

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, MEC and Member Hicklin. Member Waters, are you ready? A question to the MEC.

Mr WATERS: Yes. Thank you, Deputy Speaker. [Question 4.INF016]

“With regards to the Gauteng Department of Education’s 15 district offices, of which 10 are accommodated in privately owned buildings, could the MEC please indicate:

(i) what is the total annual rental cost to the Gauteng Provincial Government for accommodating these 10 district offices in privately-owned buildings;

(ii) whether the department has determined if any vacant or underutilised provincial government-owned buildings could accommodate any or all of these district offices;

(iii) If so, how many such buildings have been identified; and

(iv) if suitable government-owned accommodation is available, why does the Gauteng Provincial Government continue to incur rental expenditure on privately owned buildings rather than relocating the affected district offices?”

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. MEC.

MEC MAMABOLO: Yes, thank you very much. Let me just clarify quickly. This is a brief answer, that the first part, these buildings that are being referred to, the 10 accommodated in privately owned buildings, we want to refer the Member to the Department of Education, GDE, as the department is responsible for this leasing and for the budget management relating to these particular facilities; so, that should answer the question.

Whether any vacant or underutilised, our reply is that there are currently no vacant or underutilised Gauteng Provincial Government-owned buildings within the identified districts that are suitable, available and of sufficient capacity to accommodate the affected Gauteng Department of Education district offices.

The third question was about, so how many of those- we have answered that, we do not have. There are no such facilities that are suitable for the purpose intended. Number (iv) relates to if suitable government accommodation is available, we have indicated that it is not available; so, that answered the question. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Member Waters, there is the reply. Thank you very much.

Mr WATERS: Thank you, Deputy Speaker. It is strange that it is like a ping pong ball between the Department of Education and Infrastructure Development as to whose responsibility it is for renting out these buildings and who pays the actual rental amounts.

So according to GED, the Department of Infrastructure is responsible, yet infrastructure says it is GED. Anyway, but I also find it very strange and hard to believe, MEC, that there is [are] no buildings, government buildings, that could house these district offices and save the taxpayer 10s and 10s of millions of rands. But thank you, Deputy Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. MEC.

MEC MAMABOLO: Sorry. Thank you very much. I am just not sure whether I heard the Member very well using the word ping pong or whether he said something else. I will check the Hansard what exactly did he say, but the long and short of it is that I will challenge the Member to provide me with a written reply from the Department of Education that points to [that] we are shifting the goalpost, I think that is what the Member wants to suggest, so that we can be able to deal with the matter.

As far as I am aware, we have not avoided any responsibility to answer this matter. If there is, I will ask the Member to share that with me, so that we can answer him properly, if there is any misunderstanding on this issue. I was just giving him what we have, but I would plead with him to come back to us, in case there is any misunderstanding there. Lastly, I just want to say to him, we do not have suitable government facilities in the areas that he has raised. We are serious when we say that. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Waters, you are going to send what you have been requested to send, neh? Got that?

Mr WATERS: Deputy Speaker, I am most certainly will. In fact, I think I asked the question where I referred to- a written question, where I referred to the reply from GED, if the MEC wants to get his office to look at that as well but I will send it to the minister- MEC. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay, thank you. Alright. MEC, please answer the next question, on Member Masilela. MEC.

MEC MAMABOLO: Yes, thank you very much. The question by Honourable Masilela is acknowledged and it relates to the successes that we have spoken about, and I think the Member is worried about the expenditure of 45% of its annual budget in the first quarter, relating to planned programmes and targets for the remaining three years, given that the expenditure is quite ahead.

The reply to that part of the question is that the expenditure is incurred purely and due to the fact that the department has had outstanding financial obligations from the previous financial year. At the end of [the] 2025/2026 financial year, the department had approximately R1 billion in accrued liabilities, primarily relating to municipal rates and taxes. So, you can clearly see that these were accruals and there is a long reply, but that is the basic point that what spiked the expenditure was really the payment of previously accumulated financial obligations.