**Mpumalanga Health Department needs a complete overhaul**

Hon Speaker, 2016 was the year that saw hundreds of Mpumalanga health professionals across the spectrum finding their voices as they took to the streets to protest against the shocking conditions under which they have to operate, under the stewardship of Hon. MEC Mashego.

It is common to dismiss a protest by a political party and label it politicking, however, in Mpumalanga, doctors, nurses, Trade Unions and citizens all had their own protest actions to express their frustrations and disappointments with the severe deterioration of the healthcare services in the province.

Hon Speaker, it’s unfortunate for the Departmental officials, as well as the healthcare professionals, that this will not change in the new financial year as it is evident that Hon. MEC Mashego is determined to sink the ship until there are no life boats left to rescue anyone.

The Department is currently sitting with R750 000 000 worth of accruals, of which R39 000 000 was outstanding from the previous financial year! Hon MEC how is it possible that in less than two months into the new financial year, your Department has already accrued R710 000 000? The chances of resuscitating this Department back to life are slim.

Hon Speaker, the MEC once said in this august house that the reason why medical negligence claims against the Department have skyrocketed to R123 million, is because citizens have now realised their rights and are milking the Department dry!

What the MEC forgot to mention is that the real reason why these claims against the department are so high, is that the ANC-led government cut out 12 836 healthcare professional posts within healthcare facilities across the province, and the effects thereof are showing because patients are suffering.

Hon. Speaker, our emergency medical services are as good as dead, year after year this program is not able to meet a single target because there is just no political will to resolve the ongoing chronic staff shortages in this Department. Ambulance shortages are the order of the day and worse of all, the Department decided to not budget for the much-needed Computer Aided Dispatch System in this financial year.

Hon Speaker, there is not a hospital in Mpumalanga that is compliant with all extreme and vital measures of the National Core Standards. Year after year, the same story, this target is never met yet I am sure the Hon. MEC is going to stand up and tell us that he has a good story to tell.

The Maternal Mortality Rate for the 4th quarter in 2016/17 financial year reached a staggering 140.9%. Hon Speaker, this is sad and unacceptable and once again this points to chronic staff shortages. More and more mothers are not returning home or go home empty handed after they enter our health facilities to give birth, yet the Hon. MEC is going to stand here and tell us there was no clinic in Mamehlake and Leroro during apartheid and today there is a clinic, therefore the people should be thankful that there is a clinic. The very same clinics are not delivering adequate services and their loved ones perish instead of being saved.

Hon Speaker, in this year’s budget there is a 100% increase in the Health Facilities Management program from R714 774 000 to R1 436 440 000. This opens the door for the bottomless pit of corruption to thrive where projects are left unfinished and shady contractors are appointed as is the case at:

- KwaMhlanga Hospital, the incorrect design was used and a toilet was mistakenly built in the theatre room.

- Mananga Clinic, contractor’s work was so poorly done that the structure has to be rebuilt.

- Ermelo Hospital, incorrect design was also used and the psychiatric ward had to be rebuilt.

- KwaZamokuhle Clinic was completed late last year and was supposed to be open for 24 hours, however, it remains closed and unused, becoming a white elephant.

Hon Speaker, it is crystal clear that this Department is in need of new leadership, new vision and a complete overhaul. Doctors, Nurses, Trade Unions and the citizens of Mpumalanga have spoken.

Hon MEC, we are not going to stop protesting until you are gone!!

I thank you