

of our [Inaudible.]. When we look at this Budget, which continues to exclude the poor, and abandon the very people of whom Mahlangu and countless others gave their lives. We must speak out with the same revolutionary conviction that defined our liberation struggle.

This Budget is rooted in an ideological framework of neoliberal austerity that is inherently anti-poor and urban-centric. Against this background we, the ANC, strongly reject the 2025/26 Budget.

What we are presented with is not merely a physical document, it is a damning indictment of the DA's ongoing neglect of working poor and rural communities across our province.

This Budget exposes the DA's true priority, serving urban elites while systematically excluding the rural poor from access to basic services.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the glaring inequality in transport subsidies reveals the DA's neoliberal governance approach. While the hon MEC for Finance proudly announced the R4 billion allocated to MyCiTi and GoGeorge services, benefiting about 34 000 predominantly urban commuters, she failed to acknowledge the millions of rural residents in the Central Karoo, West Coast, Overberg, etcetera, who have no access to reliable public transport. Yet the hon MEC makes a big claim here today that transport is the lifeblood of the Western Cape economy. It is not talking to those who live in the countryside.

Hon Deputy Speaker, we applaud Minister Barbara Creecy's further investment towards the GoGeorge because the BRT initiative programme remains an ANC programme launched about a decade ago.

This statement, hon Deputy Speaker, is not a condemnation of subsidies for MyCiTi and GoGeorge, but rather a call to expand the Bus Rapid Transit Programme to other towns, such as Hermanus. It is essential to have a government that cares for farm and domestic workers who must travel to work or access healthcare.

This Budget makes it clear, if you do not live in privileged urban areas you are forgotten.

Hon Deputy Speaker, it is evident that hon Minister Sileku and the Mobility Department have chosen to neglect the only Black-owned industry in the Western Cape, the minibus taxi industry.

Instead of supporting this essential sector the hon MEC unleashes traffic officers who attack it, criminalise it and cut its subsidy. The Budget acknowledges the minibus industry contribution to the Western Cape, over 60%, 70% of passenger trips, or 1,5 million trips per day, but fails to provide concrete plans to invest in the sector.

The Budget speaks about formalisation and improvement of minibus taxi

services, yet it fails to explain what formalisation and improvement truly mean in practise. We challenge the hon MEC to clearly outline these concepts. What is urgently needed is investment in the taxi industry.

The Shayela Smart Programme in its current form is not a meaningful economic investment in the sector and this Government must stop pacifying the industry. It is time for genuine investment.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the Budget also fails to address the crisis in scholar transport, particularly in areas like Saldanha where bakkies and Avanzas are competing with minibus taxis. The Chairperson of SANTACO, Mr Hermanus, has called for the scholar transport sector to affiliate with SANTACO. A call that has been blue ticked by this Government.

The proliferation of informal transport options, such as bakkies and Avanzas further complicates the regulation and control of the transport sector and puts commuters at risk.

Hon Deputy Speaker, in the course of my oversight work in the West Coast I was alerted of this dangerous rise of bakkies and Avanzas operating outside the taxi industry. These vehicles are increasingly being used for public transport, bypassing the formal sector, creating safety concerns for commuters and taking away the work of the minibus taxis.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the Department's narrow obsession with the devolution

of rail powers has hindered meaningful engagement with the rail sector.

As the ANC we commend PRASA for the reopening of the Central Line and call all rail commuters, hawkers and public to use every means at their disposal to defend this vital public asset.

Hon Deputy Speaker, we also call on President Ramaphosa and Minister Creecy to resist the DA's political manoeuvring on rail devolution. The call for devolution is not about improving the efficiency of the rail of our people, it is about making the Western Cape and Cape Town a federal province with the aim of deepening private participation in rail and freight.

Private interest prioritises profit maximisation, which means Metrorail tickets will become unaffordable for working class commuters and workers will lose their jobs.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the Getting YOU to Work initiative is a good concept, but with only 3 000 jobseekers registering it is insufficient, especially considering the number of unemployed individuals in this province. That 3 000 is but a drop in the ocean. Rather than expanding this programme funds have been allocated to consultants' contracts. Therefore we call on the Department to expand the programme beyond Cape Town and ensure that it reaches more people in need.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the use of consultant services must not be a way to

hollow out the capacity of the State or facilitate corrupt activities. We are deeply interested in knowing who benefits from these consultants contracts.

Further can the hon MEC guarantee this House that none of these consultants are implicated in the Mini Cooper gang scandal currently under investigation by SCOPA?

On behalf of the ANC-headed alliance in this province, which represent the collective mandate of the [Inaudible.] and the voices of the working class masses of this province, we demand a radical reallocation of resources to prioritise mobility infrastructure.

We call for the reinstatement of the Blue Dot and Red Dot Taxi Subsidy Programmes with the aim of getting full subsidisation of the taxi industry, increased investment in safe, regulated scholar transport. The protection of PRASA is a national asset serving all our people.

Meaningful subsidies for taxi commuters will form the backbone of our transport system, making operating licences accessible, construction of dedicated lanes from the city centres to townships, report on the action taken against the traffic officer involved in the attack of a taxi operator and finally address the traffic congestion in Cape Town as the economy loses about R2,8 billion, and the hon MEC cannot throw his hat in the air and cry, "Yet there is a crisis," and expect only the City to deal with the matter.

Hon Deputy Speaker, the DA may have numbers to pass this Budget, but they lack the [Inaudible.] authority to do so.

To the people of the Western Cape we say the ANC-led alliance sees your struggle. We hear the cries of the rural mother who cannot access healthcare, the worker who spends half their wages on transport and the scholar who is forced to ride on unsafe conditions.

In memory of Solomon Mahlangu we are calling to fight for a mobility system that serves all our people, not just the privileged few. This is not just about transport, it is about justice. It is about undoing the centuries and decades of special legacy [Inaudible 1:35:09]. It is about recognising that mobility is not a privilege, but a fundamental human right.

The DA's Budget fails on all these counts, which is why unequivocally we reject it. The struggle continues until every resident in this province, whether in Khayelitsha, Klein Karoo, has access to safe, affordable and dignified transport.

Let me conclude by addressing what appears to be political degeneration of the DA empire.

In their efforts to weaken the ANC caucus they show a disturbing [Inaudible 1:35:44.] by attacking all ANC women. This behaviour alone demonstrates that the DA will never transform. It will remain a party of White

conservative liberals with a few Black men merely serving as a token presence like a [Inaudible 1:35:59] chocolate.

On the other hand these White liberals, along with some Black apologies, attempt to isolate me from the ANC-led alliance collective caucus. [Interjections.]

This is not only because they fail to understand that the ANC is a multi [Inaudible 1:36:14] party, but also because this agenda is fundamentally anti-communist.

The anti-communism and anti-worker sentiment they espouse mirrors the very same attitude held by the apartheid regime in White monopoly capital. [Interjections.] Please know that we will not be silenced by this apartheid narrative that is aimed at delegitimising the voices of the working class.

As the ANC in caucus we therefore reject this Budget. Thank you very much.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon member Ngqentsu. I see online the hon member Constable.

Mr N CONSTABLE (PA): Good afternoon, hon Deputy Speaker, and good afternoon colleagues.

Hon Deputy Speaker, let me start by saying the Patriotic Alliance is a party

that determines itself when to vote for and when to vote against. For the ANC to call us traitors in this debate is a very dangerous statement.

Hon Deputy Speaker, [Interjections.] the Budget remains biased towards urban areas whilst rural areas remain neglected. Hon MEC, numbers do not lie. This Mobility Department remains dependent on consultants and lacks the transfer of skills.

The projects, hon Deputy Speaker, outlined in the draft Western Cape Provincial Land Transport Framework is again a slap in the face of rural areas and hopefully it will be rectified through the public participation process that the hon MEC spoke about.

So, hon MEC, hon Deputy Speaker, here are our recommendations.

- Allocating an increased percentage of the budget to rural transport initiatives to enhance accessibility.
- Forge the partnerships with local communities for input on transport needs, especially in under-deserved or under-serviced areas.
- Improve transparency in budget allocations and project outcomes across different regions.

The Patriotic Alliance encourages a rolling Budget approach that adjusts allocations based on historical performance and evaluations.

In conclusion, hon Deputy Speaker, for the Western Cape to thrive a balanced approach to Budget allocation between urban and rural communities is not just ideal, but essential.

The Patriotic Alliance advocates for increased transparency, engagement with local demographics and adjustments in Budget strategies to promote equitable transport services across the province.

By ensuring that no community is left behind we can build a more connected and prosperous Western Cape. I thank you, hon Deputy Speaker.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon member Constable. I see the hon member Lithakong.

Ms T LITHAKONG (EFF): Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker, since the scrapping of the Blue Dot initiative in this province this Department has not developed any initiative to assist the minibus taxi industry.

Hon Deputy Speaker, a subsidy to the minibus taxi industry will go a long way in assisting residents of this province to afford the forever rising fees.

It cannot be that only Golden Arrows Bus Services is the one to benefit from undisclosed amounts in subsidies, benefits from this province, while there are areas in which their buses cannot even access in order to collect commuters.

With the Cape Town Central Line and train services to other areas across the Western Cape still not fully operational, the demands for cheaper transport will always increase and this Department seems to be unwilling to assist at that level.

So, hon Deputy Speaker, until the Department adequately responds to the transportation needs of our people in this province, the Economic Freedom Fighters will not be supporting this more than R3,2 billion tabled Budget intended for the MTEF. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon member. I see the hon member Herron.

Mr B N HERRON (GOOD): Thank you, hon Deputy Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker, the Western Cape's Mobility Budget for 2025 stands at R3,2 billion, with roughly 60% of the Budget, or R1,9 billion, allocated to transport operations, but whether this money is being used to build a system that works for everyone remains to be seen.

The current model prioritises big operators while sidelining the very people who keep our transport moving. Golden Arrow's monopoly on scheduled bus services must end. Breaking up the contract into route clusters and tendering out these routes would drive competition, increase service coverage and crucially create an opportunity for taxi companies to tender, compete and

participate more fully in the sector. It is time to bring them into the fold, not treat them as rogue or informal and then leave them on the margins.

Rail recovery is another pressing issue. The Provincial Government has been talking about working to restore commuter rail since 2019, but commuters are still waiting in frustration.

You have invested billions of rand in learner law enforcement officers, but not one cent into fixing the backbone of mobility and the foundation of economic growth.

Without serious intervention we cannot restore our rail system to full capacity and without rail economic inclusion suffers, and I will say, hon Deputy Speaker, the response will be that this is a National Government mandate, but so is policing.

The Province must move beyond words and start breaking down the barriers delaying rail restoration. People should not have to spend hours commuting just to earn a living. Mobility is about more than just moving people. It is about ensuring they arrive safely.

Last year during Mobility Month only two free school bus checks were completed. That is 11 hours of oversight for thousands of learners who rely on transport daily. We must expand these roadworthy tests, ensuring every child gets to school safely every single day. Thank you.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, hon member Herron. I now see Professor Mbombo. [Interjections.]

Ms N MBOMBO (DA): Hon Deputy Speaker, hon Speaker, hon Premier *in absentia*, and your Cabinet, Leader of the Official Opposition, hon members of Provincial Parliament, the members of the fourth estate, that is the media, the people of the Western Cape who are watching †molweni ngale njikalanga. [good afternoon.]

†Mandibulele ngokunikwa ithuba lokuthatha inxaxheba ndiphawula ngolwabiwo-mali lwe Vote 8 le sebe lwezothutho lwase Ntshona-Koloni. UMphathiswa, uTutuse utyatyadule esaneka ukuba uzazicazulula kanjani izigidi ngezigidi ezingama waka-waka amathathu anamakhulu anemivo (R3,2 billion. [Let me take this moment to say thank you for granting me an opportunity to have partaken in decision making on budget of Vote 8 of Department of Transport of the Western Cape, Minister Tutuse has spread out an explanation on how R3,2 billion will be used.]

Hon members of the House, through you, hon Deputy Speaker, as the Chair of this Committee I confirm that the budget was supported actually by all but one in our meetings. The “but one” budget objector and uGquqgugqu a member of the opposition – did not surprise us with his rejection. However, I had hoped he would raise constructive alternatives in the spirit of the Government of National Unity (GNU). Instead, we heard only noise, not

solutions. – I am not surprised in terms of the rejection.

However, I would have hoped at least Gquqgugqu to raise not only the noise, but also to come up with a solution.

So †Gquqgugqu, izithonga ezithathu, sive sasinye kuphela. Gquqgugqu, [with three sounds but we could only hear one.]. [Interjections.]

Let me now raise the argument for why the DA supports this Budget.

It will be remiss of me not to reflect on the broader state of South Africa's transport system as a whole before I dive into the solutions that this Budget is trying to solve.

We begin with an assessment of the problem followed by a diagnosis and then the proposed solution. That is what my profession tells me how to approach this.

Public transport in South Africa has long been left in a state of disrepair. The infrastructure is dilapidated and fragmented, with limited investment, while corruption continues to plague most State-owned Enterprises.

Transport is meant to be an enabler of economic growth, a facilitator of communication and a powerful equaliser to address both inequality and inequity. Instead it has become a daily struggle for the poor who spends 60%

of their income to transport. Whether it is travelling to work, seeking employment, going to school, accessing health care, reliable transport is not a luxury, it is a lifeline, hon Deputy Speaker.

A well-functioning economy requires a well-functioning transport network, one that provides access to opportunities, fuel investment and improve public safety.

This Budget, hon Deputy Speaker, reflects that vision and our unwavering commitment to create a connected and mobile province.

Now I just want to start with the minibus taxi industry because I did indicate I am coming with a diagnosis before we look in terms of the resolution that is being proposed by this Budget.

The minibus taxi's Gquqgugqu serve almost 80% of commuters, but operate in a largely informal space – informal, not unprofessional space – plagued by infighting between associations and often prone to violent attacks.

Bus industry service. The bus services like the Golden Arrow, MyCiTi in the Western Cape, and of course the others like Putco, Rea Vaya elsewhere, they have got limited coverage, with some facing actually aging fleets, yet they get more subsidy and support from the governments.

The bus service often competes with minibus taxi's thus causing conflict and

tensions, because the Government system is still operating in dark ages of consolidating a system that talks to all for the benefit of the commuter.

The third, the rail service through PRASA. Many routes are non-operational as we know, as it is faced with infrastructure vandalism, poor maintenance and corruption.

The freight transport brings challenges as tankers cause more congestion on the roads, accidents also due to lack of rail to transport these large goods.

We have heard when we visited the sea ports recently how crucial the on time and reliable transportation of the exports and imports for the trade are in order to improve economy.

Aviations, hon Deputy Speaker, although I do not want to dwell much on how National Government has collapsed the SAA, but with the current challenges of Air Traffic and Navigation Services, where scheduled plains end up being docked, delaying arrivals and departures, these all cause havoc on economy.

Hon Deputy Speaker, our Chair, [Inaudible 1:48:20] Chair, that is the diagnosis of the South African transport system. It is rotten from the core, meaning it will be a mammoth task to expect Western Cape Mobility to fix the rotten system all by itself. It needs the whole-of-governments, local, national and provincial governments to work together. It needs public-private partnerships, the associations, commuters themselves to assist.

†Yeyele [indistinct] mayonyulwe. [It has sank [indistinct] it needs to be saved.]

I commend the Department for increasing the Budget this year. There is an increase of R73,15 million, which is 2,32% from last year, demonstrating actually that the DA-led Western Cape's commitment to connecting people, goods and institutions by providing the residents with an efficient, reliable and safe transport network.

A well-functioning economy requires a well-functioning transport network which enable access to opportunities and also to improve safety.

Investing more money into transport not only drives the economy, but bridges inequality gap, as the poor spends – I am repeating this – more on transport cost to access such amenities as I mentioned, like schools and healthcare.

[The Temporary Chairperson takes the Chair.]

Hon Chair, the minibus taxi industry plays the pivotal role in the Western Cape's economy, as the hon Minister has alluded to, and society by providing reliable and affordable transport, particularly to the working class Gquqgugqu. The industry remains a cornerstone of the province's transport network. We all agree.

The Department has made a progress, as we have mentioned, like the Shayela Smart, to formalise the industry. NB, I am not saying professionalise, to

formalise, because we must not take them it is an unprofessional industry, ensuring it is safe and more reliable for all.

Now let me qualify this. Remember, the minibus taxi industry is the only industry that was there during the early stages of the COVID pandemic – the hon member of the EFF actually mentioned that – commuting our healthcare workers between their homes and healthcare facilities through the Red Dot. It is also the same industry that also commuted COVID infected patients to quarantines sites, if you recall.

So thanks to the Department for providing that support, because it is the same Department that has done that.

†Kancane kancane, kuzolunga. [Slowly but surely it is going to be fine.] we need to help the industry. We are not there as yet, but we are getting there.

So I am excited when I hear that the Department is prioritising to formalise this industry.

Hon Chair, the DA has been calling for the devolution of powers for the rail to Metro specifically. I thank the National Transport Minister for finally making progress towards that. Moreso mostly on the freight. Actually we are urging the fast-tracking that includes the commuter rail in terms of the devolution.

The only way to establish integrated transport system is to apply the principles of subsidiarity. What does it mean? It means to decentralise the local service for the local people and managed by the Local Governments, with Cape Town specifically potentially as a pilot, not only to help the Western Cape, but for the whole of South Africa when we integrate all these systems together.

Cape Town's transport system is missing a crucial link, the trains. Yes, I hear that there has been progress recently. While the City's MyCiTi bus system operates efficiently and taxis serve as a primary mode of transport for many residents, the absence of reliable train network creates significant challenges for commuters.

To effectively address mobility issues residents need an integrated public transport system where the taxis, the buses and trains work seamlessly together, which is what for some of us when we travel where we get one coupon for the taxi, for the train, for everything, the e-hailing, all of those, whether it is your [Inaudible 1:52:42] or whatever. That is what we are asking for, for the sake of the Auntie Sara's.

Trains were once the backbone of public transport in Cape Town, offering an affordable and efficient way to travel. However, the deterioration of the rail services under PRASA has forced commuters to rely more on taxis and private cars, driving up the costs of maintaining roads and contributing to traffic congestion.

While various bus services and taxis cover large areas it cannot match the capacity that a functioning train system provides.

Coming from [Inaudible 1:53:19] specifically, where the train in the Eastern Cape used to be the mode of transport, I can understand. That is why I am so passionate about getting the train to be able to work together with the taxis and the buses and everything, and e-hailing.

Reviving the train network is essential, not only for saving money, but also for alleviating the road congestion.

An integrated transport system would allow commuters to transition easily moving between taxis, buses, trains, making travel more efficient and cost-effective. As I made an example of using even one coupon for all of these.

Last but not least, hon Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about the traffic officers. Staff comes first, with the issue of the HR for me, so I am passionate about that, because there are no services without staff. So that is why we must always acknowledge the staff.

The Western Cape stands out as the only province in South Africa so far with a 24 hour traffic law enforcement service, the last time I checked, with over 700 traffic officers and about 360 vehicles deployed across the region.

The Western Cape Mobility Department in collaboration with the key partners, including the National Traffic Police and the City of Cape Town and others, further strengthens the enforcement efforts. Together they work tirelessly to improve road safety, particularly in high-risk areas. The N1s, the N2s, around Khayelitsha and so forth.

If you look in terms of the 2024/2025 Festive Season, during that Festive Season the team inspected over 215 000 vehicles that led to 905 arrests. It is a big thing actually even to have an arrest, and out of those 905, 627 of those, these were the people who were driving under the influence of alcohol. Imagine.

Additionally in the same period a total of 72 438 fines were issued for various traffic violations, which was an improvement from the previous year.

So my deepest gratitude to our traffic officers and the whole team there in the Department for their commendable job to ensure road safety remains a shared responsibility.

Noting, through you, hon Chair, acting HOD, the Department is not only one year and so old, but also has been faced with not having the whole of a staff compliment, specifically the head of department. I hope your search becomes fruitful.

In conclusion, hon Chair, please, hon members, take care on the road, especially as we approach the Easter Holidays and other long holidays. Please buckle up and make sure that even if you have got the kids at the back, they also buckle up. Do not drink and drive.

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

Ms N MBOMBO (DA): Do not drink and walk in the streets. Do not be that passenger †engxadazela endleleni. [walking and drunk on the road], think of our traffic officers, the law enforcement officers, the emergency care workers and all of these, because when you start misbehaving or behaving recklessly on the road, it impacts on everyone, but it must start with us and also with our family.

Thank you very much for the Committee to be the very dynamic Committee who allows us to do whatever we want to do, and thank you to my colleagues for your support, more specifically my hon Minister and also the Department. The DA supports the Budget. †Sebenza mphathiswa, igunya sikunikile. Enkosi. [Continue to work, minister, you have been given an authority. Thank you.][Applause.]

The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, hon member. I now recognise the hon Minister.

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: Thank you very much, hon Chair. I will start with the highest three, which is the Chairperson of the Committee, in

my responses, and firstly, hon Chair, thank you very much for your contribution in terms of the debate.

Hon Chair, there is something that is important that we need to stress the issue of the subsidy that is given to the Golden Arrow Bus Services. It is an issue that had been there pre-94 and still an issue that is there post-94. Fortunately it is an issue that is decided by the National Government.

So the National Government must actually look at what is it that they need to do to make sure that they also cater for the minibus taxi industry, and I must share with the House, when you talk about the minibus taxi industry, even the National Minister is also having a headache and how does one deal with the minibus taxi industry in terms of funding.

So that is an issue that is not going to go away in the near future. It is an issue that has been coming for the last three decades while the African National Congress has been in power.

So we are definitely, from a side of province, saying we are not going to leave it at that. There have been several calls to say, "Let us engage with the National Minister of Transport," and during the last Minibus Taxi Task Team there was a resolution that was taken that we are going to approach, together with SANTACO, the Minister of transport, Minister Creecy. We are going to talk about Shayela Smart, we are going to talk about the Blue Dot and see how can the Government assist us as the Western Cape to make sure we stop

crying about the minibus taxi industry not being subsidised, but we are actually looking at, you know, tangible solutions so we can move forward.

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: Also, hon Chair, thank you very much for raising the issue of the traffic law enforcement officers. I need to share with the House that for the last 10 months in office I have deliberately spent 80% of my time with the traffic officers of this particular province. It was not an easy thing to do, it was the right thing to do.

Why did I take that particular decision to engage with them for most of my time during my first few days? It was because of the importance of what they do in terms of their work. Because once you come to this province the first people you see are our traffic officers. When you leave our province the last people that you see are our traffic officers.

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: So as a government that has apex priorities of increasing economic growth so we can create more jobs, it is important when people come to this province they are treated in a manner so they can also go and share the message of saying the kind of service that we get in the Western Cape does not compare to other provinces. It is the best service.

So when you want to invest here and assist us in what we want to achieve in making sure, you know, we create more jobs, it is our responsibility.

Also, hon Chair, we have also decided as a department, because I am not a lone ranger, I work with a team and Team Mobility has decided that we are going to appreciate those traffic officers for the work that they have done during the festive season, and I must say I went through the whole province and each and every individual was given a certificate of appreciation ...[Interjections.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: ...and I must say it did actually assist them to boost their morale. [Applause.] We are boosting the morale because it is an important job that they are doing.

Secondly, hon Chair, I cannot disclose, we are looking within the space of the traffic management how can we also add towards some of the concerns that they have raised with me during my time when I was engaging with them, and me and Willie, the Acting Director, we are actually working on that because we understand the work that they do it is very much important and we need to make sure that we support when we need to support.

To hon member Brett Herron, I agree with you. Each and every time during the Festive Season, Easters, we do go out and we encourage everyone to come to Gene Louw so they can test their private vehicles, they can also test their public transport, but unfortunately the appetite is not always what you want to see, because people are always afraid that we might pick up something and they might get a fine, but that is not our ultimate goal, our is to alert any particular driver that is going to go on a long trip to say, "Look at A, B and C. Fix it because it might put you in a very compromised position."

So we also encourage municipalities to do a similar stance and some of the municipalities have been assisting us in that regard. Whenever we go on such an initiative they also assist us in that regard.

Hon Chair, you see, sometimes it is very difficult to address hearsay. You know, hearsay, you know, you read. You do not attend the Standing Committee meetings of Mobility and you come as the EFF, you say something that you have read somewhere. You do not have a cooking clue what we are doing, what we have been doing.

So I am not going to waste my time. You know, that is why Theewaterskloof is under FRP, financial recovery plan, because it is actually because of that particular hon member, because she was the [Inaudible 2:03:33] Chair and she ran away, she is here. So I am not going to waste time with that, because her views are sometimes very, you know, gossip. I am not going to follow gossip, gossip †is nie lekker nie [is not nice.]

Let us go to hon member Constable. †Dis my buurman en my [Onhoorbaar 2:03:47], hy is van Beaufort. Buurman, ek weet u is baie passievol oor die Karoo, soos ek ook passievol is oor die Karoo. Dis dieselfde met agb lid Bans, sy is ook passievol oor die Karoo, en dis hoekom ons gesê het om iets te bereik in die lewe moet iemand die eerste stap neem, en ons, as die Departement van Mobiliteit, is besig om daai eerste stap te neem.

[It is my neighbour and my [Inaudible 2:03:47], he is from Beaufort. Neighbour, I know you are passionate about the Karoo, as I am also passionate about the Karoo. It is the same with hon member Bans, she's also passionate about the Karoo, and that is why we said to achieve something in life someone has to take the first step, and we, as the Department of Mobility, are busy taking that first step.]

†n AGB LID: Ja!

[An HON MEMBER: Yes!]

†Die MINISTER VAN MOBILITEIT: Dis hoekom ons R4 miljoen in die begroting ingesit het, om te kyk hoe ons die mense van die Karoo kan ondersteun sodat hulle nou ook iets kan kry van die regering, en ons gaan meer en meer doen in terme van onse werk om seker te maak dat niemand van die Karoo word agtergelaat nie.

So ek is baie dankbaar vir u ondersteuning en u insae in die Komitee wat altyd positief is, en ek waardeer dit.

[The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: That is why we put R4 million into the Budget, to see how we can support the people of the Karoo so that they now also can get something from the Government, and we are going to do more and more in terms of our work to ensure that no one of the Karoo is left behind.]

So so I am very grateful for your support and your insight in the Committee that is always positive, and I appreciate it.]

Let us go to the most, or how can I call, hon member Ngqentsu? I do not know whether I am going to be addressing a member of the African National Congress or whether I am going to be addressing a member of the South African Communist Party, [Interjections.] because, hon Chair, you know, the GNU syndrome that he is suffering from is confusing at times.

He is so obsessed with what is happening in the GNU and he does not even acknowledge when things are actually going the right way, or where there are, you know, credible solutions to the issues that we are confronted with, because if he was so influential as a partner of the coalition of the ANC – of what you call this? Tripartite alliance. As a member of the alliance all these views that he wants to raise here that we must do as Mobility, he is not even succeeding to raise them when they meet.

Now he wants to impose these views here and the people that make policy on public transport in this country is the National Government and it is his

alliance partners. He must lobby more so that we can change all the issues that we see in the Minibus Taxi Task Team, in the minibus taxi industry, instead of coming here and crying foul, all of that.

Also in terms of the congestion. We are dealing with congestion and it is not a short-term solution. There are things that we are considering as a department, what is it that we can do in the short, medium to long-term, and from the side of the Ministry we have called all the officials in Mobility where the session was facilitated by an outsider, to say what is it that we can do from the side of Mobility to assist the work that is done by the City of Cape Town, so that we can deal with the issue of congestion.

So we are dealing with it and we are looking at solutions in terms of that.

Hon Chair, in closing, as much as I do not want to defend myself, when a person says I mimic Mmusi Maimane, I become a little bit worried. [Interjections.] It is not mimic. You know, when you represent the poor they must not hear you speak about the poor, they must see your conduct.

So that is why when I talk about the public transport there is passion coming from inside, because I understand the struggles of the most marginalised people in this province. [Interjections.] I do not portray as if I am for the poor, but I just recently adopted a fiscal framework for 0,5% on VAT and then I was rejoicing. I have not seen him condemn the decision that was taken last week ...[Interjections.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear-hear!

The MINISTER OF MOBILITY: ...now he wants to be the holy cow here. He must get his priorities right. Thank you very much, hon Chairperson.
[Applause.]

The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. That concludes the debate on this Vote.

Hon members, the House will now suspend for two minutes to allow the guests of hon Minister Sileku to leave the official bay, thank you.

Hon members, we now allow the guests of hon Speaker Mitchell to take their seats.

The Secretary will read the 6th Order of the day.

The SECRETARY: Debate on Vote 2: Provincial Parliament – Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 2-2025].

The SPEAKER (Mr D G Mitchell): Thank you very much, hon Chairperson. Hon Premier, hon members of the Provincial Cabinet, hon Leader of the Opposition, hon members and guests, residents of the Western Cape.

It is indeed an honour to present to you the Western Cape Provincial Parliament's Budget for the Medium-Term commencing in the year 2025/2026. Hon Chairperson, the Medium-Term Budget is our planned resource, a five-year strategy and plan, and as articulated in the 2025/2026 to 2029/2030 Strategy Plan and the 2025/2026 Annual Performance Plan. As we execute the Constitutional mandate of oversight, lawmaking and public participation, we will continue pursuing a Back-to-Basics approach.

Hon Chair, Back-to-Basics simply means that we execute our core business as an institution, to the best of our ability within our means and utilising all available resources optimally. There is simply no time, space or resources for frills and 'nice to haves', not contributing to the execution of our core function.

In our endeavours to positively impact the lives of the people of our province, we will focus on the following intermediate to long-term outcomes: enhanced public trust, meaningful public involvement, enhanced parliamentary effectiveness, improved overall capability, performance and resilience of the Administration.

Hon Chair, the Constitution compels us to keep a clear line of sight to the broader societal context which we seek to impact as a Legislative Institution. Hon Chair, I reiterate that through this Budget, we are embracing the Back-to-Basics approach which returns to the fundamental functions of what Parliament is constitutionally mandated to perform, namely: lawmaking,

overseeing the works of the Provincial Executive and facilitating public involvement in its processes.

This central theme will guide our plans and operations over the next five years. Hon Chair, through this Budget we plan to give effect to the key priorities for the 7th Administration. They are building a credible WCPP; improving and expanding services and the experiences of the people of the Western Cape; strengthening the core business; strengthening the support to the Legislators; strengthening organisation culture, administrative capabilities, performance and resilience.

Hon Chair, the perspective of internal and external stakeholders whom we had the pleasure of consulting over several sessions prior to developing this plan, were also taken into account.

Some of the key matters raised by our stakeholders include the emphasis on the active role of the Provincial Legislature, particularly in the Western Cape Provincial Parliament in lawmaking, oversight, highlighting the need for better utilisation of the authority; the efforts to improve the citizens' experience and expand access to the WCPP; fostering a culture of evidence-based decision making; extending consultations to include those not typically in the room; ensuring that continuous engagement between the Legislature, civil society and the citizens take place; and building a trusted and credible structure through feedback mechanisms; enhancing public participation to strengthen oversight and representation roles; the importance of capacity

building, skills training, and effective members of Parliament; and addressing the proper resourcing of committees and the importance of mechanisms to track and implement the resolutions of these committees.

Hon Chairperson, let me turn to the specifics of the Budget. The Western Cape Provincial Parliament's Budget allocation for 2025/2026, including direct charge, amounts to R269,189 million. This is an increase of R11,119 million or 4,3% increase from the previous financial year.

Hon Chair, priority areas as identified and in our strategic plan, and costing thereof, is in Programme 1 under Governance and Leadership and Administration. The Budget of R99,985 million will fund strategic initiatives that respond to a number of strategic priorities we have set for the 7th Parliament. Over this parliamentary term, hon Chair, we will position the Western Cape Provincial Parliament to be a credible, respected, reputable and a stable legislative institution that is modern in its operations, committed to openness and transparency, committed to upholding good governance, ethics and integrity, and effective at executing our Constitutional mandate. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The SPEAKER: This is key, hon Chair, in building trust and confidence in the Legislature, improving our effectiveness at oversight, lawmaking and public participation and ultimately, to deepen democracy in the Western Cape.

Hon Chair, being modern in its operations is the hallmark of a leading Parliament, one that embraces technology to bring about greater efficiency in the process and procedures. To this end, we will be making a major investment in the modernisation of our facilities over the MTEF. Audiovisual upgrades are planned for the Chamber, committee rooms, library and other areas. An amount of R6,5 million was earmarked for this purpose in the 2024/2025 financial year and a further R3,4 million is allocated to the 2025/2026 financial year.

Hon Chair, we anticipate that these upgrades will greatly facilitate the digital transformation of this Provincial Parliament, facilitating the work of hon members, political parties and the administration, and enable more seamless integration of the public and stakeholders into the work of Parliament.

Through technology, hon Chair, we will seek to strengthen the core business, improve administrative efficiency and enhance our service and the experience of the residents of the Western Cape, all of which are key strategic priorities. This investment, hon Chair, is therefore core to attaining our objectives over the Medium and 5-Year terms.

Hon Chair, a key aspect of embracing technology is facing the challenges that come with modernisation, including security. The security of our hon members, staff and stakeholders is paramount. One of the biggest threats facing governments and parliaments today are risks related to cyber security.

Data information and records that are leaked in a data breach may have devastating consequences for the hon members, for political parties or for staff. Reputationally, this could be disastrous for the Provincial Parliament and may erode public trust and confidence in the institution.

To ward off the threat and the risk to the Institution, we are going to be allocating in the region of R2 million annually over the MTEF for cyber security and funding of CCTV upgrades that will enable enhanced surveillance capabilities within the WCPP. We are also appointing a dedicated cyber security professional within our ITT to further improve the security posture.

Hon Chair, to promote openness and transparency as part of a credible Institution, we have allocated an initial amount of R100 000 over the MTEF to support the development of an open data dashboard that will give the public greater access to the Provincial Parliament's information. This goes well beyond making legislative information available and entails a more proactive stance of involving citizens in holding Parliament to account through a range of accessible forums, platforms and media.

Hon Chair, to further build public trust, we will introduce for the first time in this term, a public perception survey that will assess the level of public awareness of the people of the Western Cape, of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament, its mandates and functions, as well as the degree to which the public trust the Provincial Parliament. It will also assess public and

stakeholder perceptions of how effectively we are executing our mandates. This practice of engaging the public on how they perceive us will be institutionalised starting with the first survey in 2025/2026. An amount of R2 million is allocated for this province-wide survey which will be conducted by an independent team of researchers.

Hon Chair, strengthening organisational culture and building the resilience of an Administration is also a priority over the five-year term. In this regard, we will implement a culture change intervention that will help us build a productive organisational culture in which staff are valued. We will adopt a range of approaches to support staff and build a culture where staff wellbeing is prioritised. We have allocated R252 000 for this in the 2025/2026 financial year. This will increase slightly over the MTEF and by the 2027/2028 financial year, will have reached the R276 000 mark.

In addition, hon Chair, we will regularly assess the culture and climate. Ultimately, a productive culture is key to supporting members in their role as Legislators and ensuring we are well equipped to ensure citizens participate in the work of this Parliament.

As part of the digital transformation of the WCPP and repositioning the WCPP for impact, we will undertake our organisational development exercise that will also assist us to identify staff skills and capacity requirements. It will also assist the Institution with the design of an organisational structure that meets future-fit skills requirements.

Hon Chair, this will commence in 2025/2026. In particular, the alignment of resources to strengthen the capacity and capability of committees will be a key focus, including the provision of adequate quality committee research, content advisory and legal support.

Hon Chair, this Parliament is committed to good governance, ethics and integrity. Both in our oversight over the Executive, but also in the manner in which we operate as a Parliament. This is fundamental to building a credible Institution. And to this end, we will be undertaking a performance and expenditure review in 2025/2026 that will assist us to budget more efficiently, identify opportunities for saving and even greater value creation through the work that we do.

The Budget of R26,563 million for Programme 2 under Parliamentary Support Services contributes in the main to the strategic priority on the strengthening of the core business. Hon Chair, this Parliament's core mandate is to oversee the Executive action and to make laws, while fostering greater public involvement. In 2025/2026 and in the outer years of the MTEF, we have allocated R3,5 million to fund the work of Standing Committees. This allocation is key to ensure that the engine room of Parliament functions optimally and executes the mandate effectively.

In terms of oversight and lawmaking, we will introduce an Institutional Oversight and Accountability Strategy that will align to lead parliamentary

practice and that will provide the framework within which oversight is exercised in the WCPP.

Hon Chair, we will do more to institutionalise the involvement of civil society in order to ensure that oversight and law-making is informed by lived realities of the people of the Western Cape. In this regard, we will identify entry points for collaboration in committee activities. This will form the basis for more structured engagement model. Feedback mechanism to committees and stakeholders and citizens engaged by committees through oversight hearings and oral or written submissions will also be considered. We will also introduce post-Legislative scrutiny, hon Chair, which will enable an evidence-based assessment of the impact of the Legislation that we pass in this Parliament.

Hon Chair, under Programme 3, Public Engagement, the Budget of R17,779 million in the 2025/2026 financial year contributes in the main towards programmes which respond to the priority of involving expanding citizen services and experiences of the people of the Western Cape. Hon Chair, digital access has the potential to accelerate public involvement through various platforms. On the other hand, it has the potential to deepen existing inequalities arising from citizens' inequitable access to digital communication services.

Hon Chair, through a revised communication strategy, communication channels for the internal and external communication which will be enhanced

to ensure greater and more meaningful public engagement. We will strategically deploy digital tools and platforms. We will be expanding the use of social media channels to increase reach, stimulate engagement and the public involvement to the work of the WCPP. We will develop a new website incorporating an interactive online digital platform and R200 000 is allocated for this purpose in the 2025/2026 financial year with an increase to R1,7 million, hon Chair, in the 2026/2027 financial year. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Excellent!

The SPEAKER: We will also refine our e-Petitions process and continue to provide reverse billing functionality which enable public access to the website at no cost to the user.

Hon Chair, R924 000 goes to the Public Education and Outreach Programmes in the 2025/2026 financial year. We will implement a revised public participating framework that is even more effective at leveraging stakeholder and civil society participation in the legislative process. Our Public Education Programmes will be revisited to ensure that they empower citizens, hon Chair, with knowledge about the business of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament and how to participate in its processes. We will partner with civil society and other organs of State to further expand the reach and impact of our Public Engagement Programmes across the Province.

Hon Chair, under Programme 4, Member Support, the Budget of R67,476

million in the 2025/2026 financial year contributes towards the strategic priority of supporting Legislatures. Hon Chair, a parliament that is affective in oversight, lawmaking and public involvement is better positioned to serve and protect the rights of the people of the Western Cape and ultimately, hon Chair, to deepen democracy in the Western Cape.

The Western Cape Provincial Parliament will prioritise support to its members and R6,8 million is allocated to members enabling allowance in 2025/2026, increasing to R7 million and R7,3 million in years two and three of the MTEF. These allowances, hon Chair, ensure that members are supported in carrying out their functions as Legislators.

Hon Chair, secretarial and constituency allowances receive R57,7 million in the 2025/2026 financial year, increasing to R60,2 million and R62,8 million in the outer years. Hon Chair, these are key budget allocations which we will use to advance our priorities.

Hon Chair, I am under no illusion that we face a number of challenges. We remain committed to the opportunities presented to us to be a leading parliament in line with our vision for the 7th Parliament.

Hon Chair, in conclusion, in administering this Budget we will strive to maintain the clean audit outcomes we have sustained over the 11 consecutive years. Furthermore, we shall keep our focus on our vision for the 7th Parliament to deepen democracy in the Western Cape. I thank you.

...[Applause.]

The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, hon Speaker. I now recognise hon Bans, the hon Chief Whip of the Opposition party.

The CHIEF WHIP (ANC): Hon Speaker, hon Deputy Speaker, hon Leader of the Opposition, Khalid Sayed. As the ANC celebrates the Heroes Month, allow me to quote our former President of the African National Congress, our General O R Tambo when he said:

“Comrades, you might think that it is very difficult to wage a liberation struggle. Wait until you are in power. I might be dead by then. At that stage, you will realise that it is actually more difficult to keep the power than to wage a liberation war. People will be expecting a lot of services from you. You will have to satisfy various demands of masses of people. In the process, be prepared to learn from other revolutions. Learn from the enemy also. The enemy is not necessarily doing everything wrong. You may take his right tactics and use them to your advantage. At the same time, avoid repeating the enemy’s mistakes.”

It is not oftentimes that the ANC find themselves in agreement with the DA on many matters, but in Vote 2, we must acknowledge that the DA made an exceptional choice in its leadership of the Legislature. Both the hon Speaker and the hon Deputy Speaker are young, dynamic professionals who bring energy, integrity and a spirit of cooperation to their roles. [Interjections.]

Whilst we continue constructively to criticise them and scrutinise as an effective Opposition, they are individuals who we respect and work well with and their commitment to their duties is beyond question, but just for not.

It looks like young blood has appetite to pay attention, as I was sitting and listening, and they listen. It is something, some skill that they really need to transfer to their eldership.

In the Committee meeting, the hon Speaker responded to our questions by stating that he would deliver a people's driven budget. As the ANC, we will closely monitor this people driven budget to assess whether it reflects the demographics of the Western Cape. We have experienced unequal benefits as hon members of this House, especially those of us residing far from Cape Town. Our constituencies were deprived of the opportunity to visit Parliament due to distance, with the excuse that it was not viable to bring communities from far flung areas to this House.

In which province are we to stand? The people of Mossel Bay, Merweville and Vredendal and do not reside in the Western Cape. We must also consider this Budget includes some commendable policy choices, particularly in procedural efficiencies and member support that will benefit all parties and enable us to perform our oversight and Legislative duties more effectively. I do think that this is what President General O R Tambo meant when he said:

“The enemy is not necessarily doing everything wrong.”

However, hon Chair, beyond these few positives there is little else in the Budget that deserves praise. The shortcomings are severe ranging from chronic underfunding of critical functions such as Standing Committee and institutional enablement to reckless spending on unconstitutional vanity projects that the ANC cannot in good consciousness support.

While we stand here debating this Budget, the fourth floor of this very building is struggling to connect to Wi-Fi. Staff members cannot bring documents because the network points that were removed during renovations of Public Works contractors at the end of the 6th Administration, are not yet restored. This is not a minor inconvenience. It is a systematic failure. How can we claim to be a modern, efficient Legislature when basic infrastructure failure standing.

Speaking of basic infrastructure, hon Chair, it is uncalled for the hon members even struggle to access or leave parliamentary premises while they are coming to perform their duties late or early in the morning. It is totally unacceptable. Day in and day out, you must respond to members that are stranded to enter our buildings.

The Budget before us does not allocate sufficient funds to rectify these issues. Instead, it continues to priorities superficial advancement over fundamental operational needs. The Financial Management of Parliament and Provincial Legislators Act mandates that we maintain robust systems for

accountability and service delivery. Yet, we are failing even to for basic IT functionality. We cannot ensure that our own offices are functional, how can we claim effectively serve the people of the Western Cape?

There was a time, hon Chair, when hon members of this Legislature could submit the written questions every week. Written questions are critical to upholding the Executive accountable. Yet, due to severe staff shortages a problem has persisted for years. This was reduced to just twice a month. This is not just an administrative issue. It is a direct attack on our Constitutional duty to conduct oversight.

The Budget confirms that there are no plans to hire additional staff, despite their clear need. Dedicated professionals like the Senior Procedural Officer, Ms Saaiman, that are stretched to their limits resulting in reduced capacity for members to hold the Executive to account. Our oversight duties cannot be held hostage by a refusal to allocate the necessary resources. If the Budget truly cared about accountability, hon Chair, it would provide for the hiring of additional staff to restore weekly questions, submissions and other critical oversight mechanism.

The DA's exceptionalism has left us with the smallest Legislature in the country, despite the Western Cape being the third largest province by population. This is not just a matter of numbers. It is a matter of democratic representation. The DA's refusal to increase the number of seats means that we cannot adequately serve every citizen in this province. The Budget before

us allocates a mere R211 million for the entire Legislature, a paltry sum of compared to the needs growing in this growing province. Other provinces receive significantly more funding relative to their size.

The ANC is clear, hon Chair, that the number of seats must increase to match our population growth. A larger Legislature would also mean a larger budget, allowing us to restore weekly question submissions, expand committee work and ensure proper oversight. Yet, this Budget makes no provision for such expansion.

It is unacceptable, hon Chair, that this Legislature continues to waste public funds on frivolous Bills championed by the DA. Despite not having enough money to hire more staff, we wasted taxpayers' money on unconstitutional Bills and now we are doing the same with the Western Cape Monitoring and Support Municipalities Amendment Bill, which seeks to grant hon MEC Bredell powers he does not legally possess.

The Budget shows no accountability for this wasteful expenditure. There is no transparency on how much has been spent or will be spent on this doomed legislative project. Meanwhile, we see, hon Chair, that the decreased allocations for goods and services as well as institutional enablement directly impacting our ability to function effectively. Why are we cutting essential services while pouring money into unconstitutional vanity projects?

While we commend the hon Speaker for taking the State of the Province to

Beaufort West where the business community benefitted, we must ask where are the benefits for the people? What is being done to address the pressing challenges: unemployment, poverty and service delivery failures that were identified during our visit? I am happy hon member Sileku said something about it. The reports of such cluster visits must fully be implemented, not selectively and we must stand united as members of this Committee to ensure that we hold the Executive accountable.

We note, hon Chair, that the concerns that cut the critical programmes like bursaries, a move that directly harms opportunities for our dedicated staff while there is an increase in consultant fees. Why are we slashing education funding while outsourcing work to expensive consultants? Where is the detailed list of these consultants as requested in the documents, hon Chair?

The Budget reveals a pattern of mismanagement and misplaced priorities. We see reductions in goods and services at capital assets institutional enablement. All critical to the functioning of this Legislature. There is an unjustified increase on spending on consultancy. This is not a clear justification. The Budget confirms that there are no plans to hire additional staff despite overwhelming need.

The so-called direct charge against the Provincial Revenue Fund remains unexplained, raising serious concerns of accountability, hon Chair. These financial decisions are indefensible. They show a Legislature that prioritises political projects over service delivery, vanity over accountability, and

austerity overgrowth.

The ANC calls for more resources to hire additional staff to alleviate the burden on the overworked employees and restore weekly question submissions. We demand that the internet work points be fixed, particularly on the fourth floor, to ensure that basic office functions can be performed without hinderance. The number of seats in the Legislature must increase to better represent the growing population of the Western Cape. We insist that Legislature cease wasting public funds on unconstitutional things that goes and puts money to waste and focus on legislation that truly serves the people.

Finally, hon Chair, we require a detailed plan to address the service delivery challenges identified by the SOPA in Beaufort West and surrounding areas. The ANC cannot support a budget that fails to address these critical issues. The Budget breakdown proves this Budget is not just inadequate, but reckless. It cuts essential services, while funding wasteful projects; ignores a shortage of staff, while increasing consultant fees; and refuses to expand representation despite the growing needs.

For these reasons, hon Chair, the ANC's position is very clear. We are rejecting this Budget, and we will be rejecting ...[Interjections.] ...[Applause.] it up until we see the performance as stated out by the hon Speaker when he said it is going to be people driven. We will be following, and we will be monitoring. I thank you, hon Chair. ...[Applause.]

The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, hon member. I now recognise hon Petrus from the Patriotic Alliance on the virtual platform. Hon Petrus.

Mr B PETRUS (PA): Thank you, hon Chairperson. Hon Speaker and hon colleagues, I greet you and the people of the Western Cape. Hon Speaker, in your Executive Authority statement, you mentioned the following and I quote:

“The delivery on our core mandate of lawmaking oversight of the Executive and public participation in our operations remains at the centre of what we as an Institution do.”

We call on you to ask the Executive to release the report on the George building collapse as it is of national public interest. We do not want to go into the merits of the case but demand the immediate release of the report to the Western Cape Parliament.

Hon Speaker, we support your efforts to make Parliament more accessible for the people. †Ons glo dat meer geld beskikbaar gestel moet word vir openbare deelname so dat die stem van ons mense gehoor kan word. Die Wes-Kaapse Regering het 'n verantwoordelikheid om meer te belê aan sy werknemers en strukture om dienslewering te verbeter. As ons nie die middele het nie, kan ons nie effektief regeer nie. [We believe that more money must be made available for public participation so that the voice of our people can be

heard. The Western Cape Government has a responsibility to invest more in its employees and structures to improve service delivery. If we do not have the means, we cannot govern effectively.]

We also need more resources and funding to strengthen our communication systems and relationships with municipalities. Hon Speaker, our people in the province deserve the best services and the Patriotic Alliance will support the allocation of more funding to achieve it.

We support this Budget Vote. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, hon Petrus. I now recognise hon Cassiem of the EFF, also on the virtual platform.

Ms A CASSIEM (EFF): Thank you very much, hon Chairperson. Hon Chairperson, in the past we have seen rapists, abusers and others that pose a threat to staff and members, walk into Legislatures across the country intimidating and scaring, especially female staff members, despite them having restraining and protection orders against them.

Security needs to be increased, hon Chairperson, on the premises where an identification process needs to be put in place upon entering, and this would include for all service providers, guests or any member of the public to

ensure the safety of all those working within the building, similar to what National Parliament has, hon Chairperson.

Especially against those who pose a threat to those working within the Legislature because when a member or staff member reports to the Legislature on such cases, the system should immediately be able to pick that up.

Hon Chairperson, more money needs to be spent on taking Parliament and public hearings to those who need it the most, like that of residents in African and Coloured townships and informal settlements, instead of leafy suburbs where at most times, the poor are not able to attend these public hearings unless Legislature sends a taxi or tour for transportation.

Hon Chairperson, furthermore, what is concerning when it comes to Provincial Parliament is the fact that there is a very slow pace when it comes to the rendering of maintenance to its existing infrastructure and the inconvenience it has for those who carry out their daily duties in the building is increasing.

Hon Chairperson, as an example it took this Legislature way too long to service the bathrooms on the fourth floor which are utilised for parties like the EFF, the ACDP and the GOOD party because the reality is, hon Chairperson, that these late upgrades created a lot of inconvenience for staff members.

Hon Chairperson, another concern is the fact that it takes long for offices to get supplied with the necessary furniture or equipment after a call has been lodged. As we speak, hon Chairperson, since the previous term our office aircon does not work. Our member's office still continues to be locked from the beginning of the new Administration and cannot be used by the member, while at the same time, our offices are not being serviced by the cleaning company unless we go out and call them to do so, among other issues.

So, in conclusion, while these are some of the issues I feel need to be addressed and a call for efficiency when it comes to maintenance ...[Interjection.]

The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Hon member ...[Interjection.]

Ms A CASSIEM (EFF): Thank you, hon Chairperson.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Thank you. Thank you, hon Cassiem. I now recognise hon Bosman from the DA.

The DEPUTY CHIEF WHIP (DA): Thank you very much, hon Chairperson and good afternoon to you and the esteemed hon members of the Provincial Parliament.

Today, I rise in strong support of Budget Vote 2, the allocation for our

Provincial Parliament for the 2025/2026 financial year. This Budget demonstrates the Democratic Alliance's unwavering commitment to a strengthened, transparent, and effective Legislature that lies at the heart of our democratic project in the Western Cape.

The proposed appropriation of just over R211 million for 2025/2026 represents a crucial investment in the Institution that holds the Executive accountable, crafts the laws that govern our province, and ensures the voices of our citizens are heard.

We note with satisfaction the 4,26% increase from the revised estimate of the previous financial year, a clear indication of the growing importance and demands placed upon this body. The indicative allocations of R213 million for the 2026/2027 financial year, and R219 million for the 2027/2028 financial year, provide a stable outlook for the Medium-Term, allowing for strategic planning and consistent execution of our parliamentary duties. It is important to remember that these outer-year figures are indicative and subject to future appropriations by this House.

This Budget, hon House Chairperson, directly supports the core functions and the responsibilities of the Provincial Parliament. These include providing procedural and related support for effective lawmaking and oversight, as well as ensuring corporate support to members and staff. It enables the promotion of optimal public participation in our parliamentary processes and fosters sound administration to ensure organisational efficiency.

The Democratic Alliance welcomes the key focus areas outlined in the coming financial year, which align with our vision of a modern and accessible Parliament. We strongly endorse the continued provision of procedural and related support for lawmaking and effective oversight, as this is the bedrock of our representative democracy.

The commitment to promoting public participation in parliamentary processes, including leveraging digital platforms, is essential for ensuring the work of this House is truly citizen centric. Ensuring enabling facilities and financial support for members and political parties is vital for all elected representatives to effectively fulfil their constitutional obligations. This will be continually reviewed to ensure resources are appropriately used.

Hon Chairperson, I want to draw the attention of the House and especially those on the opposite benches, to the Rules of this House that says that political parties are allocated a secretarial allowance to make provision for internet access for their operations in this building. I hope my colleague opposite me will look at that allowance and allocate some money for internet, for the African National Congress.

The planned implementation of appropriate digital platforms for business system integration and improved accessibility will enhance the efficiency and transparency of our operations. Investing in cyber-security capabilities and digital skills is a prudent measure in today's digital age to safeguard the

integrity of our systems as well as the information.

The IT Modernisation Project, mentioned by the hon Speaker, includes upgrades to our Chamber, our committee rooms, the auditorium, and the library and this will provide members and staff with the necessary modern tools to perform their duties effectively.

We are particularly encouraged by the development of an Artificial Intelligence framework and the implementation plan that goes with it. This has the potential to further enhance our research capabilities and administrative processes.

This Budget Vote also underpins the Provincial Parliament's commitment to its 5-year Strategic Plan, commencing in the 2025/2026 year. This aims to contribute to deepened democracy in the Western Cape. The Back-to-Basics approach that the hon Speaker spoke about, underpins this plan to serve as the guiding principle for all our endeavours in this Parliament.

Hon Chairperson, I think we need to be really honest when we talk about money allocated for consultants because I have checked. Page 82 of the Blue Book allocates R80 000 in this financial year for consultants and advisory services. I encourage the hon members to go and look at some of the other Legislatures in this country and see how many millions are budgeted for consultants. Because in this Province, we have got capable staff that deliver excellent service, operate efficiently and ensure that all hon members are

adequately supported.

Hon Speaker, I want to extend my heartfelt thank you to all the members of this Committee who make sure that we hold the Executive to account, and that Parliament runs efficiently. But a very special thanks goes to all the staff members at our Provincial Parliament who work day and night whether in this building or on the road, to make sure that hon members are capacitated, that citizens are able to participate, and that this Legislature continues to be the best run Parliament in South Africa.

A special thank you goes to our Procedural Officer in this Committee, Ms Waseemah Kamish-Achmat who ensures that the hon members are provided with the correct information, have up-to-date information of when we meet and that our meetings run as efficiently as possible.

Hon Speaker, in conclusion, the Democratic Alliance believes that this Budget allocation for our Provincial Parliament is a responsible and strategic investment. It provides the necessary resources to ensure that this Institution can effectively carry out its constitutional mandate, deepen our democracy, and serve the people of the Western Cape with diligence and integrity. We urge all members to support this Vote because it is our Parliament that we are investing in and not a political party's Parliament. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Yes!

The CHIEF WHIP (DA): So, I do encourage my hon colleague opposite to really review what is in this Blue Book and perhaps, change her mind because I know secretly, she does not believe what she delivered. [Interjections.]

With that said, the Democratic Alliance supports the Vote. ...[Applause.]

The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: Thank you, hon Bosman. I now recognise the hon Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Chairperson and thank you very much for all the comments and inputs made during this Budget.

Hon Chair, I want to start with the Chief Whip of the Opposition. Thank you very much for the kind words, for your support because as the Chief Whip has absolutely correctly highlighted, this is not a political party, this, all, is our Parliament. The Parliament belongs to all nine political parties represented here, representing the citizens.

But I want to open with a quote, and I want to say, hon Bans:

“Sometimes one needs to learn from the enemy also.”

Hon Chair, I want to start with the questions. If you go to the Standing Rules, hon Chair, on page 68, the publication of questions. Hon Chairperson, under Rule 195(1) dictates our questions whether they are written or oral.

Questions are being submitted or processed in Parliament. So, we are absolutely following the Standing Rule. It is not a decision of an individual when we decide to publish a Question Paper.

It is my view, hon Chair, that I mean, I am a stickler for rules and as you would know, and executing Standing Rules as adopted by this House. By every single hon member at the first sitting of this Parliament, we adopted these Rules. It dictates how Questions are being published.

With that being said, hon Chair, there is a process underway where we are reviewing the Standing Rules and political parties have had previous opportunities to make inputs to the amendments of Standing Rules because we learn every day. Every day that the House is in session, some new potential amendment to a Rule could be proposed and we are busy with that process. But again, it is not a Speaker decision or an administrative decision, it is the decision of all nine political parties and some political parties in fact, hon Chair, have already made some inputs to that process.

Hon Chair, then I want to go to where hon Bans raised infrastructure issues on the fourth floor, which I take very, very seriously and I was informed that the Wi-Fi issue on Thursday was as a result of a faulty power plug, and not the actual infrastructure. So that was dealt with at that point, but I have also asked that the Administration just engages the Chief Whip so that if there are any other infrastructure issues on the fourth floor, that we can deal with it. But that was the issue with regard to Wi-Fi.

Hon Chair, then with regard to the increase in training. If the hon member refers to page 79 in the Blue Book. Hon Chair, there is in fact an increase for training and development allocated in this Budget. So, there is no decrease. There is, in actual fact, a 22% increase and that can be found on page 79 of the Blue Book.

Then, hon Chair, there is an increase in direct charges that the hon member has raised, and I think it is prudent, and it is important for me to respond to that because I think I did respond to it in the Standing Committee but let me re-explain. Direct charges, hon Chair, is an increase of members of Parliament salaries. So, that is direct charges against the Revenue Fund that pays the salaries of the hon members of Parliament. So, because members of Parliament are anticipated to have a salary adjustment, there will be an increase as part of the Direct Revenue Fund. So, the direct charges have nothing to do with the Administration. It is actually directly salaries of members of Parliament.

With regards to the seats. I do not really want to get into the details of the seats because the Bill and the process of the Bill is actually in front of a Standing Committee, and it would be wrong of me to have an opinion about the process before it is actually tabled for the House for a decision. But I wish to remind all hon members of the House in order to change or to amend the Provincial Constitution, the House needs a two thirds majority.

So, whichever way the Committee decides, it is a two thirds majority, and that process has also been explained in the Standing Committee of Premier and Constitutional Matters where there is a whole breakdown of how much it is going to cost, possible alterations of the various amounts of seats that potentially could increase and what the Provincial Parliament has done thus far.

Then, hon Chair, with regard to and to which I absolutely agree with hon member Bans is the accessibility of Parliament, the actual Parliament, to the rural parts of this province. It can never be and while we are working within a fiscal environment that we cannot open Parliament to the citizens of this province. Whether somebody comes from Murraysburg or whether a person comes from where hon Booysen is from, or whether the person or the citizen is in Cape Town or Lutzville. The reality is that Parliament must be accessible and within the confines of our Budget, we need to try and facilitate that.

I do know that the Public Education and Outreach Unit has on numerous occasions, extended the invitation to members to please inform the Unit to facilitate that kind of engagement. We might not be able to do three and four in a constituency, but we really do try and make sure that it is equally spread across the province and that we make it as accessible as possible.

With regard to, hon Chair, with regard to hon Petrus. I take note of your comment with regard to the report. I do not want to venture into the details

with regard to the George Report, if I can call it that. But the understanding that I have is that the hon Premier has handed it over, the hon Premier and hon Minister Simmers have handed it over to the South African Police Services who are busy with the full investigation. I will make a commitment to see if Parliament is able to obtain a copy and then, I will revert back to the hon member.

Hon Chair, before I get to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee. What hon Cassiem has raised about the security, and I think hon Bans has also raised the security issues, is something that I take very, very seriously.

It can never be that firstly, members, staff and the building and the infrastructure is not 'protected', in inverted commas, and made sure that the relevant or the necessary security measures are put in place. So, I know that from an administration prospective we have placed an enormous value on that and that is why things like the way that you access and gain access to the building have been addressed. If there are still further security risks and issues and concerns, to please feel free to write to me so that we can take it up.

And then, hon Chair, lastly. To the Chairperson, thank you very much to hon Bosman for your comments and for the support of the Vote, but also thank you very much for the manner in which the Standing Committee and not just you, but the entire Standing Committee engages WCPP. I am always mindful that it must be difficult for hon members to have oversight over the Western

Cape Provincial Parliament where you are directly a beneficiary of these services. So, I am very mindful of that and thank you very much for the manner in which you conduct that oversight and provide that platform to the members of the Committee.

Hon Chair, it would be remiss of me not to, at this point, use the opportunity to say thank you to a few people. Firstly, hon Chair, I think let me start with the hon members of Parliament. Hon colleagues, thank you very much for the support that you have provided. Thank you very much for the manner in which we can engage. Thank you for at times, knowing that actually, but this is our Parliament. Thank you for fighting for the credibility and reputational image of this Institution as hard as what I am fighting every single day. Thank you for making it personal. I really, really do appreciate it.

And hon Chair, not too long ago, we have had that engagement and thank you very much for the manner in which you also fight for the credibility of this Institution, and I appreciate that because it is not a Speaker Parliament, it is our Parliament and if Parliament fails, all of us fail.

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear! ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Chair, and then to the hon Deputy Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for your support over the last couple of months. I know that it has been a new transition but thank you for your unwavering support to make sure that we make Parliament work.

Then, to the Secretary. I think the Acting Secretary is here and the previous Secretary is in the gallery. Thank you very much for the support, Mr Adams, over this past year and for getting us to this point. ...[Applause.]

I think it is also just important for the record to state that Mr Adams' contract with the WCPP naturally concluded on 31 March and we have embarked on a recruitment and selection process, which was a multiparty panel, and that process is not concluded yet and that is why we have an Acting Secretary in the form of Ms Goldstone.

So, thank you to the Acting Secretary, to you and the senior management team for the work that has gone in to making sure that today happens, and the last couple of days. And thank you very much for your daily support to make sure that we can make Parliament continue to function.

Hon Chair, then to every single member of the staff of WCPP. Thank you, thank you, thank you. We engage on various different levels, various different needs, but thank you very much for the support to not only myself but also to every single hon member of the WCPP. You are truly valued, and we truly appreciate the efforts that you do on a daily basis.

Then, hon Chair, to the team in my office. To Lorica and the team: †baie, baie dankie, [thank you very, very much] thank you, thank you, thank you! And lastly, hon Chair, this is a very emotional thank you, but to my mother

who is watching online. †Baie dankie. [Thank you.] I do not want to get into the details because that I will say to her tonight. I do not think it is necessary to be broadcast, but †baie, baie dankie vir die gebede, vir die onderskraging [thank you very, very much for the prayers, for the support] and daily, daily motivation. †Baie dankie. [Thank you ...[Applause.]]

The TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON: That concludes the debate on this Vote. The House will now be suspended for two minutes to allow the guests of the hon Speaker to leave the officials bay.

[The Speaker takes the Chair.]

The SPEAKER: Order, hon members. The Secretary will read the 7th Order of the Day.

The SECRETARY: Consideration of Votes and Schedule – Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 1–2025].

The SPEAKER: I have to announce that there are currently 38 hon members present and entitled to vote, and the House is therefore quorate. Parties now have an opportunity to make a declaration covering all the Votes. I will afford parties and opportunity to make a declaration, if they so wish. I recognise the ANC.

Ms N D NKONDLO (ANC): †Nkosi Somlomo. [Thank you Speaker] The

African National Congress stands before this House to firmly reject the 2025/2026 Provincial Budget. While the Budget has been increased to R89,3 billion comprising of R65 billion from the Equitable Share and R16 billion in Conditional Grants, the expenditure will not translate to meaningful change for the majority of the people of the Western Cape.

It is the height of hypocrisy for the Democratic Alliance to reject a National Budget under the pretext of defending the poor, a new term that they have adopted, while in this Province they eagerly pass a budget that entrenches existing inequalities. The DA-led Government has once again demonstrated its disregard for the plight of the poor and working class. Anyway, this DA is not so democratic after all, but a spin.

As the very hon MEC of Finance left an unfinished mandate to develop a procedure to amend money Bills as mandated by this House to sought to rather leave democracy in this House on the arrogance of numbers as a majority party. While they cry foul on losing in a democratic process of the National Budget, something they inflict on us in this House as a democratic process that we all accept as democrats.

We welcome the increased allocations from the National Government, but we are not convinced that these funds will be optimally used to improve the living conditions of our people. Winter is approaching and yet, there is no urgency or provision in this Budget to address the dire conditions in informal settlements where families brace themselves for floods and are forced to seek

shelter in local halls.

However, when disasters affect farms and agri-business, the Government suddenly finds the will and resources to act swiftly with their friends from the private sector. This selective response speaks volumes. We are also asking here in this House for money to be reprioritised for the SMME Booster Fund.

Despite receiving an increased Budget including allocations for the cost-of-living Wage Agreement, the DA is still pushing forwards with its disastrous plan to cut teacher posts for the 2025 academic year. This will have a devastating impact on the quality of education, particularly for children from poor communities.

The so-called Growth for Jobs Strategy embedded in this Budget, will not resolve the province's deepening crisis of unprotected jobs. With 797 000 unemployed people and an additional 1,5 million economically inactive individuals, this Budget offers no real solution, only more profits for the DA's private sector allies with no tangible benefits for the people.

Furthermore, this Budget exposes the DA's twisted priorities. The province faces a growing crisis of crime and violence, yet the budget for Police Oversight and Community Safety has been decreased. Instead, we are told that a conference of extortion is what the response is of this Government for people who are dying under protection fees daily in the townships.

Meanwhile, the hon Premier's Department received over R2 billion, while the ...[Interjection.]

The SPEAKER: Hon Nkondlo, your time has expired, but I am going to allow you to ...[Interjection.]

Ms N D NKONDLO (ANC): How does this Government justify such misaligned priorities. We do not ...[Interjection.] ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Nkondlo. I recognise the PA.

Mr B PETRUS (PA): Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Speaker, we raised our concerns during the Budget process. It is on record. But we, as the Patriotic Alliance, support it. ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I recognise the EFF.

Ms A CASSIEM (EFF): Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Speaker, the EFF has no declaration, but for record purposes, we are not in support of the Budget. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. The NCC? The Freedom Front Plus?

Mr G P MARAIS (FFP): Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Speaker, the Freedom Front Plus does not support Vote 1, Vote 10 and Vote 5. We believe that in

terms of Vote 1, we are not convinced that the hon Premier has made sufficient explanation for the unforeseen circumstance funds set aside.

In terms of Vote 10, hon Minister Simmers's refusal to answer my question ...[Laughter.] and he has made me simmer with anger.

In terms of Vote 5, the hon Education Minister: [Interjections.] we are not happy with the response and no answers in terms of our constituency. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Order, hon members. Al Jama-ah. The ACDP?

Mr F C CHRISTIANS (ACDP): Hon Speaker, the ACDP supports the Budget. Although we are going through difficult times financially and we do not know the full impact of the US on the country, I think the hon MEC of Finance and the Departments are doing well to cater for our people.

I want to say that sitting on the Education Department, the ACDP is very pleased that we will move forward with Education in the Western Cape, and we believe in the Budget. You can only do so much with what you get. So, I think this Budget will serve the people in the Western Cape. I thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. GOOD?

Mr B N HERRON (GOOD): Hon Speaker, thank you. The 2025 Western Cape Budget has misguided priorities. The Budget underfunds Education, overspends on ineffective policing, allows a healthcare crisis to deepen and invites private interests into public infrastructure without transparency. We do not support the Budget. Thank you.

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I now recognise the Democratic Alliance.

Mr P JOHNSON (DA): Hon Speaker, it is my honour to rise in support of the Western Cape Main Budget for 2025/2026 financial year. This is the budget that places the people of this province at its heart. While the uncertainty reigns abroad and at home, this Budget is proof that the Western Cape is stepping up to fill that void. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

Mr P JOHNSON (DA): We are putting forward a plan that is clear, focused and most importantly, a plan for everyone.

Approximately 80% of this Budget is directed towards Social Services because we know that dignity starts with access to quality education, healthcare and social services. Over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, more than R215 billion will be invested in frontline services that uplift our residents, protect the most vulnerable and build a better future.

We are investing in our children with R101 billion for Education, supporting infrastructure upgrades, Early Childhood Development and hiring additional teachers to manage growing enrolment.

We are strengthening our Healthcare system with R100 over the MTEF, ensuring that our facilities remain stocked, our staff supported, and our communities cared for.

Hon Speaker, as mentioned in my Budget speech last Thursday, this is a budget for the entire province. With R8,4 billion allocated to Social Development, R31 billion for Infrastructure and targeted investments to unlock economic growth, we are protecting communities, correcting past injustices and encouraging the engines of growth.

By creating an environment where opportunity can grow, where jobs can be created and where dignity is foremost, we are building a better province, a better future and a better life for all who call the Western Cape home. To every resident from the entrepreneur in Khayelitsha to the farmer in Beaufort West, this Budget is for you.

That is why the Democratic Alliance supports this Budget because in the Western Cape, we believe in a government that shows up, steps up, and delivers. A government for you. ...[Interjection.]

An HON MEMBER: Hear, hear!

Mr P JOHNSON (DA): Thank you. ...[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Thank you, hon Johnson. Hon members, that concludes the Declaration on the Consideration of the Votes and the Schedule of the Bill. Are there any objections to Votes 1 to 14, and the Schedule of the Western Cape Appropriation Bill?

Hon MEMBERS: Yes!

An HON MEMBER: No!

The SPEAKER: There is an objection. All those in favour of the Votes and the Schedule of the Western Cape Appropriation Bill being adopted, please say yes.

Hon MEMBERS: Yes!

The SPEAKER: Those not in favour of the Votes and the Schedule of the Western Cape Appropriation Bill being adopted, please say no.

Hon MEMBERS: No!

The SPEAKER: I think the 'ayes' have it. The Votes and the

...[Interjections.] Order, hon members! [Interjections.] Order! I think the 'ayes' have it. The Votes and the Schedule of the Western Cape Appropriation Bill has therefore been adopted. The Secretary will read the 8th Order of the Day.

The SECRETARY: Finalisation of the Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 1–2025].

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I recognise the hon Minister of Finance.

Die MINISTER VAN FINASIES: †Goeie middag, agb Speaker. Ek versoek hiermee die Finalisering van die Wes-Kaapse Begrotingswetsontwerp [W 2–2025]. [Good afternoon, hon Speaker. I request herewith the Finalisation of the Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 2-2025]]

The SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon Minister. There being no list of speakers, are there any objections to the Bill, Clauses and Short Title being finalised?

Hon MEMBERS: No!

The SPEAKER: No objections, agreed to. The Finalisation including Clauses and the Short title of the Western Cape Appropriation Bill [B 2–2025] are therefore approved. The Secretary will read the Bill.

The SECRETARY: Western Cape Appropriation Bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Bill will be sent to the Hon Premier for assent.

Hon members, that concludes the business for the day. The Secretary will now end the meeting, and all hon members will be exited from this Sitting. The House is adjourned.

[House adjourned at 17:45.]