

Opposition walkout over absent MECs

SABELO NSELE

A PROVINCIAL legislature meeting meant to hear two budget speeches on Friday nearly collapsed after opposition MPLs staged a walkout to protest the absence of MECs.

Members of DA, IFP, NFP and EFF all walked out of the session rendering the meeting non-quorate as there were fewer than 30 of 52 ANC members in the house at the time.

There are 80 MPLs in the provincial legislature including the opposition.

Opposition parties slammed the absence of the ANC members and the MECs as only one MEC, Ravi Pillay, who was meant to deliver budget speeches for Human Settlements and Public Works on the day, was present at the time the issue was raised.

The opposition parties later returned after meeting with chief whip Nontembeko Boyce.

DA caucus leader Francois Rodgers said they would not hesitate to lead another walkout in future if the non-attendance of MECs is not resolved.

“These sittings are the most important event on the legislature’s calendar. They deal with the provincial government’s R122 billion budget and how it is allocated.

“That neither the premier, nor any of his MECs, apart from Human Settlements and Public Works MEC Ravi Pillay, bothered to attend today’s sitting is unacceptable.”

IFP caucus leader Blessed Gwala said “Although we know that MECs have other departmental commitments, they must respect the legislature sessions irrespective of whether they have other political party commitments. We call for stronger measures to be taken to ensure that MECs attend meetings and sessions as per the Legislature Schedule. We call for tough action to be meted out against MECs who do not attend legislature sessions,” he said.

NFP MPL Erickson Zungu said they had demanded that at least five MECs should attend future sittings.

• sabelo.nsele@witness.co.za