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# Bulk of KZN budget goes to Education and Health

## IFP welcomes move as 76% of budget is allocated to the two depts

**CHRIS NDALISO**

The KZN provincial government has allocated 76% of its 2023/24 budget to the Education and Health departments.

Tabling the budget at the legislature yesterday, Finance MEC Peggy Nkonyeni said about 62% of the provincial budget goes towards paying public servants, and this is being influenced strongly by the number of teachers and healthcare workers employed.

She said the provincial government is planning to spend around seven percent of its budget on capital-related expenditure, leaving a balance of nearly 22% to purchase the goods and services required to implement service delivery programmes.

The provincial equitable share amounts to R115,9 billion in 2023/24 while the conditional grant allocation amounts to R26,3 billion. The total amount received from the National Treasury is thus R142,3 billion.

When adding the province's own revenue and provincial cash resources to this amount, the total revenue that the province has is R146,2 billion for the financial year under review.

"I am very pleased to announce that we see the allocation of funds back to the province in this budget process with the funds allocated by National Treasury being mainly to assist Education and Health with the budget pressures that arose from the budget cuts made in previous budget processes. Further, additions have been made to the provincial fiscus for the three-percent wage adjustment implemented last year, and the payment of izinduna," said Nkonyeni.

She said another positive in the



KwaZulu-Natal Finance MEC Peggy Nkonyeni.

financial year under review was that there are no further fiscal consolidation budget cuts made by National Treasury.

"On the other hand, there are some reductions in the provincial budget as a result of the annual updates of the data that is used to determine the portion of the provincial equitable share formula allocated to each province. As such, we see a decrease in our provincial equitable share budget of R235,7 million, R548,3 million and R979 million over the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF)," she said.

She said KZN will get a reduction of 0,16% of the provincial equitable share compared to the previous period. The National Treasury allocated R631,1 million "specifically" and "exclusively" to settle the back-

pay of Izinduna. Given the financial constraints, only a few departments are set to receive additional funding over the MTEF, apart from the funds allocated to the province by the National Treasury, said Nkonyeni.

Such additions are a R100 million once-off in 2023/24 to the office of the premier; R100 million towards funding for political parties; and R11,6 million for the establishment of the community safety intervention unit.

### DEPARTMENTAL SHARE

Education received R60,6 billion, which is 41,5% and the largest share of the provincial budget; Health received R50,7 billion, 34,7% of the budget; Transport (R13 billion); Human Settlements (R4,3 billion); Economic Development, Tourism and

Environmental Affairs (R3,4 billion); Social Development (R3,3 billion); Agriculture and Rural Development (R2,5 billion); Cogta (R2,4 billion); Public Works (R1,7 billion); Sport, Arts and Culture (R1,5 billion); Office of the Premier (R872,1 million); Provincial Legislature (R748 million); Provincial Treasury (R678,9 million); Community Safety and Liaison (R250,6 million).

The IFP noted and welcomed the budget as presented. Party president Velenkosini Hlabisa said they had indicated earlier that Education, Health and Transport should be prioritised.

"We support this prioritisation. The budget as tabled today must not remain on paper. We will be vigilant in ensuring that money is spent prudently. The IFP welcomes the step

forward regarding the remuneration of izinduna as this step was initiated by the IFP during the time when the late Inkosi Nyanga Ngubane was the MEC for Cogta, KwaZulu-Natal.

"We will also ensure that all grants are spent accordingly as this will contribute considerably to jobs creation," said Hlabisa.

He said the national government must re-prioritise the needs of the country.

"For a stable, crime-free country where investment is made in the future, nurses, educators, police, soldiers and doctors must receive salaries that are in keeping with the times and are sufficient [for] these key government employees which are the backbone of a stable community," he said.

DA spokesperson for finance Francois Rodgers described the budget presentation as a road to nowhere.

He said the provision for izinduna backpay was welcome. "Regrettably, it comes as KZN's contingency reserve hits its lowest point ever. One of the priorities in the budget appears to be the uncontrolled budget for meet, greet and eats for MECs. This as they launch their 2024 election roadshows.

"The KZN's bloated provincial structure must be addressed, including the non-performance of many individuals," said Rodgers.

He said while they welcome additional funding for Education and Health, this must be juxtaposed against KZN's R23,9 billion irregular and unauthorised expenditure where the two departments are repeat offenders.

He questioned the province's ethical state without which the money allocated to infrastructure might not be well spent.

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