**DEBATE ON BUDGET VOTE 18: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

1. Chairperson, the EFF rejects budget Vote 18 of the Department of Health.
2. It is now over fourteen months since we’ve had our first case of COVID in this country, and during this time, we have seen the absolute devastation brought by the virus to the country and the world.
3. We have observed first hand what years of neglect of the public health system has done to the ability of our public hospitals to provide the most basic of services to the people.
4. We have watched with horror as those who are supposed to lead us to health have all abandoned this mission, and have chosen to rather lead in the looting of resources meant to help health care workers deal with the growing numbers of sick and dying patients.
5. Minister, you have made no provisions for fixing the public health mess that almost collapsed public hospitals in Gqeberha during the second wave of the corona virus. You have not employed any more health workers in that part of the world.
6. The entire Eastern Cape was a mess before COVID, it is still a mess today, and you have not lifted a finger to fix the situation in that province.
7. You committed to vaccinate all health workers during this first phase of vaccine rollout, and your own estimations puts the number of health workers at 1.2 million. To date, just less than 400 000 health workers have been vaccinated.
8. The target of vaccinating 67% of the population in order to achieve herd immunity is a distant dream, and will possibly never be attained at the rate at which we are going.
9. The risks are far too obvious minister. Soon enough we will be faced with a rising number of hospitalizations and preventable deaths, and this will be all on you. You will be personally responsible for the death of so many of our people because of your incompetence.
10. You have no vaccination plan worthy of the name, even as we speak today. You have not acquired the sufficient number of vaccines because you are preoccupied with buying vaccines from those who can corrupt you.
11. You have learnt nothing from the past two waves of the virus, and you have not prepared our hospitals sufficiently to deal with the virus.
12. Minister, we need s strong public health system, to deal not only with COVID, but with a number of health threats faced by our people.
13. It is all common cause the HIV and TB care took a serious knock as a result of the focus on COVID. You have to date, developed no plan to integrate COVID treatment with the treatment of HIV and AIDS. The result of this is too dire to even imagine.
14. It will be no surprise if the excess deaths we have seen over the past year are not a direct consequence of COVID, but rather a result of the neglect you have shown to other diseases.
15. Minister, the failure to deal with COVID should provide you with a clearest indication of what needs to be done to reconfigure South Africa’s health system.
16. We need to build new hospitals that would provide cutting edge medical care to the majority of people across the country.
17. We need to train a range of health workers, and employ them in the public service.
18. We need to pay specific attention to primary health care, in order to prevent the flooding of our hospitals by people with lifestyle diseases.
19. But at the moment, we need a decisive leadership from you and your government, that will get our people vaccinated before the end of the year, in order to prevent the calamities that will surely follow if we fail to do so.
20. You have proven that this job is way above your level of competence Minister, and if you had any trace of dignity in you, you would have resigned by now.
21. We reject this budget vote.