**With poor service delivery increasing, it is unacceptable that the allocation to strengthening municipalities decreased by 64%.**

Honorable MEC, it does not matter how many clean audits you receive; the mere fact that municipalities still fail to manage their finances, collect revenue, pay their creditors and fail to deliver service to the citizens of Mpumalanga, your Department will always be seen as a failure.

Over the past years, we have witnessed a number of municipalities being plagued by poor revenue generation and subsequent debt repayment as they are incapable of generating and collecting their own money.

In 2016 the situation exploded when Eskom threatened and carried out power cuts in two of the Province’s municipalities. And despite the fact that we have municipalities which the MEC herself refers to as non-viable and are therefore weak, it is unacceptable that the allocation to strengthening municipalities and ‘service delivery measures’ decreased by 64%.

Honorable Speaker, this will not be accepted as the province’s protests action increased by 47% in the space of one year. And being an indicator of political stability, activities on the ground are reflecting discontent for the ANC.

The 2017/18 budget for the Department decreased by almost 20% and I do believe that there are other mandates of the Department, besides strengthening the capacity of local government which should have received budget cuts.

The people on the ground are not happy and you cannot blame them when they are not accessing their guaranteed free basic services 23 years into democracy. I would like to request the MEC to be bold and take the bull by the horns and deal with non-viable municipalities directly, not through strategies which have proven to be unsuccessful.

Honorable Speaker, dilapidated infrastructure has troubled the Province’s municipalities for years and despite the complaints, service delivery protests and service interruptions to the communities, nothing has been done to take corrective steps to improve our infrastructure.

The national minister stipulated that 8% of all municipal budgets should be set aside for dealing with infrastructure challenges, I hope the MEC will hold municipalities to this.

The municipalities are wasting millions on unnecessary and wasteful expenditure, I would like to see this 2017/18 budget improve audit outcomes so that the money our municipalities waste can go towards improving the lives of our people. I have witnessed, MEC, that you and Premier David Mabuza place a lot of emphasis on the Back to Basics Strategy which has gained no positive results since it was introduced in 2014.

Honorable Speaker, I would like to condemn the practice by this Department of donating cattle and now tractors to the Chiefs and Ndunas in the province which are not tools of trade. You cannot fool us, and nor the voters.

Firstly, this is another way of looting the coffers of government through middlemen who buy these tractors and equipment from the dealers and sell them to the Department at an inflated price.

Secondly, this is also an ANC government tactic of using traditional leaders to campaign for them.

The donated items rarely help the poor people and no difference is made in communities as these items remain with the Ndunas and Chiefs.

Tractors and equipment from the Department of Agriculture are seen in every rural community unutilised. The drivers of these tractors are collecting salaries every month for only going to work to check-in and sleep.

Millions of South Africans are without work and in our province 42.7% people are unemployed.

Communities have no water, proper sanitations and no service delivery, while the ANC-led government chooses to appease a few elite at the expense of the majority poor.

History is going to judge you.

Thank You