



**WHEN THE SUN RISES
WE WORK HARD TO DELIVER**

STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS

23 February 2018

The speech is available on www.mpumalanga.gov.za

**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
ON 23 FEBRUARY 2018.**

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 Mpumalanga Executive Council;
Executive Mayors;
Chairperson of SALGA,
Judge President and all esteemed members of judiciary;
Provincial Commissioner, General Zuma;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
His Majesty King Makhosonke II;
Chairperson of the Mpumalanga Provincial House of
Traditional Leaders, Inkosi uNgomane;
Director-General and all Provincial Heads of Mpumalanga Government, CEO of Parastatals and
other Chapter 9 Institutions;
Veterans of our struggle for freedom;
Distinguished guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is a great honour for me to deliver this State of the Province Address at a time of great hope, renewal and aspirations for Unity of the people of our country.
2. The past few weeks have been a difficult period for all South Africans and we need to appreciate that out of all the choices we could have made, collectively and individually, the path we have chosen will lead us to a brighter future.
3. These events and decisions we made are a demonstration of a maturing democracy and the supremacy of democratic governance.
4. Like the baobab tree, South Africa's democracy is strong and vibrant. Our democratic cultures and practices are deep enough to withstand any tests, pressures and storms.
5. Even in moments of anxiety and despair, South Africa is an epitome of a resilient nation. The goodness of the country and the spirit of nationhood, transcend everything for the good of the collective.
6. As the storm settles, we thank our immediate past President Jacob Zuma, for his service to our country. We salute him for his courage and patriotic spirit that prevailed on him to respond in the positive manner that he did.

7. He proved to all of us, that his personal circumstance and challenges he faced are subservient to the wishes of the African National Congress as a legitimate representative of the people.
8. His selfless contribution in the struggle for our freedom, will remain ingrained in the history books of the revolutionary struggle against colonialism and oppression.
9. We thank him for his service to our country. We are grateful for his peace-building skills that he had put to great use during the darkest period of our history. He was at the forefront in ending political conflict and violence that ravaged KwaZulu-Natal.
10. Without his contribution, we could have easily become a permanent war-zone and a statistic on a list of failed states.
11. For stepping down and allowing for a peaceful transfer of power, he has contributed in deepening democratic practices in our country, and made South Africa a beacon of hope and democracy.
12. By so doing, he affirmed the values of submission to the people's will, upon which the democratic South Africa is built.
13. We are confident that he will avail himself in the near future to the service of our country in various capacities.
14. Madam Speaker and my fellow South Africans;
15. The gods of Africa are shining on this beautiful nation. The spirits of the warriors that fought in frontier wars of resistance against colonialism, have regained life.
16. Like the story of Ezekiel and the Valley of Dry Bones, our nation has received breath that has brought it to life.
17. The energy and hope that shook our country in April 27, 1994, has been revived.
18. Once again, we are filled with hope that the making of a better nation is possible. In no distant past, we were tearing one another apart. All of a sudden, the hope of unity and struggle against common challenges is upon us.
19. Only Afro-pessimists can hold on to the dying belief that South Africa cannot rise to her full potential. It is indeed a new dawn!
20. The belief in our own abilities as agents of change than mere recipients is a reality that cannot be denied.
21. I stand here today in front of you and the whole world to see, proclaiming that Unity of purpose is possible and can be achieved.
22. To His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, we congratulate you on your election as the 5th president of the democratic South Africa. Your message to the nation and the world was loud and clear.
23. We as the people of Mpumalanga, are ready to step forward and be of service to our country.

24. We say without shame, that we are at the disposal of our nation to serve and be of use in making our country a great place where the dreams and aspirations of all our people are fulfilled and realised.
25. In honour of the great Bra Hugh Masekela, whose heritage is from Mpumalanga, Nathi-ke, sithi Thuma Thina!
26. 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.
27. 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, gays and straights, poor and rich, in working to build a democratic and prosperous society.
28. As we gather today in our multitudes, we are reminded that 28 years ago, President Nelson Mandela was released from prison after spending close to three decades behind bars.
29. He came out harbouring no grudge or quest for revenge against his captors. As he walked free, despite his separation from his family and his people, called on us to join hands in building a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa.
30. To him, peaceful resolution of political differences was not an option but the only way.
31. In his first address as a free man, he proclaimed himself as 'no prophet, but as the servant of the people'.
32. He later spent his years as our Head of State, promoting reconciliation and peaceful co-existence among all South Africans and people of the world. Only those in denial can deny that because of Mandela, we are a better nation.
33. As we celebrate the centenary of his birth, equally, we salute Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela for keeping the Mandela name and the struggle alive defying the odds of repression.
34. In the same vein, we are celebrating the centenary of his birth and that of Mama Albertina Sisulu, a stalwart of the United Democratic Front and our glorious movement.
35. We draw inspiration from the lives of Tata Mandela and Mama Sisulu. In them, we find strength in knowing that even though our struggle for total emancipation may be steep, it is possible to accomplish.
36. These two great South Africans, fought for social justice and freedom. In honouring their lives, let us be bold in confronting the challenges of our time.
37. As part of centenary celebrations, we will, this year, erect a statue of our global icon, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, within the Riverside Government Complex precinct in honour of his selfless service to the people of South Africa and the world.
38. The statue of this towering figure will be a constant reminder to all of us, public representatives and public servants, that we are here not for own sake, but 'as loyal

servants of the people'. We will be reminded to embrace servant leadership values, and always act in the best interest of the citizens in Mpumalanga.

39. At the heart of everything that we do and aspire to achieve is the dismantling of the exclusionary political economic structure that protects the privileges of the few at the expense of the majority.
40. Honourable Speaker and members;
41. Since the beginning of the term of this Administration, and despite limited resources at our disposal, we have made great strides in making our Province a better place to live in.
42. Following our election into office in 2014, we identified investment in infrastructure as the primary pillar of our government programme. This means that every priority that we had set out in our election manifesto, was to be advanced and implemented around infrastructure.
43. We stated in no ambiguous terms that our Government will increase investment in economic and social infrastructure. It is thus not a surprise that the budget for 2014 – 2019 of this Administration, indicates a significant rise in the infrastructure outlay.
- 44. *Madam Speaker - Although the current economic times are tough, the future outlook of our county is promising!***
45. Over the last decade, our economy declined from 5% GDP growth to 1%, whilst unemployment rose from 20% to 27%. This rise in unemployment, has been coupled with rising costs of food and electricity.
46. As of Q4 of 2017, the official unemployment rate for Mpumalanga is standing at 28.9%.
47. This gloomy picture does not warrant populist slogans. It rather calls for unity and struggle. It's a blemish we must confront, fight and defeat. We cannot afford to bury our heads in the sand.
48. We say so, because it is a reality of the moment. Therefore, we must find solutions to resolve this challenge so that every child of Mpumalanga can have a place under the sun. We must do so to ensure that every child can have a decent meal and go to school to realize his or her own potential.
49. The high rate of unemployment, further highlights the relationship between low levels of education and inadequate skills, with poor prospects for employability.
50. It is precisely for this reason that we have prioritised skills development as a pillar for our development. Therefore our fight against unemployment especially among the youth cannot be divorced from a comprehensive programme on education and skills development.
51. Notwithstanding this harsh reality, statistics show that the programmes adopted and pursued by this government in the fight against poverty, are bearing fruits.

52. In its 2017 report, Statistics South Africa demonstrates that the percentage of the provincial population below the lower bound poverty line of R647 per person per month, decreased from 46.1% in 2011 to 42.6% in 2015. This is a positive development for our Province.
53. We are the only province in the country to register a decrease, whereas the national rate increased from 36.4% in 2011, to 40.0% in 2015.
54. The economic reality we are faced with, is that unemployment and poverty has in recent past been compounded by low levels of investment in the South African economy.
55. It has widely been reported that the JSE's 50 largest companies are currently sitting on cash reserves of about R1.4-trillion, in what is called an 'investment strike'.
56. Simply put, this means we have had low levels of domestic investment.
57. However, we expect this to change for the better. This optimism is informed by the positive response of the investor community to recent political developments in the country.
58. These sentiments were triggered by the smooth change of leadership, both in the governing party following its successful 54th National Conference, and that of leadership in government.
59. This resurgent confidence points us to a positive direction of potential growth and prospects for a different and better trajectory. Already, signs of improvement in investor confidence began to emerge in the second and third quarter of 2017.
60. Notwithstanding the GDP growth rate of 1.9% per annum between 2009 and 2015, Mpumalanga has recorded a considerable growth driven, to a certain degree, by a strong recovery in agriculture.
61. As things stand, we are expecting our provincial performance to be in line with national growth. This growth might even be higher depending on the performance of the mining industry, more specifically coal.
62. Among many other investments in the Province, the expansion of Exxaro coal operations in the Belfast area signifies a great deal of confidence that Mpumalanga is the key destination for investment.
63. That is why it also gives me pleasure that South32 Limited announced in November 2017, an investment of **R4.3 billion** into Mpumalanga, which will extend the life of its Klipspruit Colliery by approximately 20 years.
64. This investment will ensure employment for an estimated **740** people and will create **4 000** additional jobs during the construction phase.
65. This is a major boost to our economy and will add to the growth in employment figures registered between Q4 of 2016 to Q4 of 2017.
66. During this period, the provincial economy registered a net job creation of **87 000**. This was mainly driven by jobs in trade (35 000), agriculture (17 000), private households (14 000), finance (12 000) and mining (11 000).

67. Over the last few years, we have been concerned about the decline in the mining sector's contribution to job creation as it is one of the biggest sectors in the Province. We welcome the 2017 figures which are showing a slight recovery in terms of the sector's contribution to job creation.
68. We will continue to engage with industry leaders in this sector to ensure that we do all we can to attract new investments and create much needed jobs.
69. As the provincial government, we have set aside resources to support the **Youth Miners Incubation Programme** as part of broadening youth participation, and ownership of mining assets.
70. In partnership with industry players, we will support our youth in mining to access prospecting and mining rights, and ensure that this sector makes a meaningful contribution to youth development.
71. **Madam Speaker; among the critical sectors of our provincial economy, is Agriculture, which remains an important life blood for Mpumalanga!**
72. The agricultural sector registered a larger share of total employment in the third quarter of 2017, as compared to the national picture.
73. A total of **99 624** persons were employed in the provincial agriculture industry. An additional **109 899** citizens were involved in subsistence farming.
74. Let us recall that in our 2017 State of the Province Address, we announced a policy decision to introduce a Government Nutrition Programme aimed at revitalising agriculture in Mpumalanga.
75. This programme has created a market platform for our small and emerging farmers to supply fresh produce directly to government institutions such as schools and hospitals.
76. Our main focus is to stimulate production to ensure that the agriculture sector expands opportunities for new entrants and creates much needed jobs.
77. We are supporting all our emerging farmers to be ready to supply the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market that is under construction. In this process, we want to unlock the potential of SMMEs, Co-operatives, as well as township and rural enterprises.
78. To date, a total of **305 smallholder farmers** have benefited from the Government Nutrition Programme. This has ensured their sustainability including that of local bakeries as well as the youth-owned transport enterprises.
79. From the 1st June 2018, government will expand this programme to include the procurement and supply of both dry products and fresh produce. With this expansion, the programme will cover a significant number schools and hospitals.
80. We are pleased to report that the construction of the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market that we mentioned earlier, is gaining traction.

Since inception, have invested approximately R500 million into this project since its inception.

81. Those who have driven past the construction site, would have noticed the progress being made.
82. We have thus far implemented bulk services infrastructure, creating a total of 800 jobs during this construction phase. In April this year, we will be commencing with construction of top-structure market buildings, covering 30 000 m².
83. This investment will be further supported by three agri-hubs located in Dr JS Moroka, Mkhuhlu and Mkhondo. As of today, phase 1 of the Dr. JS Moroka Agri-hub is complete, and the construction of the other two has begun. This year, we will complete the construction of the remaining two agri-hubs.
84. By late 2019, our Province will boast a world-class fresh produce market facility that will enable Mpumalanga farmers, particularly the small-scale farmers, to trade their fresh produce to local and international markets.
85. We have opened markets for our farmers to send their produce to Oman and Russia. The volume of exports will increase over time owing to expansion of our bilateral relations with other partners.
86. In pursuing these initiatives in the agriculture sector, it is a cause for celebration that we have increased the participation of youth in agriculture through the government's flagship Fortune 40 Incubator Programme.
87. The African Development Bank projects that in 2030, agribusiness will be worth 1 trillion US Dollars. This means that the future for Africa is in agribusiness.
88. This past year, we commenced with a development of further 14 farms. Eleven projects are already in production and they are supplying the Government Nutrition Programme.
89. We have also intensified government support to poultry production. This is aimed at growing this sector in the face of threats of imports to the industry.
90. We need to appreciate that our success as the Province in growing large-scale agriculture depends on the utilization our arable land to optimal capacity. This includes utilizing communal land to capacity.
91. That is why we call upon our revered traditional leadership to play an active role in this regard. We are pleased with their positive response thus far. This will assist the Province in enhancing its production capacity including communal areas under AmaKhosi.
92. As government, we will continue to provide the necessary mechanization support to till the communal land and bring it to full production. AmaKhosi must play their leadership role as we embark on this aggressive agricultural 'revolution'.
93. ***Madam Speaker; our Province is on a development path that is anchored on large scale investment in world-class infrastructure!***

94. To date, we are delivering the largest programme of public works in the Province's history. We have invested more than **R13, 2 billion** over the past four years in the rollout of Mpumalanga's public infrastructure.
95. We have steered the Province to be an infrastructure driven domain, striving for quality products and value for money.
96. Our public investment in infrastructure has vastly enhanced the Province's potential for growth.
97. Beyond achieving world class infrastructure, this capital investment has supported the coal, forestry, agriculture and tourism industries.
98. Our capital investment in tourism infrastructure through upgrading of nature reserves and upgrading of tourism routes, has resulted in increased tourism spend.
99. This has grown to R4,6 billion for foreign tourists and R1,8 billion for domestic tourists. The signing of a partnership agreement between Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency and Ural Association of Tourism of Russia, will further contribute to growing these numbers.
100. Given the importance of this sector in our provincial economy, this Government will continue to prioritise the growth of tourism sector through increased investment in the development of liberation heritage routes like Makhonjwa Mountains near Barberton, Waterval Boven, Bethal and Mbuzini.
101. Our Administration committed itself to ensuring that the diversity of our arts, culture and heritage is exploited to its full capacity. In order to realise the potential of this sector as a major contributor to building social cohesion and economic development in Mpumalanga and the rest of the country, we have initiated the process for the establishment of the Mpumalanga Creative Industry Commission which will be operational before the end of the year.
102. As part of further developing tourism infrastructure, the Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Agency will be concluding concession agreements for Manyeleti African Ivory Route as well as Zithabiseni Resort under a public-private partnership. Through this process, our government wants to see increased transformation of this sector, by increasing the participation of black-owned SMMEs.
103. More importantly, our youth must seize the opportunities in the tourism sector. Government will continue to prioritise skills development programmes that will enhance participation and growth of youth-owned tourism enterprises.
- 104. Madam Speaker; There can be no development without quality socio-economic infrastructure!**
105. We are pleased that we have invested significantly in the delivery of socio-economic infrastructure as a key enabler of access to opportunities and a better quality of life for all the citizens of our Province, irrespective of their socio-economic status.

106. Over the past four years, we have built a number of schools, hospitals, offices, libraries and road infrastructure.
107. The expenditure over this period indicates major bias towards Education and Health Infrastructure. This is consistent with the manifesto priorities of the African National Congress.
108. Who can forget that President Mandela believed in the power of education as an effective means to improve the livelihood of the people?
109. Inspired by his words that “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”, this Administration prioritised investment in education infrastructure.
110. There can be no doubt that there is a link between education infrastructure and the quality of education. This is evinced by improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in Mpumalanga.
111. Today, the children of the downtrodden poor farm workers and farm dwellers of Donkerhoek and Amsterdam in Mkhondo, Emakhazeni and Steve Tshwete, can get their education in the comfort of boarding schools that this Administration built for them; be at peace that their future is bright and that they now have a better shot in life than before.
112. To deal with the perennial problem of inequality within our society, we must level the playing field in terms of access to quality education, irrespective of race or socio-economic status.
113. This Administration will continue to do this because to us, education is the central tool for development.
114. Whereas we acknowledge the strides we have made, much more still needs to be done. We must lift the children of labourers from the bondage of marginalisation and the cycle of poverty, to secure a better future and place under the sun.
115. That is why the message of this Administration to the farm communities in Thaba Chweu, is that your turn is coming and the same quality facilities are coming your way. This year, we will invest over R350 million in the construction of the Thaba Chweu boarding school, and ensure that this state-of-the-art facility opens its doors of learning in the 2019 academic year.
116. Alongside this, we will conclude all the preparation and planning work for the construction of an additional boarding school in Gert Sibande. Our plan is to ensure that this school opens in the 2020 academic year.
117. We are doing this because our assessment has shown that doing away with dysfunctional farm schools provides an opportunity to respond comprehensively to poverty challenges facing children living on the farms.

118. These boarding schools provide a new, safe and secure environment for these children, with all basic necessities that every child needs in a learning environment. With equal opportunities for every child, we are leveling the playing field.
119. No child must be denied quality education because he or she is poor and living on the farm.
120. Madame Speaker, we have made strides in the provision of water and sanitation infrastructure in our schools. Our programme focusing on the eradication of basic services and sanitation backlog in 308 schools has gone a long way towards improving the learning and teaching in our schools.
121. These schools were provided with modern and decent ablution units. In some instances with electrification and water connections. In doing so, we restored the dignity of our young people whilst creating a conducive learning environment for them.
122. We are therefore encouraged that Grade 12 learner performance has improved from 47.9% in 2009 to 74.6% in 2017. We are confident that when these interventions are sustained, the Province will hit the 80% target very soon.
123. We should continue to work together with all stakeholders in the education sector to improve the provincial performance. This Administration will continuously identify and isolate all root causes of unsatisfactorily learner performance at all levels.
124. On behalf of this Administration, allow me to express our appreciation for the support that the private sector has extended in this area.
125. The vision of the OR Tambo Maths, Science and Technology Academy would not have been realized if it were not for South 32's commitment to partnering with government to ensure that we improve the quality of teaching, learning and performance outcomes in maths, science and technology.
126. We would like to thank all our private sector partners who have contributed through the provision of bursaries and skills development programmes as we build a better future for Mpumalanga, the Place of the Rising Sun.
127. Together, we must continuously invest in human capital development that will produce relevant skills for the economy.
128. Already there is a remarkable improvement in the performance of those who pass Matric with Maths and Science as their subjects of choice.
129. The operationalisation of OR Tambo Mathematics, Science and Technology Academy will further assist in improving learner performance and teacher competence in these gateway subjects.
130. As we transform our education system and enhancing our skills, we have prioritised targeted international partnerships to open up opportunities for our children study abroad in specialised academic disciplines.

131. This government has offered bursaries to qualifying students to pursue studies in the fields of medicine, engineering, mineral beneficiation and agriculture in countries such as Russia, Belarus, Italy and China.
132. ***Madam Speaker; Building a healthy nation must be equally supported with adequate investment in health infrastructure!***
133. This Administration has made significant progress towards securing a long and healthy life for the citizens of Mpumalanga.
134. The budget for health infrastructure saw an increase from R312 million in 20014/15 to R1,2 billion which translates to an increase of 312% in 2017/18 financial year.
135. On the other hand, a number of flagship projects have commenced to improve the health infrastructure. The upgrading of Bethal Hospital, which is at 45%, and the construction of the new Mammethlake Hospital, which is at 86%, are on course to be completed as planned.
136. Our plan is complete and hand over both Bethal and Mmametlake hospitals by the end of 2018/19 financial year.
137. We will continue with the construction Middelburg and Mapulaneng hospitals to respond to the demand of quality health care. These facilities will improve accessibility to health care services, thereby improving life expectancy in the Province.
138. As Mpumalanga we are already seeing improvements in this area. The average Provincial Life expectancy at birth in 2016 was 56.9 for males and 60.1 for females, and this has improved to 60 and 65 respectively.
139. Let us not fool ourselves into thinking that these world-class facilities are the end in themselves. We must be mindful that their mere existence will be meaningless in the absence of a strong and functional health system, that is led by qualified medical personnel.
140. This health infrastructure must exist to support our fight against chronic diseases like HIV and AIDS, malaria, maternal and neo-maternal deaths; and any outbreak of communicable diseases like listeriosis.
141. This Administration identified 116 of the 287 Primary Health Care facilities for support to reach the status of ideal clinic. This will relieve the burden on our hospitals.
142. Attention will be paid to the general maintenance of all our healthcare facilities, including the maintenance of medical equipment. Where necessary, we will procure life-saving equipment to ensure that people have access to quality health care.
143. Part of improvements in the sector, has been the introduction of the Central Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution system. This will ensure that patients do not have to stand in queues in clinics and hospitals for treatment. These patients can now fetch their medication at the contracted pharmacies close to their homes.

144. The aim is to increase the number of stable chronic patients registered on this system from 135 179 to 220 000. Further to this, 33 School Health Service Teams will be established throughout the Province to assist in improving education levels in schools by reducing barriers to learning.
- 145. Madam Speaker; The provision for physical health and wellbeing of people is just one aspect of the role that needs to be played by a caring and enabling government.**
146. The other aspect is welfare through social protection. This has led to a need to improve and enhance social infrastructure across all spheres including social development.
147. To this end, 6 new offices were built within various communities whilst upgrades and renovations were carried out at a number of community centres across the Province.
148. Our footprint and support to vulnerable sectors of our society such as women, youth, children, older persons and people with disabilities continue to carry a strong developmental mandate.
149. We have been steadfast in addressing the plight of young people from all angles in changing their lives for the better. Over and above skills development initiatives and job creation, we have ensured that our young people affected by the scourge of substance abuse are also prioritised so that they can lead a drug-free life.
150. To this end we have completed the construction of two state of the art government-run in-patient treatment centres in Victor Khanye and Mbombela local municipalities. These are catering for both girls and boys, and will ensure that their successful rehabilitation.
151. This is a new dawn for our youth, and we say to them, we remain committed in waging a winnable war against drug addiction.
152. Over and above this, we are creating empowering social environments so that the youth from diverse backgrounds can access world-class learning facilities and technology.
153. The library infrastructure rolled out during the term of this Administration, provides the connections and facilities that bring people and communities in contact with information hubs.
154. In the past four years, we have completed 11 libraries in order to inculcate the development of a culture that promotes wider reading, motivated readers and learners for life.
- 155. Madam Speaker; our economic infrastructure is connecting communities and is also facilitating ease of doing business!**
156. We have made significant progress towards the provision of an efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network.
157. Since 2009, the Province has completed 22 strategic transport infrastructure projects and also given particular attention to preserving and maintaining our road assets.
158. We have provided bus shelters to the people of Simotlasi, Tekwane and Ntokozweni. They

now wait for transport in comfort, free from the hardships of scorching sun or rainy days.

159. The children of Ronaldsey and Donkerhoek can now cross rivers and go to school without losing a day of learning.
160. In Mbombela municipality, communities of Manzini and Mgcobaneni that were previously separated from each other due to lack of proper infrastructure, are now connected by a world-class bridge.
161. The breadwinners from these communities can now go to work without losing a day's work due to torrential rains.
162. The investment of R7.1 billion on transport infrastructure has ensured that the Mpumalanga has a strong economy, which creates new jobs and enhances support for social change.
163. This Administration has made efforts to improve mobility and access for people who, in the past, were placed very far from their areas of work and Central Business Districts as a result of Apartheid spatial planning.
164. To address this, we implemented the Municipal Support programme and the Integrated Rural Mobility and Access programme. Through these programmes, we delivered 12 Integrated Rural Mobility and Access projects and re-gravelled 1 861km of gravel roads.
165. In areas where these projects were implemented, school children and nursing mothers are now able to access schools and health facilities without risking their lives by crossing dangerous rivers and streams.
166. Our infrastructure delivery programme continues to be the epitome of building capacity of local communities to participate in the construction and maintenance of their own infrastructure.
167. The progress we have made on infrastructure investment, has laid solid foundation toward transforming this largely rural province into a modern state. We have made Mpumalanga a permanent construction site and in the process, created opportunities for further growth.
168. On behalf of this Administration, I invite the private sector to get involved and partner with this government.
169. Later this year, this Administration will host a public-private partnership symposium. This will showcase the progress we have made in the roll-out of our infrastructure delivery programme. It will also seek to mobilise private sector capital as partners with government in the Mpumalanga Infrastructure Fund.
170. ***Madam Speaker; Infrastructure development is not only about construction, buildings and roads, but it is a programme for economic empowerment!***
171. The roll-out of the Social Enterprise Development Model that we launched in July 2017 is beginning to show positive results.

172. This empowerment programme focuses on building capacities of local enterprises or manufacturers to supply construction materials to government's infrastructure projects, be it roads, houses, hospitals or schools.
173. We are continuing with measures to perfect this programme by formalising guidelines for community involvement across government projects in the Province.
174. In December 2017, we undertook an assessment of various SMMEs to determine their state of development and the kind of support required to ensure their optimum participation in this built programme.
175. We are pleased to announce that South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) has committed itself to work with this government in assisting local SMMEs and Cooperatives in attaining manufacturing certification for various materials they produce.
176. The Department of Economic Development and Tourism and MEGA are providing the necessary support to SMMEs and Cooperatives that have gone through the assessment process.
177. Our position is that government must be the driver for socio-economic transformation. Government spending would be meaningless if it does not elevate the economic status and well-being of the people to whom it serves.
178. As Government of the African National Congress, we are going to take full advantage of the procurement reforms that came into effect in April 2017 to help us achieve significant local content.
179. That is why we are directing government spending in social infrastructure to stimulate manufacturing in the construction materials industry. We must develop relevant capabilities in our communities and strengthen the spirit of social entrepreneurship.
180. During the course of 2017, we launched the Mpumalanga Enterprise Development Fund in partnership with Standard Bank, which is aimed at providing support to the growth and competitiveness of our small businesses.
181. An amount of R300 million over the next three years, has been set aside for the financing of SMMEs that have off take agreements with the provincial government.
182. Let us roll our sleeves and get down to work.
183. Each house that is built within our communities must be built with materials we have manufactured within our localities.
184. This will lead to more job opportunities for our people and improvement of their well-being.
185. Through this model, a child who did not have a uniform for school because his or her parents could not afford, will in future be able through hard work, to afford such. Another child can now be sent to university to acquire education, thereby ending the cycle of poverty.

186. ***Madam Speaker; the Freedom Charter states that: “All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security”.***
187. As government of the African National Congress, we have a duty and an obligation to realise this objective.
188. We must at all times seek to transform human settlements into national space economies and transform apartheid spatial planning in line with the National Development Plan.
189. Over the last few years, we have ensured that the provision of houses alongside basic services was the focal point of collaborative work between the provincial government and municipalities. In the main, we had to address the problem of access to water and sanitation infrastructure in many parts of the Province.
190. Despite fiscal constraints along the way, overall progress made in eradicating informal settlements and improving access to basic services is commendable.
191. Over the last three years, a total of 27 655 housing units have been delivered. A further 27 295 sites have been serviced.
192. We have prioritised the provision of Rental Programmes. To this end, we have delivered 273 units since 2014 and a further 880 Rental Units are to be delivered this year.
193. Whilst we acknowledge the adverse effects of apartheid policies on property ownership, the restoration of people’s dignity remains our priority.
194. Over this term, we have delivered 25 071 title deeds as part of guaranteeing security of land tenure rights. We will accelerate the issuing of the remaining 54 000 title deeds in Ehlanzeni and Nkangala District Municipalities before the end of this term.
195. For many poor households, Mpumalanga is better today than yesterday.
196. The numbers speak for themselves. According to the latest available data, we are seeing a positive cumulative impact of our investment in changing the life of citizens for the better.
- 88% of households have access to piped water
 - 96.9% of households have access to toilet facilities
 - 90.7% of households are connected to electricity
 - the number of informal dwellings is the 4th lowest among the 9 provinces at 10.9%
197. Despite these strides that we have made, the journey ahead is still long. We can never rest until all the far flung areas of our Province have access to basic services.
198. In the new year, we will continue to pay particular attention to failing sanitation infrastructure leading to sewer spillages in some municipalities.
199. To the people of Govan Mbeki, Thaba Chweu, Victor Khanye, Pixley Ka Seme, Emalahleni and Bushbuckridge municipalities, your plight has been heard.
200. Over the remainder of this term, we will prioritise key projects that will address sewer spillages and respond to bulk water infrastructure and sanitation needs. Provincial and

local government resources will be directed towards dealing with the areas of concern that you have raised.

201. For us to meet these targets, we need improve the capacity of our municipalities to ensure that they are focused on addressing service delivery needs.
202. Despite gradual improvements in the delivery of basic services, we are still concerned that our local government system continues to show areas of weakness. In the main, the financial sustainability and capacity of our municipalities to deliver key basic services need our urgent attention as this has a direct impact on ordinary people and the business community.
203. As a consequence, we are providing direct support so that we enhance financial management systems, modernise revenue collection systems, and ensure that municipalities meet their financial obligations, including Eskom account obligations.
- 204. Madam Speaker, the quality of life in our human settlements must also be measured with levels of safety and security for the most vulnerable sectors of our society – women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities.**
205. As a Province, we are pleased to see a gradual decline in many categories of crime. But we are no near where we should be in ensuring that our people feel safe in areas where they live.
206. Women and children are the most affected by crime and violence, especially rape and murder. The growing incidents of violent crimes reported over the last few weeks require our collective efforts to stem the tide.
207. We welcome the work done by police in building the capacity of the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Units (FCS). These will focus solely on cases that deal with these affected groups.
208. As we move forward, communities must work together to assist law enforcement agencies to root out criminal elements within our settlements. There is a need for community mobilization and awareness around identified crime hotspots. We must roll out a sustained campaign against crimes targeted at women and children.
209. Honourable Speaker and members, as we enter the last mile of this Administration, we must continue to prioritise measures that strengthen the overall capacity of the state machinery to drive a pro-poor development agenda. Our ability to meet our targets and commitments to the people depends on a capable administration.
210. Over the past few years, we have made progress in building a solid provincial administration upon which the new leadership will improve to ensure that the lives of the people of Mpumalanga are changed for the better.
211. Our macro-planning, policy coordination, and budget management capacities have matured to ensure that the Province is on a sustainable and sound fiscal path.

212. In the context of constrained fiscal resources, we have prudently managed public finances to shift expenditure away from consumption to infrastructure investment.
213. We have implemented targeted programmes to reduce wastages and duplications across government programmes so that we maximise the impact of limited resources at our disposal. We have enhanced our financial management systems and ensured that audit outcomes progressively improve across many of our departments.
214. We have dealt with corrupt and fraudulent activities aimed at siphoning state resources through fraudulent claims against government.
215. Our centralized litigation and case management system has uncovered and defended fraudulent legal claims by unscrupulous lawyers and agents. This has resulted in R717 million reduction in contingency liability across government. This is out of a R3,5 billion potential liability exposure as a result of fraudulent claims against the state.
216. We will fight this with our last cent.
217. Honourable speaker and members,
More work needs to be done to improve infrastructure planning to ensure that project implementation does not delay due to poor planning. We have also been concerned about the delays in the payment of contractors and service providers on time.
218. To demonstrate our commitment to the payment of contractors on time, we have directed the administration to reduce the time for the payment of contractors from 30 to 10 days.
219. The Central Invoice Bureau will be established before the end of March 2018 to ensure that all infrastructure invoices are processed within the stipulated time. Later in the year, the work of Central Invoice Bureau will extend to all other invoices across the administration.
220. We want to ensure that we improve efficiencies to limit the negative impact of the non-payment of invoices on small businesses.
221. No business must shut down because government has not paid for services rendered.
222. More importantly, our commitment to building a responsive and caring government must always be at the top of our agenda.
223. We have a responsibility to ensure that we enforce performance and accountability for results from our public representatives and government officials.
224. The people of Mpumalanga deserve better.

Conclusion

225. Madame Speaker and Members;

This year, we are entering the final year of the term of this Fifth Administration. Those who will be coming after us will inherit a strong government to take Mpumalanga forward. We believe that we managed to build on the successes of those that came before us.

226. Where we have not done well, fresh energy will be required to finish the race.
227. Madam Speaker, part of the renewal and new dawn must manifest through the emergence of a new cohort of leadership cadres to take the struggles of our people forward.
228. There is no doubt that this Province has capable men and women that will rise to leadership demands of the present time.
229. Our youth leadership should also step forward to take tough leadership responsibilities with humility and respect to consolidate and build on our work, and take the Province to greater heights.
230. We have done our best in advancing human development. We have contributed to improving the lives of our people especially in providing decent shelter and improved access to basic services like water and sanitation which have impacted positively on the lives of many.
231. We have delivered world-class social infrastructure ensuring that our children learn under conducive environments. We have brought dignity and better life to the children of farm dwellers.
232. We initiated partnerships with business and the international community to benefit the Province for years to come.
233. Madam Speaker;
President Ramaphosa has called us into action. Let us join hands and build a nation of our dreams. We must play an active role in public affairs so that we build a state that is able to drive change.
234. We must all raise our voices and put forward suggestions and proposals that contribute to making our country better.
235. Therefore, as ordinary people, as civil society, as religious leaders, as business and all other sectors of society, let us join hands in building our country as a corrupt-free, people-centred democratic state.
236. We must appreciate the courage of those that have always raised red flags against government failures. These are the people that continued to hold government accountable.
237. To those who are elected into office like me, and those who are employed as civil servants, let us care for our people and not take them for granted.
238. Let us join hands in building a winning Mpumalanga and South Africa.
239. May God bless Mpumalanga! Heal her land and her people!
240. I thank you!