Exodus from EC costs R13bn

Move to review equitable share formula which 'disadvantages rural provinces'

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HE Eastern Cape budget has taken a R13-billion beating in recent years because of an exodus of 300 000 people leaving the province since 2011.

Tabling the province's R78.2-billion budget in the provincial legislature yesterday, finance MEC Sakhumzi Somyo spoke of it as a "balancing budget".

He dedicated the budget to Nelson Mandela, saying he felt the budget had stayed true to Madiba's "course and use the public purse to contribute to the achievement of Mandela's vision", and called on business, labour and civil society to "form a united front that will enhance our resolve to inclusive economic growth and job creation".

However, Somyo decried the exodus of more than 300 000 residents from the Eastern Cape to other provinces, as per Census 2011, which had lead to a R13.9-billion cut in the province's national allocation since 2013.

This meant the provincial government had to use its money prudently and efficiently "to effect positive change in the lives of our people".

Despite a push to promote growth in agriculture, small businesses, and infrastructure, Somyo was once again forced to allocate 75% of the budget to the so-called "apex" departments of health (R23.7-billion) and education (R34.7-billion).

20 000 gradument interns and climate was ahead was not government.

Each got R2-billion more.

Teacher post provisioning received a gargantuan R23.5-billion with the MEC saying this was to pay for "having qualified educators in front of our learners".

"This priority remains a responsibility for all of us, starting with parents, communities, teachers and learners for whom we are building a brighter future and the officials who support our schooling," said the MEC.

In a progressive move, the budget for specialised education for the disabled was allocated R805.8-million.

Medico-legal negligence claims amounting to R17-billion, which have been a major burden for the provincial government, were countered with a R678-million budget to fill posts in 18 "priority" hospitals.

He repeated government's dislike of "unscrupulous (litigation) lawyers" saying the government would be clamping down on them.

"So far, 1 386 personnel, which includes nurses, doctors and admin-

istrators, have been appointed," he said.

Somyo confirmed that the department of public works would be solely responsible only for government

ment of public works would be solely responsible only for government buildings, with the responsibility of roads moving to the transport department next month.

The public works allocation took a

R3-billion nosedive while the transport received a giant increase.

Somvo said he was proud of the

Somyo said he was proud of the budget he presented as it stood to

PROVINCIAL BUDGET 2018/19

Education	R34 772 126 000
Health	R23 699 560 000
Transport	R4 811 584 000
Social Development	R2 836 581 000
Human Settlements	R2 376 749 000
Roads and Public Works	R2 344 172 000
DRDAR	R2 328 236 000
DEDEAT	R1 146 006 000
COGTA	R983 800 000
Office of the Premier	R973 396 000
DSRAC	R942 760 000
Provincial Treasury	R591 487 000
Provincial Legislature	R525 999 000
Safety and Liaison	R101 490 000

benefit everybody, including the unemployed youth and graduates.

To this end, R1.4-billion was allocated in the 2018-19 financial year while R4-billion was set aside for the next three years for the absorption of 20 000 graduates through government internships.

Somyo cautioned that the economic climate was tough and the road ahead was not going to be easy for government.

"It requires high levels of fiscal discipline throughout government as we are faced with the ever-increasing demands of our communities against a diminishing public purse," he said.

The situation in the province was further exacerbated by the capped leave claims from civil servants amounting to R6.5-billion and infrastructure backlogs estimated at R151.1-billion.

He said government had plans to save money and have more to spend. One plan was to strike a balance between the excessive government wage bill and capital investments.

He promised to lobby for the review of the equitable share formula used by National Treasury to decide on the Eastern Cape's slice of the cake.

He said the formula "disadvantages rural provinces".

See Page 7

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