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Disgraced Mpumalanga education HOD finds safe haven in Limpopo

Mhlabane was suspended for irregular tenders

By **Tshwarelo Hunter Mogakane**

Disgraced former Mpumalanga head of the department of education, Mahlasedi Mhlabane, has found a safe haven in Limpopo after she was suspended for allegedly awarding tenders irregularly and lying about the delivery of textbooks.

Despite her track record, Mhlabane landed a cushy job as the Limpopo department of public works, roads, and infrastructure chief financial officer (CFO).

After disappearing from the public eye for years, Mhlabane surfaced in Limpopo two weeks ago when MEC Nkakareng Rakgoale and her officials appeared before the provincial standing committee on public accounts (Scopa) during public hearings in Polokwane.

At the hearings, Mhlabane,

Rakgoale and head of department Dikgole Seroka were grilled about tender irregularities, irregular expenditure and maladministration, including the awarding of a R179-million contract to a company whose directors did not comply with tax requirements.

When asked why the Limpopo public works, roads and infrastructure department, hired Mhlabane when she had a cloud hanging over her head, spokesperson Witness Tiva said nothing odd was picked up when Mhlabane was subjected to security clearance after her appointment as CFO in December 2021.

“As part of further screening Ms Mhlabane as a successful candidate, she was vetted by the State Security Agency (SSA), the highest vetting body in the country that provides the government with intelligence on domestic and foreign threats or potential threats to national stability, constitutional order and the safety and well-being of our people.

“This body found she was



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suitable to be cleared for top secret. The top secret security clearance processes entail full record checks on databases, interviews with the applicant, two interviews with references, one work enquiry and a polygraph examination, evaluation, among others.”

Despite the high-level scrutiny by the SSA, Tiva said the department was not aware that Mhlabane was suspended on allegations of maladministration in Mpumalanga before she moved to work in Limpopo.

“Due diligence was done to ensure that the position of the CFO

is occupied by a suitable and capable person. The department is not aware of any allegations of mismanagement as raised by the publication, however, the department will further interrogate the matter,” Tiva said.

Through the department’s spokesperson, Mhlabane declined to be interviewed. However, under her leadership, the public works, roads, and infrastructure department’s finances

“ Department not aware of any allegations of mismanagement

are in tatters.

Recently, Scopa in Limpopo strongly reprimanded the department for various violations of the Public Finance Management Act. Among others, Scopa found irregular expenditure and tender irregularities involving millions of rands.