FOREWORD BY HON. M.J. KUSCUS, MEC FOR FINANCE

1. Background

When I submitted the budget last year, I reported that we have reached an important milestone in budget reform. We successfully submitted the Government Financial Statistical (GFS) classification of expenditure with the traditional Standard Item classification for the 2002/03 budget. This year sees the completion of the budget reform process, which conforms to requirements of the Public Finance Management Act, Act 1 of 1999 as amended, we have now done away with the traditional Standard Item classification and are only submitting the GFS classification of expenditure for 2003/04.

However, we have changed the format of the GFS classification to make it more user friendly so that more information than the minimum requirements is presented. This change in the GFS classification makes the financial information in the budget more informative and easier to understand.

In line with the requirements of section 27(3) of the PFMA I have the pleasure of submitting the 2003/04 MTEF Provincial Budget containing the following information:

- > Estimates of revenue.
- Estimates of expenditure per vote (department) and per main division (programme) within the votes.
- > Estimates of debt servicing charges and the repayment of debt.
- Estimates of capital expenditure per vote and main divisions within the votes for the 2003/04 financial year and the projected financial implications for two future financial years.
- > Estimates of revenue excluded from the revenue fund (if any).
- Estimates of all direct charges against the Revenue Fund (Statutory Appropriations) and standing appropriations.
- > An indication of intensions regarding borrowing or any other form of public liability that will create a public debt in future years (if any).
- > The projected:
 - Revenue for the previous financial year;
 - Expenditure per vote and per main divisions within the votes for the previous financial year; and
 - Borrowings, if any, for the previous financial year.

> Any other information prescribed in section 27(3) of the PFMA.

2. The budget process

This is the first year that the development of departmental strategic plans formed an integral part of the budget process. Departmental strategic plans that will be submitted to the Legislature were developed simultaneously with the preparation of the departmental budgets. The following process was followed to ensure that departmental strategic plans were developed during the budget process:

- With the first budget inputs submitted to the provincial treasury in August 2002, accounting officers had to submit a letter of intent. The letter of intent contained information of proposed changes to the departmental strategic plans of the previous financial year.
- Departments had to submit their draft strategic plans to the provincial treasury when the draft budgets were submitted in January 2003. The provincial treasury provided departments with comments that should be taken into consideration with the preparation of the final strategic plans.

I am of the opinion that the process followed with the budget preparation will improve the quality of strategic plans and will also ensure that the departmental budgets are the outcome of an ongoing planning process. We intend following the same process in future years and I am convinced that the link between planning and budgeting will improve in future.

A second aspect that we concentrated on in preparing this budget is the quality of measurable outputs. Although I am satisfied that the departmental outputs are more measurable than in previous years, I am also convinced that we still have room for improvement.

3. Budget statements

The budget consists of the following budget statements:

- > Budget Statement No. 1: Budget Overview; and
- > Budget Statement No. 2: Departmental Estimates.

4. Basis for compiling the budget

In our quest to achieve social justice, equity and a better life for all, the provincial Government was, as in the past, guided by its policy priorities when compiling the budget. This year, however, the Government has made a concerted effort to address the needs resulting from our historical backlogs. Within the limits of the available resources, the following key challenges will be addressed over the next three years:

- We have increased non-personnel and non-capital expenditure in the Department of Education. Additional allocations were provided to the Department of Education for other expenditure over the MTEF period. This initiative will improve the personnel/other expenditure ratio and will be to the benefit our learners.
- We have provided additional funds that will enable the Department of Health to increase the number of professional medical staff. This initiative will be to the benefit of all our people and especially the poor living in the rural areas.
- Capital development funds have been increased from R250 million in the previous financial year to R342 million in 2003/04. The additional funding will mainly be utilized for addressing backlogs in classrooms, clinics, roads and the maintenance of our infrastructure.

5. Conclusion

The Provincial Government regards the budget as a vehicle to address community needs, create an appropriate climate for investments and the imbalances of the past. I would therefore like to thank my colleagues, the Members of the Executive Council, and heads of department for their constructive participation in compiling the 2003/04 MTEF Provincial Budget. Without their active and constructive participation it would not have been possible to realize the product that we are presenting.

We trust that we will succeed in improving the quality of life of our people with this budget and that the results of our planning, as contained in this document, will be of assistance to all concerned.

MJ Kuscus MEC for Finance

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