**SPEAKING NOTES –BUDGET VOTE COGTA**

Honourable Chairperson,

1. The EFF rejects COGTA proposed austerity budget.
2. Section 152 of the Constitution mandates the local sphere of government to, amongst others, provide democratic and accountable local government to communities, ensure that services are provided to communities, in particular poorer communities.
3. This debate of the Annual Performance Plan and budget votes of the Department of Cooperative Governance for the year ending 31 March 2021, is taking place right after the oversight of the Portfolio Committee of COGTA in Northwest.
4. We were all left traumatised by the state of all municipalities, a complete disaster. We all agree that there are no municipalities left there.
5. The first problem is corruption that is engulfing the Province. Just recently, the major of JB Marks Local Municipality who just resigned is adding to a long list of mayors, municipal managers and other senior officials who have resigned on the account of corruption.
6. Council sittings are not taking place because councillors are afraid of thugs who have taken over the municipality.
7. JB Mark Local Municipality and many other municipalities owe Eskom millions of rands and owe waterboards even more millions. The money is spent on electricity and water, but it is never paid to Eskom or water boards, while our people do not have water and electricity. Money is just being looted.
8. You begin to ask yourself if the council cannot meet to take decisions, how do you they perform their work as public representatives to service communities. People of DR Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, which JB Marks is under, don't have electricity, infrastructure is collapsing, there are no roads and there is no water. This is not the case in North-West, but it is common across all provinces.
9. In some of the municipalities, there's madness, total madness. We were told that Ratlou And Ditsobotla Local Municipalities have two mayors.
10. We simply don’t have capable leaders and the ruling party has lost control of all these. The Chairperson in the portfolio committee ask mayors and municipal managers if they have read the municipal system act, and all of them are not ashamed to admit they haven’t read it but these are people entrusted with the responsibilities of leading these municipalities.
11. The Audit General pointed out to large sums of money are used on consultants, but still, the financial systems of municipalities are far from improvements.
12. Wasteful expenditure, irregular expenditure. unauthorized and fruitless expenditure accounts for billions and these municipalities are ensuring that MPAC and Disciplinary boards are permanently dysfunctional to write off this billion through council resolutions at the end, no one will be held accountable for this plain looting. A case in point is the Chair of MPAC of Mbhashe local municipality during pc meeting she couldn't explain how did MPAC decide written off UIFW.
13. Collapsed local government must be blamed squarely for the failures of the ruling party. There is no political will to remove and replace the corrupt ANC deployees.
14. Since we arrived here in Parliament as the EFF since 2014, we have outlined a clear, cogent and practical way out of this mess we find ourselves in.
15. We started the clear call for revision of the division of revenue bill to solve the systemic budget allocation issues to ensure that we deal with the unfunded mandate of basic service delivery in local government and solve apartheid spatial planning.
16. We said you cannot solve local government spatial challenges without resolving the land question. Municipalities need land to build infrastructure, to build water pipes, to build sanitation and sewer pipes and to build recreational facilities.
17. But also, we need to resolve land question so that we repurpose local government into the sphere of economic activities. Each and every municipality must be an economic hub on its own, create jobs, employ people and people will in future be able to pay for water, rates and other services.
18. We must appoint only qualified people to work in municipalities, engineers, artisans, town planners, geographers and other skilled professions, and do away with outsourcing of basic services.
19. But we cannot do any of this if we have an administration hellbent on austerity, cutting local government grants. The EFF rejects this budget.