**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**COMMITTEE ON COGTA TELLS MEC THAT ADMINISTRATIVE SOLUTIONS CANNOT SOLVE DEEPENING POLITICAL PROBLEMS**

**Parliament, Thursday, 26 November 2020**– One of the major drawbacks in the North West Province’s municipalities is the political infighting that is increasingly characterising the interventions by the Provincial Treasury and the Cooperative Governance Department. That was what the Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs told North West’s MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs yesterday.

The MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Mmoloki Cwaile and the Head of the department briefed the committee yesterday on the progress on section 139 interventions in the North West. Also present in the meeting was the Chairperson of the North West Provincial Legislature’s Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Human Settlements, Mr Arone Motswana.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Faith Muthambi, said the main challenge facing the interventions seems to be the lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the appointed administrators due to the inconsistencies between their appointment letters, the terms of reference concluded with the provincial department, and misalignment with the requirements of legislation. As a result, she said the interventions have had little impact on the audit outcomes of the affected municipalities.

The majority of municipalities in the North West Province have undergone constitutional intervention in terms of section 139, and yet their financial health remains a cause for distress. The committee told the MEC that the 2018/19 audit findings on the state of municipalities in the province paint a bleak picture, including in those municipalities that have been subject to repeated interventions.

Ms Muthambi said to cite a few examples, JB Marks, which came under administration between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020, stagnated on a qualified audit opinion, and with R680.8 million in irregular expenditure, it remained among the top three municipalities that contributed most of the irregular expenditure in the province. “The administrator is on record for writing to the AG for assistance in clarifying his role, as the terms of reference concluded with the department confused his role with that of the Accounting Officer, resulting in disputes with the Municipal Manager,” added Ms Muthambi.

The committee made it categorically clear to the MEC that given the examples it cited, it is clear that the Provincial Department has been a significant part of the problem, as far as the administration of the interventions is concerned. It said the fact that there were instances where the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) did not approve interventions is indicative of this problem.

The committee told the MEC that it was not possible to resolve deepening political problems at the municipalities with administrative solutions. Furthermore, the committee said there was no hope that the North West Provincial Government, which is also under administration under section 100 of the Constitution, can successfully deal with problems that include political and administrative instability at the municipalities.

Mr Cwaile and the Head of the North West’s Department of Cooperative Governance and Human Settlements answered some of the questions that were asked by the committee. Mr Cwaile assured the committee about the strategies that are in place to turn around the municipalities to ensure that they meet their constitutional responsibility of rendering services to the communities under their jurisdictions.

Ms Muthambi told the MEC to investigate and stop the continuation of what she referred to as the “apartheid-era tendency” of the prioritisation of white farmers with the provision of electricity at the expense of the poorest of the poor across the North West Province. “That must stop. The priority of the government is the people, please MEC ensure that stops,” emphasised Ms Muthambi.

**ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, MS FAITH MUTHAMBI.**