

BUDGET VOTE 2
SPEECH BY THE SPEAKER OF THE NORTH WEST
PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE HON BASETSANA R.S.
DANTJIE

Madam Deputy Speaker, Hon Motsumi

The Premier, Hon Kaobitsa Bushy Maape

Members of the Executive Council

Members of the Provincial Legislature

Maapara Nkwe, Makgosi a Rona

Executive Mayors and Mayors

Speakers of Municipal Councils

The Secretary to the Legislature and management

Director-General and Heads of Departments

Officials of the North West Provincial Legislature

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to take this opportunity to present Budget Vote 2 for the North West Provincial Legislature 2022/23 financial year. We are half way on the implementation of our current adopted strategic plan as the 6th Legislature. The past year has been a challenging one as we had to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic storms and turbulences.

Through hard work, resilience and innovation, we continue to make sure that there are no major disruptions in our day to day running of the Institution. In his state of the nation address (2022), His Excellency President Ramaphosa reiterated the words of the former President Mbeki when he said “Trying times need courage and resilience. Our strength as a people is not tested during the best of times”. Indeed, the period under review has been very tough, painful and trying for many of us, but through resilience and courage, we are, by the special grace of God still standing strong.

Hon Members, few months ago we witnessed one of the most devastating, unforgettable attack and the burning down of National Parliament. This is a serious setback for the Sector, the country and national democratic revolution, our gains since the dawn of democracy in 1994. This unprecedented setback led to the country wide strengthening of security at all Provincial Legislatures and other Protected Infrastructures including the constitutional court which was also attacked.

Despite all the setbacks, we must remain optimistic and draw courage from the words of our late statesman, former President of the Republic of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, when he said, “I am fundamentally an optimist. Part of being optimistic is keeping one’s head pointed to the sun, one’s feet moving forward. There were dark moments when my faith in humanity was solely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death.”

Honourable Members, our assessment of the past year shows that despite our achievements, there are programmes that could not be achieved and such had to be carried over to the current financial year. We are, however, hopeful that our committee chairpersons will ensure full implementation of resolutions arising from strategic plans of committees held towards the end of the last financial year. We shall complete our set objective at the end of our term. At the heart of decisions taken at the strategic planning session, lies a commitment and the zeal to get all the work done at a better, faster and more efficient pace than before by Hon Members.

As the Legislative Sector, the pandemic forced us to have a different perspective on how we conduct our business. It forced us to continuously review our business processes and create innovative platforms for public suggestions, opinions and participation on how they expect their government to respond to their needs. Our success depends on an activist legislature with strong, robust and energetic committees we have. Committees of the Legislature, are the driving force behind successful execution of its oversight mandate. Its primary focus is bias towards service delivery commitments made by departments through their APPs.

Our pursuit of oversight is guided by the Sector Oversight Model and in line with this model committees need full cooperation and availability of Members of the Executive at all times. We must at all times bear in mind that Legislatures are central components of service delivery, we bear the equal responsibility for overall government performance through pro-active oversight. We must have a shared understanding that oversight is done in pursuit of good governance and service delivery. Our oversight must be done in such a way that it does not disrupt the business of government and must not be adversarial.

It should neither be antagonistic in both form and approach nor be seen as encroachment. In the same vein members must execute their constitutional mandate within the framework and provisions of the law. It should therefore be accepted that the new normal requires of us to shift from our traditional way of conducting Legislature business, modernise our systems to be up to speed with the challenging environment and push to a higher level.

Honourable Members, it is no secret that the bulk of the work of the Legislature is done by its committees. Committees are the engine room of the Legislature. Committees are also structures through which members of the public can access the Legislature as they are given the opportunity to express their opinions directly to influence the decisions of the Legislature. They play a critical role in processing legislation that is

prepared by the executive, oversee their work and the implementation of policy directives. **There should therefore be zero tolerance for failure to cooperate with and provide necessary support to committees.**

The challenges that we continue to experience as the Legislature is the delay in tabling committee reports. These delays impact on the reporting for auditing and communication to the Executive for implementation and or consideration of house resolutions. We also need to improve on how we process our petitions, which is part of our strategic objective. We are all aware that people of our Province are not happy the way in which we process petitions. One of the contributing factors to this challenge is that the Committee responsible for processing of Petitions and House Resolutions is not fully functional.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is nothing sinister about adopting new strategies and implementing new business processes and bringing in new ideas and energy in the Legislature. It is in fact reaffirmation of our commitment to our constitutional mandate of oversight, law-making and public participation. In that regard, we need not be apologetic in executing such a noble objective lest we erode the gains made by our forebears. We should rather strive for more gains to improve the lives of our people. To strengthen this point, Hon Members, allow me to reiterate the words of President Ramaphosa when he said “There are moments in the life of a nation when old certainties are unsettled and new possibilities emerge. In these moments, there is both the prospect of great progress and the risk of reversal.”

As the Legislature, we should choose progress over reversal. We are where we are today because of hard work and sacrifices of those who came before us. It is for these reasons that in our planning we always strive to put the interest of the people of the North West first. It is the people who entrusted us to lead them in the fight against poor service delivery, gender-based violence, joblessness, poverty, inequality and corruption.

Honourable members, these are non- negotiable basics we all want to live to achieve. We will continue to be open to the public in line with our constitutional mandate, advance the developmental agenda of the NDP 2030 and Africa 2063 vision. As the President said, “in rebuilding our country we must make sure that no-one is left behind.” **Asijiki, forward we go.**

Madam Deputy Speaker, the administration support team of the Legislature remains the key pillar to enable members to perform their constitutional mandate. It remains crucial for management and the administration team to understand the strategic support that members require on their daily work and to meet the expected standard.

The administration must at all times focus on administration work and refuse temptation of being involved in politics. Honourable Members should at all material times and without any fear nor favour, put the interest of our people first guided by the adopted policies of government. Objectivity and impartiality in serving the people should always be at the centre and at the heart of our daily work.

Hon Members, in assessment of our performance, we reflected on our strides and planned for the year ahead. According to our strategic plan, we have committed ourselves to focus on the following key strategic areas:

- Enhancing oversight over the Executive;
- Increased public awareness and vigorous public participation;
- Strengthening the law-making practices; and
- Monitoring House Resolutions.

To give effect to these key priorities and build on the work already done, the institution is committed to do the following;

- Strengthen our process of scrutinising and overseeing the executive arm of government, its entities and local government.

- Build public confidence through people's driven and centred Legislature that is responsive to the needs of the people
- Build an effective and efficient people's legislature capable of speaking for the voiceless and the oppressed.

Members of this House have always decried the fact that we are not passing enough legislation in this House. As much as I agree with Hon Members, we must always bear in mind that it is the responsibility of each Member of this House to initiate laws whenever the Member identifies any legislative gap. This is the authority bestowed to each Member by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and also echoed in our Standing Rules. In order to equip Members to initiate laws, we will work closely with the Members Enabling Facilities Sub-Committee to ensure that Members are empowered on the law-making processes.

Honourable Members, the Auditor General (AG) said this Legislature has a potential for a clean audit. At one stage we were doing very well towards addressing the findings by the AG. However, we seem to be dropping the ball. During Strategic Planning Session of management, I implored on all managers to ask themselves, where did the wheels fall off and how can it be fixed for the institution to regain momentum.

The internal audit is doing their best to show all the red flags during the year, however, the AG made a finding that the Legislature does not implement recommendations of the Internal audit. On the other hand, the Audit Committee has raised a concern on the lack of consequence management, lack of discipline and work ethics as the main sources of our problems as the institution. The AG equally share the same sentiments and further raised findings which include:

- Failure to pay service providers within 30 days
- Weakness of internal control
- Lack of consequence management

Proposed solutions to these questions are contained in details in the Annual Performance Plan. The Secretary to the Legislature has been directed to implement recommendations made by the Audit Committee, the Consequence Management Advisory Committee as well as to prioritise work around the Post Audit Action Plans. We must cross the bridge into clean audit very soon, because we have been stuck close to it for some time.

Public participation and IT remain instrumental towards improving these processes, taking other lessons on how we conducted Legislature business in this pandemic. Hon members, we have also launched the e-Petition system during the last quarter of the past financial year. Part of the initiatives planned for the financial year is to channel financial resources to technological infrastructure to enable members to continue with their work. The project to renovate the chamber that include installation of new ICT system in the chamber and committee rooms is underway.

The Public participation Unit in collaboration with the ICT Unit will conduct public workshops to educate the public how the system works and whilst this process is continuing, we should ensure that petitions that are submitted to the Legislature are integrated into our work.

Hon Members our public participation programmes have been interrupted by Covid-19 pandemic. We are however confident that the situation is improving and we are gradually getting back to normal. In the current financial year, we will embark on some of the public participation activities such as Taking the Legislature to the People, Basadi Re aga Sechaba among others.

The size of our Legislature is small with only 33 members, and is expected to do same tasks as other bigger legislatures. The population of the province, as a determining factor for allocation of legislature seats, has grown significantly since 1994. That on its own makes a strong case for the review of the number of seats the Legislature should

have. The current number of members is not enough to perform oversight over 10 Departments and their entities, 18 Local Municipalities and 4 Districts Municipalities, in a vast, predominantly rural province as ours.

We are pleased that the process to amend the Electoral Act to make provision for the determination of number of Members have been completed and we are hopeful that our size will be increased before the 2024 general elections.

As one of the Critical Infrastructure, (National Key Point), the Legislature must find creative ways to keep information secured from unauthorised access, alterations, ensure safety of members, staff and all stakeholders visiting the Institution. The Joint Planning Committee which is a structure responsible for threat analysis and assessment of security infrastructure in the institution, has raised a number of concerns regarding security risks in the Legislature. In this financial year, funds have been prioritised to strengthen internal controls and compliance with all relevant Protected Infrastructure (National Key Point) and other related legislations.

I am advised that some work have started in this regard though at a slow pace. The Secretary has been mandated to fast-track the process and prioritise those things that can be achieved within the current financial year.

Hon Members, strengthening of internal controls and security infrastructure is not intended to hide anything or subvert the Promotion of Access to Information Act, Supply Chain Management Systems, Risk Management Systems etc but it is a compliance matter required by law. There is privileged and protected information that cannot be made accessible without controls. An institution of this magnitude cannot operate in a fashion that does not give due regard to security, privacy, risks, and the livelihood of its staff, Members and stakeholders. Strengthening of internal controls will largely help us to do away with irregular, wasteful, fruitless and unauthorised expenditure and thus pave our way towards clean audit and sound governance.

I am pleased to announce that we have now established a Risk Management and Internal Control Unit and have also appointed key personnel in Human Resource Unit. In order to strengthen our support to the core business of the Legislature, we have beefed up the legal Unit of the Legislature and ensured that adequate Researchers and Committee Administrators are appointed to serve Committees.

Hon Members, I wish to implore on Committee chairpersons and members, to ensure that committee reports are not just tabled through the ATC but they get debated in the House as one way of strengthening oversight and accountability. Debates are an opportunity for MPLs to engage with government policies, new laws and current issues. It also allows MPLs to voice concerns of their constituencies and issues brought to their attention by the public through the oversight visits and Sectoral Parliaments.

Capacity building is still at the centre of the work of the Legislative Sector for its members. To give effect to this priority of the Sector, the Legislature has approved bursary policy for the members to empower themselves with knowledge and skills. We implore members to enrol with different institutions and have greater influence even in our youth to love education. Through education members will continue to get different perspective on how they can enhance Legislature work and even beyond their term of office in the Sector, in this regards we must appreciate the good work of the Deputy Speaker.

Parliamentary Institute: The Legislative Sector is at the final stages of launching the newly establishment Parliamentary Institute which aim at further empowering members and staff with the relevant work of the Sector. These are some of the platforms that members will be expected to take advantage of, in empowering themselves and strengthen their knowledge. We are in the process, through National Speakers Forum, of arranging a road show to the Legislature by the Parliamentary Institute in order to showcase various fields that are available for Members.

New and reviewed policies: The Political Party Funding Act has serious implication for the legislative sector which required policy alignment with the Act. We have also streamlined the Members Facility Policy and Political Party Allowances Policy in accordance with the new Political Party Funding Act.

Hon Members, following the decision that was taken by the Rules Committee in 2019, we have once again issued an invitation to all parties to submit proposals on amendments to the Standing Rules. The initial date for submissions by parties was 30 April 2022 and has now been extended to 30 June 2022.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as at 31st March 2022, the NWPL had a total of 216 support staff, 142 in Administration and 74 in the Core Function. Gender split is 120 males and 96 Females. The Institution will review its Employment Equity Plan in the coming year to address the gender disparities.

Priority posts for the first year of implementation were advertised and filled. Out of 32 posts that were advertised 29 have been filled. This will strengthen the work of committees and the administration of the Institution.

The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Representatives were appointed and trained on Emergency Preparedness as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993. Plans are in place to establish the OHS Committee from those Reps including Union Representatives in the second quarter of the new Financial Year.

Honourable Members we have resuscitated Employee Health and Wellness Office by appointing a specialist, a qualified and registered Social Worker. This is aimed at ensuring the wellbeing of Employees and their immediate families is well taken care of.

The Institution continue to offer various skills development programmes to its workforce for the year under review and provided support where required. This included awarding Bursaries to qualifying staff members.

We are continuing to forge working relationship with other Institutions pursuing similar mandate with ourselves and also participating in national and international forums. We have recently launched the Provincial Speakers Forum (of which MPAC Chairpersons are standing invitees) and we will ensure that we use this Forum to continue building and strengthening the capacity of municipal Speakers so that they are effective in Executing their mandate.

Hon Members, the Legislature remains committed to protect and cooperate with Chapter 9 Institutions, I am pleased to report that we have recently hosted the Public Protector, Adv Busisiwe Mkhwebane and the Auditor General of South Africa, Ms Tsakani Maluleke.

The Public Protector presented reports that she has concluded for the North West. The reports were tabled and referred to relevant committees which will find expression in the work of the Legislature as part of its oversight work. Committees will continue to engage the Office of the Public Protector and relevant departments and municipalities to monitor the implementation of the remedial actions contained in the reports. The Secretary in consultation with Hon Theologo and Hon Motswana will organise a session for all members to receive a presentation from the Office of the Public Protector relating to these reports, as resolved by the Programming Committee.

The Auditor General presented her reports on MFMA audits and highlighted areas of concern which they identified as repeat findings when conducting audit in government institutions. In her address, the AG also placed emphasis on strengthening governance, consequence management and the importance of good financial management. Based on the commitment and pronouncement by the Premier in that

meeting, we expect turnaround on the current trend of audit in the province especially at our municipalities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we will continue through committees to hold those entrusted with public funds accountable for every cent spent. We also appeal to government to prioritise implementation of post audit action plans in municipalities. We were also encouraged by the AG placing emphasis on the powers of her office in referring matters to the law enforcement authorities. We however request Executive and accounting officers to ensure that actions are taken against those found to be on the wrong side of the law.

We are actively participating in International Parliamentary Forums such as the CPA Africa Region and CPA International and as a Member in good Standing we will participate in the CPA Africa Region Conference in Sierra Leone and CPA International Conference to be held in Canada. We will also participate in the National Conference of State Legislatures Summit to be held in the United States of America this year. The Summit provide an opportunity to learn best international practices and benchmark on our operations.

We will also continue to participate in the programs of the Association of Public Accounts Committees (APAC). APAC is an important oversight mechanism looking more specifically on the utilization of the funds appropriated to various organs of state. In this regard we are humbled by the contribution that is being made by our own Hon Job Dliso who is serving as the Executive Member of APAC.

We are beneficiaries of the European Union funding which come through our participation at the Speakers Forum. In the current financial year, we have been offered an amount of R2.5 million to enhance our functions. This funding will go a long way to alleviate our budget constraint and will be channelled towards special projects.

Budget allocation

Honourable members, the budget for North West Provincial Legislature is allocated into three main programmes, namely:

Programme 01: Administration;

Programme 02: Statutory Payments; and

Programme 03: Legislature Operations.

Programme 01: Administration is allocated an amount of two hundred and sixty-five million, and thirty-eight thousand rand (R265 038 000.00) for the 2022/23 financial year. This allocation includes the following:

- Infrastructure projects which amounts to twenty-five million rand (R25 000 000.00). The amount is comprised of an allocation for the Refurbishment of the Chamber, that includes sub-projects such as the replacement of the carpet, refurbishment of furniture and fittings as well as procurement of the house system which is important to enable e-Parliament, improve efficiency on virtual and hybrid house sittings, to mention a few advantages.
- The upgrade of the electronic security systems: This project is one of the key priority projects of the Legislature, which is aimed at improving compliance with the NKP requirements and to optimize occupational safety and security.
- Provision for staff training and development, appointment of staff in critical vacant posts, enhancement of media and communications strategy, payment of audit fees, procurement of ICT equipment aimed at enhancing the ICT infrastructure.

Honourable Members, it is imperative for this august house to note that the allocation for this programme declines by 6.3 per cent which amounts to eighteen million, two hundred and ninety thousand rand (R18 290 000.00) from the 2021/22 adjusted allocation of two hundred and seventy-nine million, one hundred and twenty-eight thousand rand (R 279 128 000).

Programme 02: Statutory Payments, which caters for Members' salaries, is allocated an amount of thirty-five million, four hundred and eight thousand rand (R35 408

000.00). The allocation shows an increase of one per cent from the 2021/22 allocation of thirty-five million, one hundred and three thousand rand (R35 103 000.00).

Programme 03: Legislature Operations which hosts the core functions of the Institution is allocated an amount of One hundred and eighty-seven million, one hundred and forty-two thousand rand (R187 142 000.00).

Madam Deputy Speaker, when comparing the 2021/22 budget with the 2022/23 budget, one will notice a decline of eight million, six hundred and eighty-two thousand rand (R8 682 000.00). The decline is due to the relocation of the Library and Information services staff to Media and Communications under Programme 01: (Administration). Moreover, the decline is also attributable to the once off allocation for Democracy enhancement, which was only allocated in the 2021/22 financial year, which was the year for local government elections.

Despite the registered decline, the budget for core functions show a year-on-year growth as follows:

- Exposure to Parliament Services budget grow by four hundred and sixty-six thousand (R466 000.00) to augment the bursary fund that is aimed at enabling honourable members of the Legislature to obtain tertiary qualifications;
- Public Participation allocation grows by ten million (R10 000 000.00) to cater adequately for public participation services which include Taking the Legislature to the People (TLP), Sectoral Parliaments, Public hearings and so forth.
- Committee services, allocation grows by one million, four hundred and seventy-five thousand (R1 475 000.00) which is mainly as a result of continuing with implementing efficiency gains (Savings) particularly as a result of hybrid and virtual platforms for some meetings.

In summary, the total allocation of the Legislature for the 2022/23 financial year is divided as follows:

Programme		Amounts '000
1. Administration	Two hundred and sixty-five million, and thirty-eight thousand rand	R265 038
2. Statutory Payments	Thirty-five million, four hundred and eight thousand rand	R35 408
3. Legislature Operations	One hundred and eighty-seven million, one hundred and forty-two thousand rand	R187 142
Total	The total allocation amounts to four hundred and eighty-seven million, five hundred and eighty-eight thousand rand	R487 588

Honourable Members, as the Legislative arm of government we acknowledge the dire economic challenges that the country has faced in the past three years and would continue to observe and explore cost containment measures in carrying out our mandate, however, it is imperative to note that our allocation for the 2022/23 financial year makes up of only 1 per cent of the total allocation of the total provincial allocation of forty nine billion, four hundred and seventy three million, five hundred and eighty eight thousand (R49 473 588 000.00).

While we acknowledge our budget constraints, we must appreciate the good work done by members and portfolio committees in holding the Executive accountable without fear. We must always remember that we are the voice of the voiceless and our people have entrusted us with this huge responsibility to protect and represent them.

Hon Members, challenges at members residence, Lowe, remains one of the major concerns that must be attended to by the Department of Public Works. Maybe in future

we need to give consideration on how best we can improve efficiencies and the maintenance of Members residence by possible declaring Lowe as our precinct which can be maintained inhouse.

Concluding Remarks

As I conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to call upon this august house to join me in paying tribute to the departed members of the legislature family who left us last year and early this year for their incredible contribution in the work of the Institution.

My sincere thanks to the Hon Premier Kaobitsa Maape, Members of the Executive and Members of the Legislature for their cooperation in the work of the Legislature.

I also wish thank the Deputy Speaker, Hon Motsumi, and the Presiding Officers for unconditional support at all times.

To the Secretary Adv Netshitumbu, support staff in my office, management and the entire family of the North West Provincial Legislature, thank you very much for all your contributions and hard work in support of the work of committees and all structures of the Institution to execute its constitutional mandate.

I stretch my revolutionary hands of appreciation to my beloved organisation, the ANC for continued support. I will forever be indebted to this glorious movement.

My special thanks also to my loving husband Rre Dantjie and my family for the overwhelming support and their understanding to allow me to serve the people of South Africa.

Let us take courage and inspiration from the book of Matthew 5:16 which says “let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father in Heaven.”

We must continue to serve the people of North West with integrity, respect, honesty and to the best of our abilities.

From January to December, Glory be to God,

‘Chukwu ma r’obi mo,

Isi ikendu le,

Narakele Mo”.

I thank you!!!!

Hon Basetsana RS Dantjie (MPL)

Speaker of the NWPL