

Learners tips MEC Kholwane on 2015 budget

Emalahleni - MEC Sikhumbuzo Khowane got more than bargained for when he invited the learners to share their 2015 budget wish list during the pre-budget luncheon in eMalahleni on Monday, 02 March 2015.

The sharp Grade 12 Commerce Class from the four Secondary Schools in the Nkangala Districts presented what looks like a copy of the provincial budget soon to be tabled by MEC Kholwane on the 17th March 2015.

Dubbed "Pre Budget Conversation with the learners", the meeting allowed the learners to share their ideas and wishes about the budget allocations for various service delivery mandates in the Province.

"We convened this meeting to listen and learn how you (learners) would want the Provincial Budget to be allocated to serve the people," MEC Kholwane told learners.

MEC expressed satisfaction with the way the learners prepared and presented their budget proposals, which amounted to more than equitable share of R31 billion that the Province received for the 2015/16 financial year.

He also acknowledged the synergies between their wishes and the government priorities for the term of the administration.

"Your plans are my plans. Your wishes are my wishes," said MEC while reminding the learners of the daunting task of preparing the provincial budget during the tough economic times.

With the economic growth for 2015 projected at just 2 per cent, down from 2.5 per cent indicated in October last year, tough choices must be made but care should be taken to yield the poor from the adverse effect of the fiscal challenges.

"We know that the social and economic challenges are weighing heavily on your families. We do not have intentions of tinkering with the social expenditure plan now and in the future. For this reason the government will continue to make choices that will favour public education and health care", said MEC Kholwane.

He said key to the preparation for of credible and realistic budget will be to advice the departments to "reprioritize our spending to ensure continued delivery on expectations of all our people, especially the unemployed youth and those at the Schools and Institutions of Higher Learning".

"We must ensure that all our people who are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty are saved through the government's social relief programmes, MEC said.

One learner who participated in the pre-budget deliberations Ms Zanele Rantu from Kopanang Secondary school told the MEC that the Province should build science and technology centres.

"MEC would you please replace chalkboards with technology in our schools," said Ms Rantu.

Another learner from Mabande high school, Ms Kwezi Potgieter wanted the provincial government to prioritize the rehabilitation centres for youth who are addicted to drugs.