

**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE ON 22 FEBRUARY 2019.**

Honourable Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Legislature,
Ministers and Deputy Ministers present;
Members of the National Assembly present;
Members of the Mpumalanga Legislature;
Colleagues in the Mpumalanga Executive Council;
Executive Mayors and Councillors present;
Chairperson of SALGA;
Provincial Judge President Justice Francis Legodi and all esteemed members of judiciary;
Provincial Commissioner, General Zuma;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
His Majesty Ingwenyama Makhosonke II;
His Majesty Ingwenyama Mabhokho III;
Chairperson of the National House of Traditional Leaders, Inkosi SE Mahlangu;
President of Contralesa, Kgoshi Mokoena;
Chairperson of the Mpumalanga Provincial House of Traditional Leaders, Inkosi uNgomane;
Acting Director-General Mr Matthew Mohlasedi and all Provincial Heads of Mpumalanga Government,
Chairpersons and CEOs of Parastatals, Commissioners and Executives of Chapter 9 and Chapter 10
Institutions;
Officials from the British Embassy and the United States of America;
The Leadership of the African National Congress, represented by Acting Chairperson Cde Mandla
Ndlovu;
Veterans of our struggle for freedom;
Distinguished guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is a great honour and a privilege for me to stand before this August House and address you gathered here today, those at home, at work and on the road listening over their radios.
2. This State of the Province Address comes at a time when we approach the 25th anniversary of the advent of our democracy. Whilst this is my maiden SOPA speech, it also marks the end of our term as the fifth democratically elected government since 1994.
3. A five-year term that has been characterised by mixed socio-economic performance. It was certainly not the best of times, nor can we be overly pessimistic and say, it was the worst of times.
4. There were times of slight economic improvement only to be eclipsed by declines, which in some instances took us into technical recession only to be immediately followed by buoyant growth.
5. However, as a Province we have been fortunate that, when the country was experiencing consecutive negative growth quarters, our economy remained in marginal positive territory despite contraction in the mining industry.
6. What this means is that because of robust performance by some of our industries, Mpumalanga was spared of a technical recession.

7. The twenty fifth year of existence is usually associated with the transition from adolescence to adulthood characterised by economic independence, exploration, self-determination, being more realistic and pragmatic. Some would describe this period as coming of age.
8. The question that begs to be answered is, have we as a Province, reached that transition period? And if so, what level of socio economic and political development has our young democracy achieved during that period of coming of age?
9. In addition, what have we accomplished over the past five years since the last mandate our people bestowed upon us through the ballot box? It also demands that we face the realities of what we could not achieve during this term of administration.
10. Madam Speaker, this occasion gives us an opportunity to answer this question by first painting a picture of where we are coming from, what were the prevailing socio economic and political conditions of our people prior to 1994 and what the ANC led government has done to improve the lives of our people.
11. It also affords us a platform to look back through the five-year window period and account on the mandate our people gave the African National Congress through the 2014 election manifesto.
12. To some of our people twenty-five years may sound like a very long period, yet to others it feels like yesterday.
13. To those who are referred to as the born free generation, 1994 only exists through their imagination informed by the images of long queues of millions of South Africans, black and white waiting for their turn to make a cross and select a political party of their choice.
14. For the majority of our people in this country, they were making that cross on the ballot paper for the first time in their lives.
15. Since that moment to date, the people of our Province have overwhelmingly voted for the African National Congress as the only majority political organization that can represent their aspirations, bring hope, restore confidence and demonstrate our commitment in fighting the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality. We have never and we shall never take our people's trust in us for granted.
16. Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, we have made significant progress in transforming the apartheid state into a democratic one founded on the values of human dignity, non-racialism and non-sexism, the rule of law, and universal adult suffrage, as enshrined in the Constitution.
17. What we have achieved in our Province specifically and throughout South Africa generally has few parallels elsewhere in the world. The Mpumalanga that we live in today is utterly different from the one that we inherited in 1994.
18. We inherited a fragmented, unaccountable and racially divided governance system consisting of homeland administrations sometimes also referred to as "Bantustans" or "self-governing territories", as well as separate administrations for certain racial groups.

19. We acknowledge that for centuries, our people were divided along racial lines. We had become a nation in dire need of healing. We wasted no time and worked hard towards reconciliation and social cohesion and ensured that mechanisms were put in place to deal with the legacy of apartheid and redress of past imbalances in a manner that fosters unity.
20. We have always been aware and appreciated the inherent strengths that we have as a nation and were mindful of the inevitable tensions of our diversity in race, class, creed, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, linguistic and geographical origin, as we embarked on this journey towards greater social cohesion.
21. Standing on this podium, unaware that this would become his last State of the Province address, the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa who was then our Premier, His Excellency Mr DD Mabuza declared, and I quote

“As the people of Mpumalanga, our genetic make-up is grounded on Unity and Struggle. We have preached this not as a self-serving crusade, but as a belief system. We stand united in our diversity, proclaiming our full commitment to holding each other’s hand - black and white, man and women, believers and atheists, poor and rich, in working to build a democratic and prosperous society.”

22. It is this unity of purpose that the Deputy President Mr Mabuza spoke about, that continues to guide and direct our efforts of nation building, reconciliation and national cohesion. It drives our collective efforts as a nation in building peace, stability and opens up opportunities for all our citizens in this Province.
23. For a nation that was born only a quarter of a century ago, our achievements in the area of deepening democracy through the healing of divisions of the past and establishing a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights are incomparable.
24. Our liberal and progressive Constitution, admired by the nations of the world is supported not only by the Bill of Rights but also by the Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 institutions that play a pivotal role in protecting and safeguarding our human rights and our constitutional democracy.
25. These institutions have proven themselves to be impartial and perform their functions without fear, favour or prejudice. The commissions of enquiries that are playing themselves out in the public arena today are a testimony of our desire to be transparent, promote justice and fight corruption.
26. As early as 1994 we committed ourselves to the pursuit of the goals of freedom, freedom from want, from hunger, freedom from deprivation, freedom from ignorance, freedom from suppression and freedom from fear. These freedoms are fundamental to the guarantee of human dignity.
27. We have gathered here today to look at how far we have gone in the attainment of these freedoms, knowing and accepting that these goals of freedom are progressive in nature.

28. As our population grows, internal and external circumstances change, with a significant percentage of people migrating to urban areas, some emigrating from our neighbouring countries, the demands for these freedoms also change both in nature and in character.
29. To protect and defend those in our society that were most vulnerable and discriminated against, we put particular focus on programmes that will impact on women, children and orphans, young people, people with disabilities and the poor.
30. We developed a range of laws, policies and programmes to ensure increased representation, ensure the provision of basic services, create jobs, reduce poverty, eradicate violence, and promote and protect the human rights of all our people in particular the most vulnerable.
31. When we took over government in 1994, Mpumalanga Province was a dark, rural Province with few pockets of developed towns serving the interest of the minority white communities while the majority of our black people had very little or no access at all to basic services.
32. Before 1994;
- Learners who passed matric were far below 50%;
 - The child mortality rate was close to 200 per 1000 children born;
 - Less than 40 per cent of our people had access to water and sanitation;
 - Less than 50 per cent of our people had access to electricity;
 - Social net was almost non-existent;
 - There was no housing subsidy for the poor;
33. Today that picture is completely different.
- We have built **34 962 dwelling houses, 27 641 sites and 34 units** out of the Community Residential Units Programme, for our people in this Province alone and more than 3 million all over the country;
 - We have extended the **social net to cover all those who are vulnerable**, including people with disability, the youth, older persons, women and children;
 - More than **90 per cent of our people** have access to water;
 - **Maternal Mortality rate** has decreased from 108 per 100 000 live births in 2014/15 to 100.7 per 100 000 live births at the end of December 2018, below the planned target of 145 per 100 000 live births.
 - **Antenatal care 1st visit** before 20 weeks had significantly increased from 56.6% in 2014/15 to 75.7% at the end of December 2018, surpassing the planned target of 74%.
 - **Grade 12 learner performance** has improved from 74.8% in 2017 to 79% in 2018.
 - The percentage of learners that obtained **bachelor passes** increased from 23.4% in 2017 to 29, 6% in 2018.
34. All these achievements happened despite the trying economic turbulences and set-backs that we have encountered. As government, we have always maintained an open door policy for the private sector to hold hands with us and build a strong economy that creates jobs.

35. We will continue to engage our private sector partners with a view of forming strong partnerships and creating an enabling environment that will allow big and small business to flourish.
36. Whilst the road ahead of us may be treacherous, filled with challenges and unknown risks, the journey that we have travelled together since 1994 has given us valuable experiences to hold us in good stead.
37. We are confident that whatever may still lie ahead of us, we will confront and tackle it together with more vigour, renewed hope, optimism and with our strongest conviction.

The Mandate

38. Madam Speaker, in order for us to gauge our performance over the MTSF 2014-2019 period, it is important that we reflect on the contents of our mandate as articulated in the 2014 Election Manifesto of the African National Congress.
39. We promised our electorate that we would focus on;
 - Growing the **economy and creating decent employment** to address the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty, and inequality;
 - Improving the quality of **education**;
 - Improving our **health care system** to ensure that we increase life expectancy and mitigate the negative impact of HIV and AIDS, and other opportunistic diseases; and
 - Ensuring that our people have **access to basic services** to improve their quality of life.

Economic Growth and Job creation

40. Madam Speaker; the global economic growth has been inconsistent at best and very erratic at worst. We have seen robust growth only to be followed by expansion and ferocious economic downswings making it almost impossible for investors to plan for the future.
41. Looking at the situation since 2014, the provincial economy recorded a **growth rate** of almost 3 percent in 2014, but it declined to less than 1 percent last year.

Job Creation

42. Honourable Speaker, the **high youth unemployment rate of 43.5%** calls for more innovative and collaborative partnership with the social sector and the private sector to craft a strategy that will be more responsive to **skills development, unemployment and economic growth**.
43. The provincial **unemployment rate has increased from 26.6% in 2014 to 32%** in 2018.
44. The **expanded unemployment rate** which includes discouraged workers, who have stopped looking for work, was 41.1% at the end of 2018 and the total number of unemployed people according to the expanded definition was **868 809**.
45. Madam Speaker, despite the current unemployment challenges, it is imperative to note that from 2014, we have recorded a **net job creation of 107 350** between 2014 and 2018.

This is an average of **26 837 jobs per annum**, achieving almost 40% of the provincial job creation target.

46. The highest job creation was recorded in finance and utilities industries, with **32 264 and 22 321 jobs created** respectively. However, we have recorded job losses in mining and construction during the same period.
47. Madam Speaker, through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), we created more than **346 000 work opportunities and over 142 000 full time equivalents**, which translates into an overall figure of **488 000** employment opportunities.
48. This has had a significant impact on our people as it has afforded them an opportunity to learn new skills and has contributed to the alleviation of poverty.
49. Of the **488 000** job opportunities created, **328 876 were apportioned to women, 292 803 youth and 8 872 people with disabilities**. For economic empowerment, through our Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, we awarded **30% of all contracts to women and 15% to youth**.

Skills Development

50. Madam Speaker, the bedrock for skills development in any developing country is sound education anchored on improved learner outcomes in the areas of **Mathematics, Science and Technology**.
51. To address skills shortages from our youth, we have **customised the National Skills Development Strategy** and forged informed partnerships with the private sector.
52. Our solid partnership with SASOL has resulted in **45 874 students** attending Techno X in 2015 and 2017. Techno X is a Mathematics, Science and Technology orientated expo which aims to inspire learners towards careers in that field.
53. MRTT, TVET Colleges, private sector and SETAs such as Construction SETA (CETA), Manufacturing and Engineering SETA (merSETA), Chemical Industries SETA (CHIETA) and Mining Qualifications Authority (Mining SETA) contribute immensely to the much needed number of artisans in our Province.
54. We have increased the number of young people attending at TVET colleges to **40 000 annually**. The enrolment figures at TVET Colleges have **doubled** in the last five years. However, the curriculum content should be such that it addresses the relevant technical skills required by the private sector.
55. Madam Speaker, recent statistics provided by the Department of Higher Education and Training indicate that **6 413 students** in our Province have in the past five years qualified as artisans. We would like to extend our appreciation to MRTT, Hydra Arc and other training institutions for their contribution in skills development.
56. In encouraging life-long learning and increasing the capacity of the state to deliver maximum public value, over **32 000 employees** have been trained on various programmes.

57. Madam Speaker, one of the key milestones within this period, is the establishment and operation of the **University of Mpumalanga (UMP)**, which provides a closer door for access to higher education for our youth.
58. The programme offering since inception has increased to **13 study fields with an additional 16 new areas of study** by 2021.
59. Since 2014 student enrolment has increased immensely. We have enrolled **6 612** and a further **3 406** are projected to be enrolled in the current financial year.
60. We are proud to announce that positive returns in our investment on Higher education are emerging. **569 students** have already graduated in 2018, with a further **661** expected to graduate in 2019.
61. Since the endorsement of the Provincial Human Resource Development Strategy, **over 3 138 new bursaries** were awarded by Provincial Government and to date **2 989 students have graduated**.
62. The private sector has contributed positively towards this noble course. Companies such as: Eskom, Sasol, SETAs & MQA provided **680 bursaries** to our youth from 2014 to date.
63. Madam Speaker, our commitment to improve the skills of our people is attested to, through the **international partnerships** we have forged with China, Russia and Cuba.
64. We have enrolled **232 students in Cuba** and **281 in Russia** in order to increase the number of graduates in scarce fields like **Medicine, Veterinary Science, Information Technology, Aviation, Mathematics, Science and Engineering**.
65. Through infrastructural investment, economic and social objectives have been achieved with **participation in construction activities**. A large number of emerging enterprises have benefited from the infrastructure sector skills and business development programmes.
66. The following **programs are in place to alleviate poverty** in the Province:
- Learner contractors developed through the **Sakha'bakhi Programme**;
 - Support of National Youth Service (NYS) cooperatives;
 - **Siyatentela Programme** for general road maintenance;
 - General Building Maintenance contracts;
 - Patch work and reseal contracts for road maintenance works.
67. We have introduced the **Young Professional Programme Policy** as a means to address the shortage of critical and technical skills in the Province.

Agriculture

68. Madam Speaker, faced with the challenges of youth unemployment and an aging Agricultural sector in our Province, we shifted our focus towards developing **young farmer entrepreneurs** to actively participate in this sector.

69. In the current term, special focus has been placed on incubating some of the youth through the ***Mpumalanga Young Farmer Incubation Programme*** commonly known as Fortune 40. The programme was initiated in 2015.
70. We are proud to report that to date, through this programme ***210 youth have been incubated*** and have acquired amongst others both the accredited and non-accredited agricultural and business development certifications.
71. ***24 farms under management of these youth***, are in full production of vegetable and livestock production. The farms have secured various markets including the Government Nutrition Programme.
72. The biggest challenge that farmers face is high rate of Tractor and Implements breakages. In response, we initiated an in-house ***tractor servicing programme*** to provide tractor services and repairs.
73. To date, accredited tractor mechanic certificates were provided to ***11 youth*** from the Province and seven of these youth are females, as well as a further intake of 80 young mechanics.
74. The training of farmers on agricultural skills continues to be the key driver of our intervention in the sector. To this end, we have relaunched ***Marapyane College*** and converted it into a ***Farmer Training Centre***.
75. In the past four years, we have managed to assist the farmers with ploughing and planting their ***land totalling 89 912 hectares*** which has been laying fallow due to limited financial resources.
76. Furthermore, Government has collaborated with some of the ***commercial farmers and commodity associations*** to support interventions towards increasing the production level of the resourced poor farmers.
77. The Province continues to establish and enhance the ***agro processing facilities*** to assist farmers to benefit through the commodity value chain. To this end, ***Nkomazi Red Meat abattoir*** has been handed over to the beneficiaries to assist in processing their livestock and sell to the market.
78. For grain farmers, ***two maize mills*** have been revitalised and equipped in Nkomazi and Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme. Other existing grain mills in our Province are being rehabilitated.
79. We have continued to invest in ***irrigation infrastructure*** in a form of boreholes, irrigation systems and repair of water canal in farms to increase food production. In total ***25 irrigation projects including 3 schemes*** have been completed since 2014 and four are still under construction.
80. We provided ***bulk water supply infrastructure*** to two Irrigation schemes in Bohlabela and assisted the sugarcane farmers in Nkomazi with a pipeline for bulk water supply.
81. We revitalised the ***Champagne Citrus farm*** by expanding the orchards with 14.9 hectares of arable land and it is now exporting.

82. We also provided support to the **Macadamia farm in Mbombela** with repairs of a pump station. The **soya beans farmers** in Gert Sibande were supported with mechanisation services and a combine harvester. They continue to produce and supply the oilseed plant in Standerton. To date **18 094 hectares of land has been planted with soya beans**.
83. The **Letolo poultry house** in Nkangala, and **Mkhondo poultry house in Gert Sibande** have been completed and handed over to the beneficiaries.
84. We have constructed **5 air quality monitoring stations** in the high priority areas (Nkangala and Gert Sibande District Municipalities) to monitor the pollutants and mitigate the impact.
85. These will also assist the Department of Health in dealing with health hazards caused by pollutants.
86. We are pleased to report that the **construction of the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market** is gaining momentum. Since inception, the Province has invested approximately **R500 million** for basic infrastructure which includes bulk water and electricity supply to the site, waste water, roads and storm water networks and created approximately **300 jobs** in the process.
87. The market will have ten buildings including the main trading floor area covering about 30 000 m², and agro-processing facility of approximately 3 000 m².
88. This construction is estimated to cost approximately **R1.2 billion** which will be funded by the government and other potential investors including Development Finance Institutions, private sector, and local farmers.
89. We anticipate that the infrastructure will be completed in the second quarter of 2021. This market will offer our farmers, particularly our small scale farmers, a world class facility to trade their fresh produce to local and international markets.
90. To assist farmers with storage, packaging and processing facilities which will enhance market access, the Province has initiated the establishment of **three Agri-hubs** in the Gert Sibande, Nkangala and Ehlanzeni districts.
91. These Agri-hubs will be linked to the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market.
92. To date, **two Agri-hubs**, (one in Dr JS Moroka and another in Bushbuckridge Municipalities) have been completed in terms of the top structure and will be operational soon. We are planning to complete the third Agri-hub in Mkhondo which is also in process of construction.

Tourism

93. Madam Speaker, the **tourism industry** is one of the key economic drivers in our Province. For every tourist that visits our shores two to three jobs are created.
94. Despite **global economic downturn**, especially in Europe and Latin America, we have seen an increase of visitors from our own continent and those from Asia. The **neighboring countries Mozambique and Kingdom of eSwatini tourists** form the largest number of visitors to our Province.

95. Along with the **2.4% growth in foreign tourist** arrivals nationally, the Province recorded an **increase of 10.2% in foreign tourist arrivals** growing from **1 427 795 in 2016 to 1 573 635 in 2017**.
96. Domestically, there has seen a **sharp decline of visitor numbers** in the last three years, as many South Africans cut back on traveling due to tough economic conditions.
97. Our Province, received **1 226 000 trips** in 2017 down from **1 658 000** in 2016.
98. The total spend for the Province during this period was over **R8 billion** against a target of **R10 billion** by the end of the current term. This includes **326 additional international tourist** arrivals.
99. I am pleased to report to this gathering that the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has finally approved our application for **Barberton Makhonjwa Route** to be declared a World Heritage Site.
100. We expect a **significant increase in the number of archeologists and people with a keen interest in the origins of humanity** to visit this new heritage site.
101. We call upon our local people to position themselves and provide services that will include guesthouses, tour guides, transport and cultural activities.
102. Madam Speaker, recently we completed the upgrading of a number of **our tourism facilities** as well as some of the roads that lead to tourist attraction centres. We are concerned, though by the artificial barriers and gate keeping that makes it difficult for SMMEs to gain entry into this industry. We call upon industry regulators to remove these unnecessary barriers to empower our people and make this industry inclusive.
103. We have **constructed new tourism facilities** and officially opened the Manyeleti Nature Reserve, Day Visitors Facility and Caravan Park. We have also upgraded and launched the popular 17-kilometre hiking trail at the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve.
104. We have also developed and continue to promote **three cross-border tourism routes** namely;
- **Songimvelo-Malolotja Trans-frontier 4x4 route,**
 - **The East3Route and**
 - **The Triland route.**

Special Economic Zones (SEZ) and Industrial Parks

105. Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, our commitment towards **stimulating robust economic growth that leads to creating job opportunities** for our people in the Province cannot be overemphasized.
106. As Members are aware, we took a conscious decision, as early as in 2015, to put together the **Mpumalanga Industrial Development Plan** as a response to the challenges of economic growth and unemployment.

107. During the course of this year, we will be concluding the statutory requirements of the two Industrial Technology Parks, namely, ***the Petro-Chemical Industrial Technology Park*** in Govan Mbeki and ***the Forestry Industrial Technology Park*** in Sabie. This process will accelerate the development activities of the Industrial Parks.
108. The other critical Industrial Centre of Competency Model is the ***Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (SEZ)***. I am happy to announce that the Cabinet has ultimately approved the designation of the Nkomazi SEZ. As a Province, we wish to extend our sincere gratitude to His Excellency the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa and his Cabinet, particularly to the Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr. Rob Davies for approving our application for the establishment of the SEZ.
109. Indeed, we have been provided with a window of opportunity to change ***the economic landscape of the Nkomazi Local Municipality, the Province, the entire country as well as the SADC region***. We are calling upon the citizens of Mpumalanga to grab hold of this opportunity.
110. The failure or success of this zone is dependent on all of us. Jointly, we must ensure that, through this zone, we roll back the frontiers of poverty. Therefore, we are calling upon our farming community and agri-businesses to exploit the opportunities presented by this economic zone.

Government Nutrition Programme (GNP)

111. Madam Speaker, we resolved that in order to bring life to ***economic transformation*** through state procurement, government should do things differently by re-visiting the terms enshrined in state contracts.
112. This implied that all contracts which have to do with nutritional needs of government departments and entities should be served through a different model, known as the ***GNP***.
113. The GNP model seeks to empower and support the development of smallholder farmers within the Province's agricultural sector. It is envisaged that through the model, we shall support ***smallholder farmers, local bakeries, as well as the Youth Transport SMMEs***, while ensuring the supply and delivery of good quality fresh produce to our schools and hospitals.
114. As part of the measures to improve quality and to ensure that farmers meet the demands of the programme, we have ***deployed agricultural extension officers to provide support to the smallholder farmers***, from the preparation of the soil up to the harvesting process.

Land and Agrarian Reforms

115. Madam Speaker, the struggle for our liberation cannot be divorced from the burning issue of land ownership. Our political and economic freedom is linked to the land question.
116. We are therefore pleased with the work of the Land Review Commission on land and we will continue to support its work.

117.As part of our land and agrarian reform, government has spent approximately **R7 billion** acquiring more than **41 000 hectares for land redistribution** and more than **3 000 Hectares** for settling land claims as well as transferring **996 Hectares** to farm dwellers.

118.Madam Speaker, we have started with the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on the **Socio-Economic Conditions of Farm Dwellers**. Members will recall that the report raised critical issues around the violation of basic human rights, security of tenure, poor access to basic services like clean water, housing, health, sanitation and education. We are working with local municipalities and the relevant national departments to address their plight.

Partnerships with the private sector

119.Madam Speaker, we forged strong ties with the private sector over the past five years. We still invite all our social partners to work with us and join a growing number of companies that have collaborated with us.

120.Over the last couple of years, **Sasol** has implemented a number of infrastructure and capacity building projects within **Govan Mbeki Local Municipality**. The company is also assisting us in our efforts to arrest the issue of sewer spillages in the area.

Some of these projects include;

- A **R6 billion** investment in the construction of **Fine Ash Dam 6** with high impact in enterprise development and job creation,
- Upgrading of a **Pump Station**,
- **Sewer reticulation** network,
- **Waste water reticulation** in eMbalenhle,
- Upgrade of the **Secunda electrical substation**,
- Upgrade of the **Bethal electrical substation**,
- **33 Housing Projects** for the elderly, vulnerable and orphaned as requested by Hon. Premier then, and
- **Clinic upgrade** in Ext 14 eMbalenhle

121.Madam Speaker, yet again, our **R300 million** enterprise development partnership with **Standard Bank** is beginning to attract bankable business proposals. We are confident that as more of our people enter into the mainstream of the economy, this Fund will assist them with the necessary start-up capital to develop and sustain their businesses.

122.**EXXARO** is another strategic partner on skills development and enterprise development.

123.Their **R3.3 billion** investment in Belfast will create **one of the few A-grade high yield coal deposit mines in the Country**.

124. During the construction phase, the mine has created 545 permanent employment opportunities for the people of Emakhazeni, with the number scheduled to increase exponentially once the mine is fully operational.
125. As evidence, of its commitment towards the development of the people of Emakhazeni, Exxaro has capacitated a further 257 people who have been issued with training certificates that will hold them in good stead beyond the lifespan of the mine and enable them to be competitive in the labour market.
126. EXXARRO has also displayed its commitment to stimulate local economic growth within Emakhazeni by committing R293 million of the construction capital to local suppliers. It is this holistic approach towards Community Social Investment that we urge other Private Sector role players to replicate and improve upon.

Strategic Infrastructure Development

127. Madam Speaker, as a Province, we continue to implement the ***Mpumalanga Vision 2030***, which provides a provincial expression of the key priorities, objectives and targets enumerated in the NDP, as well as expressed in the ruling party's manifesto.
128. Through our provincial Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT) that acts as our implementing agent for infrastructural projects, the Province has made significant progress towards the provision of an efficient, competitive and responsive ***economic infrastructure network***.
129. Madam Speaker, Our Province saw ***construction of 6 boarding schools, 47 ordinary schools and 2 new special schools***. Our continuous improvement against the national benchmark shows that there is an indelible link between the construction of educational infrastructure and the subsequent improvement in the quality of education.
130. Most notably, the Province undertook ***the eradication of basic services and sanitation backlog in 225 schools***. In this regard, we are proud to report that ***402 basic services and sanitation projects*** in these schools were completed. We will continue addressing the backlog of pit latrines sanitation in our schools.
131. Madam Speaker, we also made significant progress towards securing a long and healthy life for our citizens. Over ***R2, 7 billion*** has been spent since 2014 on ***upgrading and construction of 2 hospitals (Sabie and Mmammetlhake) and 6 primary health care facilities*** as well as renovations and rehabilitation in at least ***94 health facilities***.
132. These facilities have improved accessibility to health care services and by doing so inevitably improved life expectancy in the Province. The upgrading of Bethal Hospital has reached an advanced stage. Construction has also commenced on the new Middelburg District Hospital and preparatory work for the new Mapulaneng Hospital is underway.
133. On social welfare, six new offices were built within various communities whilst upgrades and renovations were carried out at a number of ***community centres*** across the Province. More significantly, the Province completed construction of ***Swartfontein Treatment Centre***, construction of ***Nkangala Inpatient Centre*** and ***5 new Early Childhood Development (ECD)*** centres.

134. The **library infrastructure** rolled out during this MTSF period provides our people with world class facilities that connect them with global information hubs.

135. In our endeavour to ensure that our citizens do not walk long distances to access libraries which are a fountain of knowledge, we have built a total of **15 new state of the art libraries** in the last five years. These libraries have been equipped and resourced with latest titles and technology including access to the internet and WI-FI to respond to the needs and aspirations of our people, especially learners.

Transport Infrastructure

136. Madam Speaker, our Provincial **road network** consists of **13 837 km** of which 40% is paved and 60% is unpaved. Since 2014, the Province has completed key priority transport infrastructure projects and also paid particular attention to preserving, maintaining its transport and road assets.

137. This investment is critical to ensure a strong economy, create new jobs and create new resources to support societal change and development.

138. In this regard, **R 8,5 billion** has been invested in improving our road network as follows;

- Re-gravelled **2 827 km of roads**,
- Upgraded **73 km of roads from gravel to surfaced roads**;
- Reconstructed and rehabilitated a total **of 558 km of roads**;
- Reconstructed **617 km of coal haul roads** *In order to reduce Vehicle Operation Costs (VOCs) for both coal haulers and other users of the network*;
- **Upgraded 86 km of roads and repaired 1 160 888 squared meters of potholes**, during the period under review.

139. SANRAL has commenced with work on the short and mid-term interventions to upgrade the **Moloto Road (R573)**.

140. The contract awarded to the service provider requires that 20% of the value of the contract be subcontracted to local SMMEs and approximately **R500 000** has been set aside to train local SMMEs and local labour on the existing construction project.

141. A further **R40,1 million** has been spent and 129 work opportunities created for the community. The estimated number of job opportunities to be created by 2020 is 5 500.

142. Our interventions that are facilitated through the **Municipal Support programme and the Integrated Rural Mobility and Access (IRMA)** programme have yielded positive results.

143. This includes assisting municipalities with road maintenance activities like patching, re-gravelling and blading of municipal roads. To date, we completed the construction of **15 IRMA projects** including footbridges and walkways.

Infrastructure Flagship Projects

144. Madam Speaker, on our flagship projects, we are happy to announce that we have already started with the construction of the **new Mpumalanga Parliamentary Village**, and it is envisaged that it will be completed in the 2020/21 financial year.
145. We completed the construction of **Mpumalanga Traffic College** and to date, the college has since passed-out the second batch of traffic officers who are now on experiential training to augment the available capacity of Traffic Officers in the Province, including Municipalities.

Education

146. Madam Speaker, Education is a phenomenon that requires collective collaboration between the State and society at large. It is indeed a global barometer used to assess the extent to which government invests in its human capital for a better and thriving future.
147. We focus immensely on education, as it is the only instrument that has the potential to create a society that is better positioned to withstand the perplexities of the 21st century and the advent of the fourth industrial revolution.
148. There is a correlation between education and economic growth in today's globalized information-based economy. Knowledge is said to be a key factor of a productive and progressive society.

Early Childhood Development

149. As Government, we remain committed to the recognition of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a universal right that lays the foundation for the accomplishment of wider societal benefits.
150. His Excellency, the President of the Republic has announced that the **"responsibility for ECD centres will migrate from Social Development to Basic Education and proceed with the process towards two years of compulsory ECD for all children before they enter grade 1"**.
151. Madam Speaker, as the Province, we welcome and embrace the clarion call made by our President.
152. Since 2014, we have steadily increased access to ECDs. The number of children in the 0-4 age group as well as Grade R cohorts has increased to **299 450 children**.
153. We are pleased to announce that a strong partnership with the private sector has been forged to look at systemic challenges on the provision of ECD infrastructure. Thus far we have achieved our Five-year target of having **55 ECD centres renovated** through the conditional grant amounting to approximately **R 5.3 million**.
154. We made an undertaking to our people that we would establish an **Early Childhood Development Institute (ECDI)**.

155. We are happy to report that the Institute, situated in the former Mapulaneng College in Bushbuckridge, has been established. In the past 3 years, it has trained **1 806** level 1 practitioners, **900** level 4 practitioners. **589** practitioners have completed level 6 and were translated as post level 1 educators.
156. Based on the training they have received, we have increased the practitioner stipend from **R2000 to R6 350 per month** in the 2017/18 financial year and from a one Year contract to a three-year contract.

Learner Performance

157. Madam Speaker, it is an undisputable fact that our Province invests largely in education. Approximately, **43%** of the provincial equitable share is spent on basic education. This has yielded positive results as the overall **enrolment rate** has steadily increased from **979 417** in 2014 to over **1 000 000** in 2018.
158. This Administration also saw an increase in the number of teachers entering the system, from **31 672** in 2014 to **35 297** in 2018.
159. However, of great concern Honourable Speaker, is the alarming **drop-out rates** from the Foundation phase which recorded a dropout rate of **9 512** in 2017 (Grade 1), and **19 348** grade 11 pupils in 2017.
160. This calls for a multi-sectoral collaboration between civil society and the Department of Education in order to firmly establish the root cause and develop strategies to arrest the worrying increase of the learner dropout rate.
161. We have worked tirelessly with the private sector and School Governing Bodies to strengthen and intensify the intervention programmes towards the improvement of **learner performance**.
162. We introduced extra classes, teacher development, radio talk shows, issuing of study guides particularly in poor performing schools including intensified monitoring and classroom support.
163. We are elated that the **Grade 12 learner performance** has improved from 74.8% in 2017 to 79% in 2018. The Province is determined to go beyond the 80% target in the near future.
164. In 2014 Madam Speaker, we promised our people that we would pay more attention towards improving the academic performance in **Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST)**.
165. We have made huge strides in increasing the number of learners who take up **Mathematics and Physical Science** in Grade 10. The number of learners enrolled for mathematics has increased from **38 533** in 2014 to **53 812** in 2018 and for Physical Science, an increase from **32 597** in 2014 to **45 806** in 2018 has been recorded.
166. The pronouncement we made in 2014 of establishing the **OR Tambo Mathematics, Science and Technology Academy** which would assist in improving learner performance and teacher competence in **Mathematics and Physical Science** was attained.

167. We thank South32 mining company for having contributed towards the OR Tambo MSTA. This is indicative of how effective and successful multi-sectoral partnerships can be.

Teacher Development

168. It is encouraging to note that over **R200million** has been invested in the past five years on teacher development. A sizeable amount was diverted towards improving Maths and Science pedagogical content knowledge.

169. We have since 2014 trained over **32 000** educators on a range of content and subject specific areas ranging from B.Ed Honours degrees and school management courses focusing on Maths, Science, Language and ECD aligned programmes.

170. The partnerships we've had with the private sector in the past 5 years have yielded positive outcomes by assisting in equipping **12 District Teacher Development Centres with ICT** equipment. These centres serve as hubs for the training and development of teachers.

School Safety

171. Honourable Speaker, the spate of **violence in our schools** seems to be on the increase and includes other social ills such as vandalism, substance abuse, gangsterism and bullying.

172. This is counterproductive to effective teaching and learning and thus defeats government's efforts of creating an enabling and **conducive environment for learning and teaching** in our schools.

173. For us to curb any form of violence in our schools, we will bolster the implementation of the **Integrated School Safety Programme** in collaboration with our social partners.

Health

174. Madam Speaker, we have worked hard as a formidable team to restore confidence in our health system, whilst ensuring that the constitutionally enshrined rights of our patients to quality health remain uncompromised.

Provincial Health System

175. The Executive Council took a decision to overhaul the health system in the Province. This was anchored on the following key Actions;

- Strengthening the **quality of leadership**;
- Provide **quality infrastructure and equipment**;
- Establish **dedicated maintenance teams**;
- Appoint and retain **suitably qualified professionals**;
- Strengthen **primary health care**;

- Implement a comprehensive *HIV and Aids programme*; and
- Implement an effective and efficient system of *medicine supply and distribution*.

176. Madam Speaker I stand here to give account that the department of Health has expeditiously recovered.

177. The process of turning around the situation in the department of health saw a budget increase of **R55 152 421 000** over the past Five-year period.

178. As I speak, key of these achievements is that **26 out of 32 hospitals** have a full complement of executive management teams, with functional Hospital Boards including filling of critical positions.

179. Management of our hospitals is now spawning the much anticipated hope. We established additional Specialist domains in our tertiary hospitals.

180. To date the cost of laboratory services and medical equipment were drastically reduced.

181. The total number of students in the Cuba Medical programme to date is **218** and **63** have already qualified as medical practitioners, whilst 103 students are pursuing medicine in Russia.

182. Their academic progress is fairly well despite socio-cultural issues which are being attended to.

183. As indicated by stats SA 2018 figures, as a Province we've made huge strides in increasing *life expectancy* at birth from the average of 62 to 64.5 years in 2018.

184. This phenomenal achievement is attributable to the improved health outcomes, *reduced HIV prevalence* and the provision of quality healthcare services.

Management of Maternal and Child Health

185. Madam Speaker, to reverse negative performance in critical sustainable development goals, we have robustly prioritised the implementation of *the provincial strategy on management of maternal and child health care*.

186. This has yielded positive outcomes in the following:

- The immunisation coverage in Mpumalanga has significantly improved from **80.2%** in 2014/15 FY to **96.5%** in the 9 months of 2018/19 FY.
- *Antenatal care programme* for pregnant mothers has significantly improved.
- Procured and distributed **105** ambulances and **22** all-terrain response vehicles which assists with the management of obstetric emergencies to reduce maternal and neonatal deaths.

Comprehensive HIV & AIDS Programme

187. Madam Speaker, We in Mpumalanga Province have set for ourselves to mitigate the devastating effects of the HIV epidemic in 2014 by declaring and acknowledging that indeed the HIV prevalence rate of **36.7%** was way too high above the national average of **29.5%**.
188. Dedicated team work and effective partnerships yielded positive outcomes and *as a result, the HIV prevalence declined from 36.7% (2014) to 22.8% (2018).*
189. Over the past years, we have been greatly concerned about the continuous **proliferation of HIV**. Its prevalence was at a rate of **40.5%** in Gert Sibande District which was the highest in the Province and second highest in the country. As a result, we took a conscious decision in directing all our energies to Gert Sibande which was ***selected as a priority district in 2014.***
190. This administration has worked as a formidable team since 2014 of the Mpumalanga AIDS Council (MPAC), **3 District AIDS Councils and 17 Local AIDS Councils** were established and placed under the chairpersonship of the District and Local Executive Mayors respectively.
191. The ***new infections*** among the Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) who were identified as vulnerable also dropped from an estimated **10 015** in 2014 to **7 293** in 2018. This is a confirmation that our interventions yielded the desired results.
192. Over and above the sterling work done by the Mpumalanga Aids Council, we have partnered with Development centred NGOs like ***GIZ, Right to Care, Foundation for Professional Development (FPD) and Broad Reach*** which have aided our technical capacity in providing combination prevention packages to the public.
193. Madam Speaker, the road ahead, in the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic is no longer as blurry in comparison to the past 15 years.
194. The future looks certain that together with the private sector and civil society we shall win this war. This ***has been demonstrated by the upsurge in the number of people*** tested for HIV with a significant improvement from the **136 250** tested in 2014/15 to **2 826 340 recorded** as at December 2018.
195. What was a thorn in our flesh for a long time was the high defaulter rate and patients having to stand in long queues to collect chronic medication.
196. I must report to our communities that we have crossed that hurdle by enrolling 243 034 patients on the ***Centralised Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution (CCMDD) Programme*** as at the end of December 2018, surpassing the planned annual target of 220 000.
197. Madam Speaker, it is important to note that the number of ***male circumcisions*** performed year on year is increasing with **42 776** recorded in 2014 and **79 929** in 2018 due to the success of the integration of Medical Male Circumcision and Traditional Male Initiation.
198. Currently we are implementing the ***Stock Visibility System (SVS) and Rx Solution*** for an effective and efficient medical supply distribution system, we are currently standing at 96% stock distribution.

199. There is absolutely no need to stand in long queues in clinics and hospitals for treatment. Our patients can now fetch their medication at the contracted pharmacies close to their homes.

Advancing Human Development and Social Protection

200. Madam Speaker, *advancing human development and Social protection* is the prerequisite to meet the scourge of social injustice head on.

201. As government, providing for the *psychological, social and economic well-being* of the citizenry is not a choice. It is mandatory for us to take care of our most vulnerable.

202. Madam Speaker, it is a fact that we are a Province where quite a sizeable number of our people are trapped in *poverty with very low levels of skills* which are not proportionate to the demands of the labour market.

203. Working together with civil society organizations, we have achieved significant milestones in improving the *material conditions of the rural poor*.

204. We must admit though, Madam Speaker that much work still needs to be done to improve the low skills levels amongst the vulnerable groups.

205. We have made an impact notwithstanding the high poverty rate, to alleviate old age poverty. We have intensified awareness programme on the rights of Older Persons and promoted home based care services.

206. As I speak, 6 169 of our Older persons are accessing funded residential facilities.

207. This administration has contributed greatly towards taking care of our frail older persons. To date, **29 219 older persons** have access to *community based care and support services*.

208. We are beginning to realize the monetary value of **R29million expended** over the past years on the daily operations of our Non Profit Organisations (NPO) who work in tandem with the state to provide the impetus needed in changing the lives of our indigent households.

209. Programmes that seek to enhance the dignity and also prolong the lives of our aged population are paramount to our provincial agenda.

210. To this effect, **32 229 older persons** have, in the current financial year, participated in active ageing programmes which saw them also partaking in the National active ageing golden games held in the Free State Province.

211. We have tried to focus all our efforts to the plight of our young children who are homeless or had to look after their siblings at a very tender age of their development.

212. In deepening social assistance and expanding access to Social Security to the young, **14 221 children** were placed in foster care.

213. Moving forward, we will make sure that none of our children deserving ***foster care placement*** fall within the cracks of the system.
214. Furthermore, ***1 551 Children*** in foster care were linked to sustainable social security programmes whilst 31 237 benefited from the Social Relief programmes.
215. Honourable Speaker, ***people with disabilities*** have rights which we, as government, are obliged to uphold. We are bound to promote and protect these rights and above all enhance the capabilities of people with disabilities.
216. Thus far, reasonable progress has been made to accommodate people with disabilities in funded facilities. A total of ***3 425 persons*** with disabilities were housed in funded residential facilities.
217. We are striving to eradicate absolute substance abuse among the youth of this Province.
218. In an effort to address this, we have developed a comprehensive ***Drug Master Plan*** which affords us an opportunity to collaborate with civil society and the private sector to tackle social ills affecting our youth.
219. To date, we have managed to reach ***120 819 children 18 years and below*** through ***drug prevention programmes***.
220. We need to be frank and admit that much more work still needs to be done, we must also develop strategies that are aimed at negating the high rate of relapse.
221. Key amongst those strategies will be the strengthening of community based support.
222. Madam Speaker, We are pleased to announce that in transforming society and increasing its knowledge base we have built libraries to the tune of over ***R560*** million since the inception of this Administration.

Integrated Human Settlements

223. Madam Speaker, earlier on at the formative stage of our democracy, we were more concerned about providing the roof above heads of our people who were previously deprived of such basic human rights for years.
224. We have since realized that providing a house is only but a small important part of the solution. It does not address holistically, the issues of building communities.
225. As a result, we have since developed and we are implementing the Provincial ***Human Settlement Master Plan*** which provides for an integrated Human Settlements development.
226. To this end, we have delivered ***66 792 housing opportunities*** in this MTSF period, consisting of ***28 141 serviced sites***; ***38 004*** Individual Housing Units; ***224*** Social Housing Units; ***321*** Communal Residential Units (CRU) and ***102*** Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme (FLISP) Units.

227. In addition, as a way of restoring the dignity of our people as well as ensuring security of tenure, **29 053 Title Deeds** have been issued to beneficiaries and 19 incomplete townships have now been proclaimed and will deliver **5 246 title deeds**.
228. In collaboration with our Local Municipalities, we are currently implementing **14 Integrated Human Settlements** and an additional **33 Integrated Human Settlements** are currently at a planning stage. In addition, **16 Informal Settlements** are being upgraded.
229. May I take this opportunity to call upon our local municipalities to continue working with us by prioritizing the provision of the much needed **Bulk Infrastructure** in the identified project areas so as to unlock the developmental potential of the areas identified.
230. We have intervened in identified municipalities to alleviate the suffering of our people caused by **Sewer Spillages**.
231. We are currently attending to the problem of Sewer spillages in Embalenhle and Leandra in Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, Wesselton Extension 32, 33 & 34 in Msukaligwa Local Municipality and Standerton Extension 8 in Lekwa Local Municipality.
232. To this effect **R214 million** has been set aside in this financial year to address Sewer Spillages and other infrastructural challenges in the Province.
233. Madam Speaker, may I take this opportunity to congratulate our Provincial Department of Human Settlements that was declared **The Best Provincial Department in Human Settlements Service Delivery in the Country in 2018**.

Fighting Crime

234. In 2014, we committed to **intensify our efforts to tackle crime** and build safer communities. These efforts would be in vain without the collaboration with our community leaders and citizens in general.
235. **Community activism** is a proven phenomenon in the fight against crime, grounded in the well-established African community philosophy, which says **"nawe uliphoyisa"**. This is a clarion call for all citizens young and old to fight crime where possible, and report to authorities as a necessity for anyone who happen to come across criminal incidents.

Towards a Capable Developmental State

236. Madam Speaker, Institutionalisation of long term planning, coupled with strengthening of monitoring and evaluation are essential elements for a **capable developmental state and its machinery**.
237. It is the ANC under the leadership of *u-Tata Nelson Rolihlahla* Mandela that showed us that spatial layout built within the apartheid belief system would have to be attended to by generations to come.
238. Our generation yielded to that call by ensuring that we conceptualise a well **thought and people centred spatial development and land use management policy**.

239. Our ANC led government is grounded in the firm belief that the Elderly, the Youth, People with disability, people with albinism and Children are at the centre of the caring government, which we are. These includes our LGBTQI community.

Supporting municipalities and the provision of basic infrastructure

240. Madam Speaker, as early as the dawn of our democracy in 1994, we placed ***local government at the forefront of service delivery***.

241. We took a conscious decision that the provision of water, sanitation, electricity and roads will take precedence over other priorities. The focus was on areas that had been neglected in the past including but not limited to Bushbuckridge.

242. Today over ***85 per cent of households*** in our Province have access to water, leaving us with a backlog of just under 15 per cent.

243. We have successfully implemented ***23 high impact bulk water supply projects*** which have benefitted more than ***158 959 households*** at a cost of more than ***R239 million***.

244. In addition, we have completed and delivered ***29 water reticulation projects*** at a cost of ***R237 million***. We expect ***38 bulk and 39 reticulation*** infrastructure from MIG currently under construction and 7 implemented from RBIG to be soon completed.

245. The following are some of the completed projects which have helped our communities to receive much needed basic services:

- Rehabilitation of ***water infrastructure in 30 Villages*** in Bushbuckridge;
- Installation of ***18 Steel Tank Reservoirs*** in Mbombela (15) and Bushbuckridge (3);
- In collaboration with Glencoe Mine, ***Phola Water Pipeline*** Emalahleni Local Municipality;
- ***Siyanqoba Water & Sewer Pipeline*** Emalahleni Local Municipality;

246. ***Sesiqalile ngomsebenzi waseSibange neseDriekopies bulk water schemes ozoletha amanzi kubantu basezindaweni zasemakhaya ezingu 18 kuzo kuhlangukanya neMgobodzi, Magudu naseMagogeni.***

247. ***Izinhlelo zokulungiselela ukudonsa amanzi eLoskop dam azophakela abantu baseThembisile nazo seziqalile. Asithemba ukuthi ezinyangeni ezizayo uzoqala umsebenzi wokudonsa amapayipi amanzi. Bakithi njengoba sihlala sisho ukuthi kancane kancane uhulumeni oholwa ngukhangelose i ANC uyeza nakini sizofika nizowathola amanzi nezinye izinsiza.***

248. Madam Speaker, the number of households with ***access to waterborne sanitation*** has increased by more than 25% between 2011 and 2017, this is despite the challenges faced by our municipalities, such as overloaded and overflowing waste water treatment works, aged infrastructure resulting in sewer spillages, poor operations and maintenance and Plants operating beyond design capacity.

249. A further 49% of the households in the Province have access to **flushing toilets**, 48% use basic VIP & Septic toilets whilst 3% still use pit toilets. Once more, Honourable Speaker, we want to assure our people that we will heed the call made by the President of the Republic **to ensure that we eradicate all pit toilets even at our schools and other public facilities.**
250. We would like to echo a clarion call made by President Ramaphosa **to all citizens of this country to pay for the services that they are receiving.** More than 92 per cent of our people in this Province have **access to electricity** yet Eskom is owed over **R5, billion** in unpaid electricity bills by our people and businesses. On the same vein, Honourable Speaker, we want to urge our communities to pay for the services they are enjoying.
251. Honourable Speaker, this Administration takes great pride in the support we have provided to Amakhosi, maKgoshi.
252. Over the period in question, we have provided amaKhosi, maKgoshi with vehicles of their choice, tractors with full implements.
253. We have also provided them with livestock as part of ensuring food security and we have increased their funding for cultural ceremonies (Imimemo) from R60 000 to R300 000 per annum for both His Majesties Ingwenyama Mabhoko III and Ingwenyama Makhosokhe II, for all traditional leaders this figure has increased from R60 000 to R200 000 per annum.
254. In an effort to improve constant interaction with their subjects, we have refurbished and constructed traditional council offices in our Province.
255. This process is ongoing Madam Speaker, and we will not rest until we address the plight of all our traditional leaders.
256. As Government, we will continue to recognise the role played by Amakhosi, maKgoshi during the liberation struggle and also as custodians of our cultural heritage.
257. Madam Speaker, our liberation history and heritage and our unity in diversity makes us even more proud to relate our stories of origins to our children and their children so that they too can relate these stories to the generations to come.
258. Whenever a question is asked about the history and the origins of our ancestors who freely roamed the valleys and the mountains of this province centuries ago we should be able to tell our story.
259. We are the descendants of the most powerful two Swazi Queens, uNomagcisa and uNyanda who reigned over the people residing on the magnificent Makhonjwa Mountains and the valleys of the entire Barberton and Mbombela area and the surroundings, amaSwati.
260. We are the off-springs of uMabhoko kaNdzuza people in the North-Western side of our province, one of the most artistic and colourful people of this country, AmaNdebele.
261. We are the product of Amahlangana, a hybrid of all nations that lived in the Lowveld at that time whose language and culture is associated with isiPulana.

262. Our history is not complete without Bakhatla, BaPedi, Bakoni, Baphuti and Batau.
263. We are the sons and daughters of the Zulu Kingdom uShaka KaSenzangakhona, amaZulu.
264. In our blood veins you will find the descendants of uNgungunyana kaMzila kaSoshangane, the Lion of Gaza, amaTsonga.
265. We live side by side in peace and in harmony with the descendants of the Voortrekkers named the Trekboers and the English speaking people who descended on our shores as part of the British Empire and Dutch Settlers who first occupied the Western Cape, amaNgisi namaBhunu.
266. We share common bondage with the Koi Koi and the San people whose history is evident on the rock art in the caves and mountains of our province in particular around the Makhonjwa Barberton Mountains.
267. We have a long and illustrious history of fighting against oppression and unjust laws alongside the Indian community who descended on our shores and first settled in Natal before coming to our province.
268. We are proud of our heritage and our rich history. We are the people of The Place of the Rising Sun.
269. As we prepare to celebrate 25 years of our freedom and democracy let us also remember the sacrifices that were made by multitudes of our people throughout the period of our struggle. Many of them paid with the highest price for our freedom as they were either hanged, murdered or massacred by the Apartheid regime and its surrogates.
270. We should never allow power structures, social trends and cultural needs influence our memories and become selective of what we want to remember and what to forget. It is our moral duty to forgive but it is immoral for us to forget our past. If we do forget our past we run the risk of repeating the same mistakes that were committed by those who lived before us.
271. Our history is both complex and contradictory, and our remembrance may be influenced and conditioned by our own points of view and by our knowledge of history. This makes it even more critical for our children and their children's children to know what happened in the past, how to avoid repeating it and how we arrived at where we are today.
272. They need to know about our great history but also about our very dark history. Not because we want to make any person or group of people feel guilty but because we want to prevent history from repeating itself. We must learn from the past whilst focussing on the future.
273. Every nation goes through periods of heroism and greatness, but there are also moments when we need great leaders to calm our fears down, lift our spirits up, nourish our hopes and foster values of strength and resilience.
274. Throughout our history as a nation, we have been fortunate to have the quality of leaders who used their powers to transform our societies, elevate us emotionally, and heal our psychological challenges. These leaders were tried and tested and stood the test of time.

275. We can think of *John Langalibalele Mafukuzela Dube, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Charlote Maxeke, Winnie Madikizela Mandela, Lililan Ngoyi, OR Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Goven Mbeki, Walter Sisulu* and many others.

Conclusion

276. Madam Speaker, as we outline the achievements of this Administration in the 2014-2019 MTSF period, it would be remiss for me not to acknowledge the former Premier of the Province and current Deputy President of the Republic, H.E. Mr David Mabuza for the sterling work he has done.

277. He has stabilised the Provincial Government and strategically positioned the Province towards a path of sustainable development. Mshengu, the love and affinity you have for the people of Mpumalanga and their development is indeed second to none. Your selfless pursuit to elevate the status of Mpumalanga as a destination of choice will never be forgotten.

278. It is not a coincidence that you have ascended to the National stage. It is simply because you are tasked with ensuring that you replicate what you have done for the people of Mpumalanga, and ensure that the entire South Africa benefits from your people centred leadership style.

279. As we continue to embark on this long and complex journey towards peace, reconciliation and stability, we will never tire in upholding the principle of unity in diversity, based on the respect we have for one another and on a set of common shared values, which forms the foundation of our endeavours to deepen social cohesion and reconciliation throughout our Province.

I thank you.