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END CORRUPTION IN EASTERN CAPE SCHOOLS

OUR CHILDREN DESERVE A CORRUPTION-FREE EDUCATION

TO:	FUNDILE GADE MPL – EASTERN CAPE MEC FOR EDUCATION
FROM:	DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE EASTERN CAPE
SUBJECT:	END CORRUPTION IN EASTERN CAPE SCHOOLS
DATE:	6 NOVEMBER 2025

Background

A recent investigation has uncovered shocking allegations that over R1 million meant for school nutrition, learning materials, and maintenance at the Ulwazi High School in Mdantsane was instead spent on luxury meals, alcohol, fuel, and unexplained cash withdrawals.

Ulwazi High is a no-fee school serving 1,200 learners. Yet while children are fed plain samp without fruit, and often receive only one meal a day, the principal and members of the School Governing Body (SGB) allegedly treated the school's account as a private cash machine.

Financial records reviewed by the Democratic Alliance show that over R250,000 was spent at upmarket restaurants, R450,000 withdrawn from ATMs, and R226,000 taken as cashback from grocery store tills. Payments were also made to fast-food outlets, liquor stores, lounges, and car washes using a bank card linked to the school account.

These actions violate Sections 37 and 38 of the South African Schools Act, which require full documentation and approval of school expenditure, as well as the Eastern Cape Education Department's financial policies governing school funds.

Service providers are now also owed over R375,000 in unpaid invoices, plunging the nutrition programme into debt.

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The situation is worsened by reports that some SGB members personally benefited from food, fuel, and cash, directly contravening the Schools Act, which prohibits remuneration of governing body members.

The Eastern Cape Department of Education has suspended the principal, but only after public pressure. The misuse of school funds for liquor purchases and “tokens of appreciation” reveals serious governance failures and possible criminal conduct.

Unfortunately, the alleged financial mismanagement, corruption and looting of school funds at Ulwazi High, is not an isolated case. There are many similar examples across the province.

Our Demands:

The DA makes the following demands to ensure that the Eastern Cape Department of Education acts decisively to end the ongoing theft from the poorest children in this province:

- An independent investigator be appointed to conduct a full forensic audit and/or investigation into Ulwazi High School, including the School Nutrition Programme and all related expenditure.
- An independent external auditing authority be appointed to review the Department's existing school audit and procurement systems to strengthen oversight and enforce proper financial governance.
- A framework for independent external auditing of school audit and procurement processes should be established, operating beyond the Department's Risk Management Committee, with a mandate to ensure compliance with the Public Finance Management Act and relevant financial regulations.
- Criminal referrals be made to the SAPS and relevant prosecuting authorities for all implicated individuals, in terms of the Public Finance Management Act and applicable Treasury Regulations.
- That the Department of Education pursue recovery of misappropriated or stolen funds through civil proceedings where necessary.
- Lifestyle audits should be conducted on all implicated school and district officials to identify and address potential enrichment from public funds.
- A province-wide forensic and financial audit be initiated into financial misconduct and mismanagement in high-risk schools, beginning within the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality.



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- The immediate firing of the Ulwazi High School principal due to the fact that the department has been aware of these transgressions for over three months.

Conclusion:

The Department of Education cannot escape accountability. The Eastern Cape's children deserve protection from corruption and honest leadership that puts their future first.

Hon. Horatio Hendricks, MPL

Shadow MEC for Education
Eastern Cape Provincial
Legislature

Mr Victor Mabece

Buffalo City District Director for the
Department of Basic Education