**BUDGET VOTE 1: THE PRESIDENCY**

**CONTRIBUTION BY**
**PRINCE MANGOSUTHU BUTHELEZI MP**
**PRESIDENT OF THE INKATHA FREEDOM PARTY**

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His Excellency the President; Honourable Speaker; Honourable Members –

Every budget highlights performance indicators, and relates these to the outcomes of the Medium-Term Strategic Framework.

In the Presidency, performance indicators include quarterly monitoring reports on such things as economic policy, job creation, fighting corruption, service delivery and social transformation. These indicators relate to the strategic outcomes of nation building, inclusive growth, an efficient public service and the safety of all South Africans.

One should then be able to get a bird’s eye-view of how the Presidency is faring based on its performance indicators.

Unfortunately, though, there is no data available for this budget cycle. Nor is there data for last year, or the year before, or the year before that.

Does this mean that there were no quarterly reports?

This is a monumental shortcoming, which would have been pounced on in a parliamentary oversight committee.

But – yet again – we come to this House to rubberstamp a budget we have not had the privilege of interrogating beforehand, for there is still no committee with oversight of the Presidency. This hinders Parliament in fulfilling its mandate and places the President in the embarrassing position of answering questions that should have been answered by the Accounting Officer in the Presidency.

Nevertheless, the questions must be asked.

Last year we were told that by 2021 almost R30-million would need to have been cut from the Presidency’s budget. One of the ways this would be done was by reducing consultants. Yet in this budget we see that expenditure on consultants and advisory services is set to increase at an average rate of 30.6% over the medium term. Why?

Surely the re-establishment of the Research and Policy Unit should reduce the need for consultants and advisory services. If the budget is no longer going to be cut here – but instead dramatically increased – where will the necessary cuts be made?

Expenditure on compensation of employees is set to increase; expenditure on travel and subsistence is set to increase; expenditure on Cabinet Services is set to increase; catering for departmental activities is set to increase.

Where are the cuts?

The IFP welcomes the re-establishment of the Research and Policy Unit, particularly because it will work with the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation to develop an early warning mechanism on potential contradictions or shortcomings in policy implementation.

This is invaluable, because so often by the time Government realises it is moving in the wrong direction, it is too far down the road to change course. The temptation is to just keep going in the wrong direction, while using more and more money to ameliorate the problem.

Presently, close to 60% of the Presidency’s budget is for compensation of employees; an amount of R326.9 million. What is the cost of the 49 additional employees, in unfunded posts? Where does that money come from? If these employees are needed, how were the needs of the Presidency so badly misjudged in formulating the staff establishment?

Honourable Speaker; when it comes to the Medium-Term Expenditure Estimate, transfers and subsidies to provinces and municipalities register a 100% decrease. On the other end of the scale, transfers and subsidies to departmental agencies and accounts have increased at an average rate of 133%.

How do we explain these figures to South Africa, when Parliament is not even apprised of what they mean or why these decisions have been taken?

Last month, a Lekgotla of the ruling party agreed to reduce unemployment from 26% to 14% in the next five years. That is good news for the 10 million unemployed South Africans. How it will be done, when our GDP is shrinking, remains to be seen.

Laudably, a budget has been allocated within the Presidency to track progress on the outcome of the 2018 Youth Summit, in line with unemployment being declared a national crisis.

But where is the budget to track progress on the Presidential Summit on Gender Based Violence? That summit was held seven months ago, yet Government is still talking about how to implement its resolutions.

In the meantime, our women are facing war. Femicide is five times higher in South Africa than anywhere else in the world.

Life is held so lightly in our country that we have had to take soldiers away from patrolling our borders, to deploy them to the Cape Flats, where women and children are dying in the crossfire of gang violence.

Poverty perpetuates our people’s vulnerability. There is nothing more important right now than securing economic growth. We therefore thank the President for signalling stability around the Reserve Bank. We now ask him stand firm against economic ideologies that would destroy our country.

In the hope that answers to our questions will be forthcoming, the IFP supports this Budget.