

2023

STATE OF THE PROVINCE
ADDRESS

- ✓ Job creation and youth empowerment initiatives;
- ✓ Infrastructure development;
- ✓ Local government support and advancement of service delivery measures;
- ✓ Improvement of Health and Educational facilities;
- ✓ Strengthening of accountable state;
- ✓ Just Transition.



Ms. Refilwe Maria Mtshweni-Tsipane
Premier of Mpumalanga

MPUMALANGA LEGISLATURE

24 FEBRUARY 2023



#MPSOPA2023

**THE STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, MRS REFILWE MTSHWENI-TSIPANE,
VENUE : PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE, MBOMBELA,
DATE : 24 FEBRUARY, 2023**

Madame Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature, Honourable Masilela;

Members of the Executive Council;

Members of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature;

**Minister of Justice, Constitutional Development and Correctional Services,
Mr. Ronald Lamola;**

Minister in the Presidency, Mr Mondli Gungubele;

Deputy Minister of Defence and Military veterans, Mr Thabang Makwetla;

Deputy Minister of Water Affairs and Sanitation, Mr David Mahlobo;

Members of Parliament here present;

**Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces and other NCOP
Members;**

**Executive Mayors, Speakers and Councillors of our Municipalities present
today;**

**Chairperson of the Mpumalanga House of Traditional Leaders, Kgoshi
Lameck Mokoena, and other Traditional Leaders here present;**

Judge President Legodi of the Mpumalanga Division of the High Court, and other Members of the Judiciary in attendance;

The SAPS Provincial Commissioner of Mpumalanga Province, Lieutenant General Semakaleng Manamela;

The Director-General and other Accounting Officers of our Provincial Government;

Municipal Managers of our Municipalities with us today;

Chairpersons and CEOs of our State-owned Companies;

The second Deputy Secretary General, Cde Maropeng Ramokgopa;

The Provincial leadership of the Governing African National Congress led by the Provincial Secretary, Cde Muzi Chirwa;

Leaders of the Opposition Parties;

The Executive Vice President of SASOL, Ms. Charlotte Mokoena and other Business Leaders in attendance;

Representatives of Organised Labour, Faith-based and other Civil Society Organisations;

Distinguished Guests;

Compatriots, Comrades and Friends;

Ladies and gentlemen;

The beautiful people of Mpumalanga Province;

Ngiyanibingelela, Ke a le tamisha, Lotshani, Avuxeni, Dumelanga, Sanibonani.

THE CONTEXT-BUILDING NEW PATHWAYS

1. I am honoured to be delivering this, our penultimate State of the Mpumalanga Province Address for the current, Sixth Administration.
2. We join the entire nation in mourning the loss of lives and extend our deepest condolences to all the families who have been affected by the recent floods.
3. We also wish a speedy recovery to those injured as a result of these adverse weather patterns.
4. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, the philosopher Karl Marx writes, and I quote, "**Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the living**".
5. So, what are these circumstances – which are not of our making - that we are directly encountering today, as we set out to effect positive change in the lives of the people of our Province?
6. We operate in an environment characterised by various stages of loadshedding; water shortages, a rapidly rising cost of living, a high rate of unemployment, especially amongst the youth, with increasing numbers of people that are dependent on social grants; water, roads and other social and economic infrastructure backlogs; and many concerns in communities over safety, crime and poor governance.
7. It is not all doom and gloom though, as the President of the Republic, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, has demonstrated in his State of the Nation Address.

LOADSHEDDING AND THE JUST TRANSITION

8. It was in his SONA that the President outlined several measures to cushion, especially the most vulnerable, from the ravages of an adverse economic environment. On loadshedding, for instance, the President declared a national state of disaster and announced his intention to appoint a Minister of Electricity in the Presidency. Working in tandem with the **National Electricity Crisis Committee**, the Minister is expected to focus specifically and exclusively on resolving the prevailing electricity crisis.
9. During the debate on the SONA, we indicated our readiness and willingness to spare no effort in ensuring that the work of the Minister of electricity is supported. After all, with 80% of the power stations located in our province, we are the undisputed home of the national grid.
10. We call upon those in our communities that live close to these power stations and the associated coal mines, to remain vigilant in defence of these national assets. They should play their part in exposing acts of corruption and sabotage, aimed at creating frequent breakdown of power-generating units.
11. It is common cause that you cannot talk loadshedding and electricity shortages, and not talk about the **Just Energy Transition**. In this regard, during the debate on the SONA, we talked at length on how our province is heavily invested in the letter and spirit of the Just Transition, in particular in ensuring that the commitment to **leave no one behind** is made real.
12. We fully subscribe to the recently published Just Transition Framework, which states that **"a just transition aims to achieve a quality of life for all South Africans in the context of increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change, fostering climate resilience, and reaching net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050 in line with the best available science. A just transition contributes to the goals of decent**

work for all, social inclusion, and the eradication of poverty. A just transition puts people at the centre of decision making, especially those most impacted, the poor, women, people with disabilities, and the youth – empowering and equipping them for new opportunities of the future ...”. In the circumstances, the Just Energy Transition can best be viewed as a subset of the broader, holistic, economy- and society-wide approach to the Just Transition; one that looks specifically at the energy sector.

13. Again, in our contribution to the debate on the SONA, we went into detail on how our Province is going to be impacted by our nation’s commitment to achieve a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy by 2050. We made reference to the fact that twelve of the country’s power stations are located here, as are the coal mines.

14. Those who work in these coal mines, those who work in these power stations, those who provide goods and services to these coal mines and power stations, those who depend on the workers and service providers to these mines ... the young man ***selling cooldrinks and cigarettes to the workers, the elderly lady preparing and selling mala mogodu, inhloko and chesanyama at the entrance to the mine or power station*** ... those are our people, and those are the people we are most concerned about ... that they should not be left behind. The Transition will not be Just if it fails to ensure that these constituencies of ours are not left behind.

15. In partnership with ***the Presidential Climate Commission, the Climate Investment Fund and the World Bank***, we are exploring plans to;

- Diversify our local economies to reduce dependency on coal;
- Re-skilling and upskilling the most vulnerable in the labour force; and
- Supporting small businesses and co-operatives in local communities to access emerging opportunities in the green economy sector.

16. Notwithstanding the fact that minerals and energy are national competencies, I should confirm that we have accepted the directive of our governing African National Congress, to take an active and direct interest in these sectors. Our interest includes that old mines should be rehabilitated, and in the process the vast tracts of land be gainfully utilized in the new industries that conform with the Just Transition principles – such as manufacturing, agriculture and assembly of solar voltaic panels, wind turbines, batteries and others.

17. We would also like to see our people participate and derive benefit from small scale, surface mining and other beneficiation opportunities.

THE MANDATE, ROADMAP AND PATHWAYS

18. The mandate, roadmap and pathways we have pursued in the 4 years of this administration, is derived from the seven priorities of our 2019 elections manifesto. These bold and ambitious goals constitute what we have dedicated our resources and energies to. They are;

- ***Economic transformation and job creation;***
- ***Education, skills and health;***
- ***Consolidating the social wage through reliable and quality basic services;***
- ***Spatial integration, human settlements and local government;***
- ***Social cohesion and safe communities;***
- ***A capable, ethical and developmental state; and***
- ***A better Africa and a better world.***

19. Our work will be informed by the nine point programme of action that is comprised of the following pillars;

- Loadshedding and the Energy Crisis;
- Just (Energy) Transition;
- A Jobs War Room;
- Infrastructure Showcasing;
- A Response Mechanism for Disasters;
- DDM and the State of Local Government;
- SOE Performance Review and Repositioning;
- Crime, Criminality and Immigration; and
- Operation Clean Audit (OPCA)

A BETTER AFRICA AND A BETTER WORLD

20. On the international front, and especially where BRICS is concerned, 2023 is a very significant year. South Africa will be hosting the BRICS Summit and President Ramaphosa, will be assuming the chairpersonship of BRICS.

21. Five priorities have been identified for the period of South Africa's chairpersonship of BRICS, and as a Province, we find relevance in the following three:

- Developing a partnership towards an equitable just transition;
- Transforming education and skills development; and
- Unlocking opportunities through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

22. Following a request we made last year, I am pleased to announce that our Province will be hosting the ***BRICS Roadshow*** during the month of April. The Roadshow is a build-up event towards the actual BRICS Summit. It will serve as a platform for both government and the private sector to showcase

Mpumalanga's tourism, trade and investment offerings to the BRICS member states and partners.

The Journey

23. Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, four years ago we were given a solid mandate as the ANC, to govern. It is a mandate that we accepted with humility, and throughout the entire period, it has never escaped us that we have been made custodians of the wishes and aspirations of our people. We dare not fail nor betray this solemn vow.

24. After all, we are carriers of promises that were made by our forebears' when they met at Kliptown, Soweto in 1955 and adopted *umhlahlandlela*, a policy document which they named **The Freedom Charter**, guaranteeing South Africans of all races their inalienable rights to govern and be governed through the will of the majority. The inalienable rights that we all enjoy, which have been codified in our constitution, have their basis in that Freedom Charter.

25. We are unwavering in our commitment to open up opportunities and give support to all people of this province, especially those that were and are still excluded from the mainstream economy.

26. We are under no illusion that more than three hundred years of oppression and institutionalised discrimination can be overcome overnight. But, we are not about to throw our hands in the air in surrender, nor will we be offering excuses as to why certain things cannot be done at the desired pace. After all, it is not excuses

that our people are looking for; it is food, energy, jobs, water and opportunities.

27. We are as resolute today as our forebears were in Kliptown in 1955, to build a fair and just society.

GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL ECONOMIC CONTEXT

28. Despite a global economy that is facing headwinds and is predicted by the International Monetary Fund that a third of it will enter recession this year, there has been glimmers of hope that our economy is steadily recovering.

29. However, this recovery is not without glitches and speed bumps which could have a negative impact in the coming months ahead.

30. Our country's economy declined by 0.7% during the second quarter of 2022 sparking fears that it could descend into recession due to the extensive load shedding and the hike of interest rates that have had an adverse effect.

31. However, we have seen the economy bouncing back beyond the pre-Covid era during the third and fourth quarter of 2022 to reach its highest peak ever.

32. The economy expanded by 1.6 % in the three months leading to September 2022.

33. Eight out of ten sectors expanded in the third quarter, with the agricultural sector at 19.2% making the biggest contribution to growth.

34. However, there are several developments and risks also in the global environment, which is not supportive to our domestic economic growth and recovery.
35. Mpumalanga's estimated growth for 2023, will be very much in line with the South African growth expectations.
36. The Reserve Bank's forecast for the national economy for 2024 is a very low growth rate of 0.7% and 1.0% in 2025. This is unfortunately not a good story and far below the economic growth targets we have set as Government.
37. Despite this challenging economic growth picture, the Mpumalanga labour market actually performed well between January and September 2022, especially from a job creation point of view.
38. The net job gains for our province was 146 320 in this period, which is a very good achievement under these circumstances.
39. 6 of the 10 employment industries recorded high job gains, but there's a concern about the job losses in the primary sector (agriculture and mining), as well as private households (domestic workers).
40. According to the latest **Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS)** of Statistics South Africa, the provincial unemployment rate, in terms of the strict definition, improved from 38.6% in Q1 2022 to 35.1% in Q3 2022.
41. This was however, still at a relatively high level. The provincial unemployment rate of youth of working age (15-34 years) of 46.5% is a concern and especially the female youth unemployment rate of 51.8%.

42. The provincial graduate unemployment rate of 16% is also a huge concern. This highlights again, the critical importance of the employability of and job creation for our young people and also women in the province.

43. Madam Speaker and Members, our socio-economic transformation response to the economic challenges, is based on:

- Investing in social and economic infrastructure;
- Strengthen partnerships with the private sector and community based organizations to create opportunities for those who are still left behind; and
- Supporting the informal sector and small businesses.

OUR YOUTH, OUR FUTURE

44. It was Oliver Tambo, the erstwhile President of Africa's oldest liberation movement, the ANC, that once remarked that ***"a country, a movement, a person that does not value youth and children does not deserve its future"***.

45. That is why in our province, we place the development and welfare of our youth at the centre of the work of government. Below I will elaborate on some of the initiatives directed at the plight and affirmation of our youth.

46. Madam Speaker and Members, the ***Premier's Youth Development Fund*** is now one of our highly successful flagship programmes. Since its inception, the project has empowered ***97 youth-owned businesses across the province and funding to the tune of R140 million was allocated to them.***

47. In the current financial year, 36 companies have been approved for funding, with a total amount of **R92.3 million disbursed thus far**. The ownership of these companies is comprised of 60 males, 45 females and 5 youth with disabilities.
48. These youth-owned enterprises are within sectors that are inclusive of mining, agriculture, manufacturing, transport and logistics.
49. Beneficiaries of the Fund are spread all over the province, with the effect that every single one of the 17 local municipalities is home to at least one beneficiary.
50. Just so that we put faces to these success stories, allow me, Madame Speaker, to showcase some of the companies and individuals involved.
51. ***Mo Africa Restaurant***, in Mkhondo Local Municipality in Gert Sibande District, owned by ***Mr. Treasure Thabethe***, is a business that started selling food from under the trees, then moved to a suitable venue through funding availed by the Premier's Youth Development Fund. The business has created **9 permanent jobs**.
52. As an economic spin-off, ***Mo Africa*** restaurant has managed to create an additional business opportunity by collaborating with a young woman-owned company that operates a boutique Spa within the premises of ***Mo Africa Restaurant***. The boutique Spa has created an **additional 3 jobs** for the youth of Mkhondo.
53. With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I will request Mr Thabethe to stand so that we may acknowledge him. Thank you.
54. ***Maradebe Pty (Ltd)*** in Victor Khanye Local Municipality in Nkangala District, is a mining company owned by ***Ms Mbali Poolo***, specialising in yellow plant

hire. Ms Poolo is also operating the Grader which was funded by the Premier's Youth Development Fund.

55. The company managed to create **5 additional permanent jobs**. The socio-economic status of these young people has changed for the better through the support of the Premier's Youth Development Fund.

56. Madam Speaker, I have invited Ms Mbali Poolo to be my guest today. May I request her to rise so that we can acknowledge her presence.

57. The province has recently advertised the 2023 Premier's Youth Development Fund. The call for applications will close on the 17th of March 2023. In order to increase the participation of youth with disabilities and youth in rural areas, roadshows were conducted in all our rural municipalities.

58. We intend to set aside at least 30% of funding for applications coming from the designated applicants, particularly people with disabilities from the rural areas.

59. Apart from funding their enterprises, we also provide pre and post investment support.

60. Through the ***Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)*** we continue to create the much-needed work and training opportunities for the poor and unemployed. In the current financial year, EPWP has created **24 205** work opportunities through the use of labour-intensive methods. The majority of beneficiaries in this regard are youth, women and people with disabilities.

61. Our Fortune 40 programme, which has been running for a period of more than five years, has reached maturity and is now producing young commercial farmers.

62. **Mr Treasure Sibaya and Siyabonga Nyembe** from Daggakraal in Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme municipality in Gert Sibande District, operate a piggery project which they started in July 2021 with 21 Sows and 1 Boar supplied by our Department of Agriculture.

63. To date these young men have already sold 194 weaners and growers to the abattoir in Ermelo.

64. May I request Mr Treasure Sibaya & Mr Siyabonga Nyembe to both stand for us to acknowledge them.

65. Another success story is that of the Barberton Vegetable farm which is operated from the Barberton Environmental Centre. This farm is the most successful vegetable farm in Ehlanzeni district under the fortune 40 programme. It produces cabbages, lettuce, Spinach, Beetroot, Green Pepper and Sweet Potatoes, and supplies the local Spar, Pick N Pay and the general public with fresh produce.

66. I have invited one of the young leaders in this farm ***Ms Nontokozi Shongwe*** as one of my guests today, may I request her to rise so that we acknowledge her.

67. Madam Speaker, ***Lebogang Mashego*** of Vlaaklagte no1, in Thembisile Hani local municipality in Nkangala District, has opened her own 26 000 capacity poultry layer farm for egg production. As we speak, Madam Speaker, she supplies Shoprite stores in KwaMhlanga and Kwaggafontein. She has created 22 jobs in the area.

68. I am honoured by her attendance today and may she rise so that we may recognise her.

69. Madam Speaker, the performance of our youth in the schooling sector continues to record great improvement, with our 2022 matric class recording

a 3,2% increase in our overall pass rate from 73,6% to 76,8%. Of significance is the notable increase in the number of bachelor passes from 31,5% in 2021 to 33,5% in 2022.

70. This was attributable to various interventions we have embarked upon to ensure that teaching and learning proceeds without hinderances.

71. To this end, we wish to commend all role players within our education system for their tireless efforts in ensuring that our children's academic endeavours bear fruit.

72. Madam Speaker, with all the intended interventions, we expect to create at-least 90 000 youth job opportunities within the next 15 months.

73. These opportunities will stem from 21 empowerment programmes across sector departments in the Provincial Government.

74. In an effort to increase skills to both employed and unemployed community members in the province, we have partnered with various SETAs in diverse trades, such as diesel mechanical engineering, construction, supply chain management, ICT, Infrastructure, local government and hospitality.

75. We are calling upon all stakeholders, including the private sector, to join us in massifying employment opportunities in the province. Working together with Municipalities, we will create strategic partnerships to ensure that our people get the employment opportunities that they desperately need.

76. Madam Speaker, we reiterate our commitment, as the Mpumalanga Provincial Government, to use public procurement to promote economic participation in order to transform ownership of the means of production. In this regard, 30% of the provincial procurement spend shall be set aside for enterprises owned by women, youth and people with disabilities

ECONOMIC SECTOR, INVESTMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

77. Madam Speaker and members, as we continue with our efforts to fight the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality, we are always reminded of the words of our liberation icon uTata Nelson Mandela when he said ***"After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb."***

78. ***The Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (MERRP)***, is an important vehicle in this regard.

79. The roll out of infrastructure programmes, ***Green Economy initiatives, industrialisation through localisation, employment stimulus initiatives, tourism and agriculture/agro-processing***, are just some of the priority areas of the MERRP.

80. The implementation of these economic projects shall be treated as top priorities.

81. We will also continue working closely with our social partners in all sectors of the economy to change the economic landscape of our province.

82. It is not an easy task, but it is possible. ***We must and we will*** change the lives of the 4.8 million citizens of Mpumalanga, especially the most vulnerable people within our communities.

83. We need to change the narrative on youth participation through building their capacities as emerging leaders, disseminating data on the positive impacts of youth participation, mainstreaming civic engagement teaching in schools, and creating a ***Youth Advisory Committee*** .

84. As government at all three spheres and working with our social partners we will establish a ***JOBS WAR ROOM*** in the province.
85. The objective of this war room will be to identify every job opportunity within and outside government and place young people into these job opportunities.
86. We will target our graduates with technical and scientific skills for job placements whilst on the other end supporting those who are not in employment, not in education and not in Training.
87. Young people in the various disciplines under the scarce skills category, who are beneficiaries of the Provincial government bursary scheme will be placed in public service to gain work place experience.
88. As government, we will continue to support and promote youth-led and youth-focused organizations through seed funding and capacity development, including informal youth networks and volunteer groups.

GROWING TOURISM INDUSTRY

89. Madam Speaker and Members, the tourism industry in the province is one of the most strategic sectors that continue to show growth potential and can create jobs and contribute to economic growth.
90. Despite the challenges that were brought about by the Covid 19 pandemic, the war in Europe and the lacklustre global economic growth which has led to the decline in disposable income, foreign and domestic tourists have been slowly coming back to visit our beautiful province.

91. Our Province is endowed with tourist attractions that encompass scenic beauty, wildlife and diverse heritage. We are in the process of augmenting our natural attractions with artificial and adventurous sites.
92. One of the key sites whose construction will commence in March this year is the God's Window Skywalk which is a PPP project aimed at attracting between 45 000 to 60 000 tourists along the panorama tourism route. The project is planned to be completed in March 2025.
93. Another PPP project is the development of a cable car linking ***Drie-rondavels*** view site and ***Swadini Dam***.
94. In the ***Barberton Makhonjwa Mountain World Heritage Site***, we will be building an education centre, geo-sites and geo-trails in order to make the site appealing to academic tourists interested in anthropology.
95. Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, I am pleased to report to you that significant progress has been made in the development of a new hotel and conference facility in Middelburg that I pronounced during last year's SOPA.
96. I am happy to report that construction has started and we anticipate completion will be reached in July this year. This is a 5 star hotel which will have over 200 beds , top star restaurants, a convention centre and a beauty spa.
97. The project has over 20 local contractors that are already benefiting. In addition, over 100 new job opportunities for local residents have been created.

98. Madam Speaker, I pronounced last year that as part of reigniting the tourism sector, Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport would receive direct flights from Germany. I am delighted to confirm that the first Eurowings flight landed on the 16th of November 2022.

99. To date, we have received a total of 182 direct tourists as a result of this partnership. We are planning to collaborate with both Eurowings and South African Tourism in a city-to-city tour in Europe to attract more tourists to our Province.

100. Through direct marketing, we will continue to establish relations with other airlines from within Africa and across the world to place our Mpumalanga as a tourism destination of choice.

101. I am happy to announce that we have partnered with the SABC to host the prestigious metro fm awards , for the next 3 years, as part of our efforts to bolster tourism within the Province and heighten our focus on the arts and creative industry.

102. All these developments are aimed at increasing tourist arrivals both domestically and internationally.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE

103. Madam Speaker, in the 2022/23 financial year, we have set aside **R 4.294 Billion** to continue with our strategic infrastructure development initiatives to unlock investment and growth.

104. We have completed a total number of 102 projects which include both building and transport infrastructure. These projects include the;

- 88 Educational facilities;
 - 3 Health facilities;
 - 2 Social development facilities; and
 - 1 Library
105. Four ***new schools in fast growing towns***, that is Magogeni Primary School, Mpumelelo Primary School, New Klarinet Primary School and Mbatini Primary School, were completed. We are anticipating to complete the following new and replacement schools before June this year:
- Msholozu progress at 96%,
 - New Doornkop at 87%,
 - Yinhle Lentfo at 82%,
 - Mkhondo Boarding School at 85%, and
 - Mpisi- Jamela at 79%.
106. With regards to Long-tom Secondary and Rockdale Extension 24, designs are being finalized and it is envisaged that construction will commence in 2023/24.
107. There are some projects that experienced delays due to community disruptions, poor contractor performance and construction materials shortages.
108. The planning and design process for the Linah Malatjie Tertiary Hospital in Emalahleni has progressed, with authorisation in terms of Environmental Impact Studies granted, town planning processes completed, preliminary and concept designs completed, and detailed design being on schedule with construction set to commence during the 2023/24 financial year.
109. Madam Speaker, great strides are being made by various road authorities to ensure long-term sustainability of the road network and the **following provincial road projects** have been completed;

- Special maintenance on Road P170/1 from Graskop to Matibidi;
- Upgrading of Road D3930 from Acornhoek to Hluvukani;
- Upgrading of rural Road D281 from Volksrust to Daggakraal;
- Rehabilitation of Road P95/1 between Verena Crossing to Gauteng Boundary;
- Repair of a sink-hole on Road P9/1 Graskop; and
- Emergency Repairs on Road D1043 (R65) between Graskop and Hazyview.

110. The ***Tekwane South Bridge*** on the D2296, made news headlines in February 2021 after it had collapsed due to the heavy rainfall as a result of Tropical Storm Eloise. I am happy to report that we have completed repairs and the bridge is operational.

111. The Karino Interchange project on the N4 which provides a link between Mbombela, Kanyamazane, N4 and access to the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport has also been completed and is operational.

112. In addition to the Karino interchange, SANRAL is implementing various projects in Mpumalanga, such as the Moloto Road that inter-connects Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, the R23 national road in Lekwa District Municipality and the R33 national road which crosses through Mkhondo and Msukaligwa Local Municipalities amongst others.

113. In an effort to improve the Provincial road network, we have prioritised several strategic roads. One of the roads that has been prioritised is, road P216/1 from Secunda to Embalenhle, which we will be constructing in the 2023/2024 financial year.

114. We will also build a bridge from Emalahleni City centre leading to Pine Ridge, Clarinet, Siyanqoba and Verena in order to improve safety and ease traffic flow

in that area. Planning and design hereon will commence in the 2023/2024 financial year.

115. As a province, we would like to extend a word of appreciation to the mining companies with operations around Thaba Chweu Local Municipality, for partnering with the Province on the rehabilitation of road P171, which extends from the Dullstroom to Rossenekaal Junctions. These mining companies, led by Anglo American, will contribute 60% of the construction value of the project.
116. Designs for the project have been completed and construction will start in the 2023/24 financial year. As a Province we are grateful to these mining companies for playing a role in resolving problems affecting our road network and we wish that other stakeholders can emulate this example.
117. We are continuing with the upgrading, rehabilitation and major maintenance of the following roads that serve the major tourism nodes (nouds) in the province;
 - Resealing of the road from Graskop to God's Window and light rehabilitation of Road P57/2 from Graskop to Kornwyn Pass, in Thaba Chweu;
 - The upgrading of Road D4407 and sections of Road D4409 and D4416 between Hluvukani /Wilverdiend and Timbavati, in Bushbuckridge ; and
 - Upgrading and rehabilitation of Road D481, Ekulindeni in Chief Albert Luthuli;

EDUCATION SKILLS AND HEALTH

EDUCATION; THE GREAT ENGINE OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

118. Madam Speaker and Members, there is a direct correlation between the quality of an education system and the economic development of a country. It has been proven beyond any doubt that there is no other better investment that has better returns than investing in education.
119. A highly skilled and educated workforce is the backbone of every community and the future of every economy. Remarking about the importance of education our liberation icon Nelson Mandela once said "***Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation***".
120. We are determined to ensure that those who enter the basic education system at Grade RR proceed and complete at Grade 12. We are seeing improvement in the number of learners who start grade R and complete matric rising from 59.7 % to 61.2%.
121. We would like to see that figure rising above 80% in five years' time.
122. To this end, we can confirm that the migration of the early childhood development ECD function from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Education has been completed.
123. We will continue to invest on ECD programmes which have proven to negate against class repetition and the drop-out rates.

124. As part of our targeted focus on ECDs we will use ***The Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme*** to encourage Grade 12 matriculants to consider pursuing Grade R teaching and be awarded some bursaries.
125. We have capacitated 508 foundation phase teachers on teaching reading languages and 602 teachers on primary school reading programme.
126. As part of mitigating the current electricity challenges, fifty primary schools were provided with ***Content Access Point, which provides academic*** content to devices even when there is little to no internet access or electricity.
127. The Province has made great strides in terms of delivering its mandate of providing quality basic education during the past 25 years, with the last 5 years seeing accelerated growth in a number of social indicators.
128. The ***Stats SA General Household Survey (2020)*** findings indicate that access to education has improved significantly, with a percentage of 7- to 15-year-olds attending education institutions in Mpumalanga Province sitting at 99%.
129. Part of this is attributable to the effectiveness of our learner support packages which include, the scholar transport programme, the national nutrition programme, no-fee schools, and school hygiene packages.
130. A total of 1370 students furthered their studies in different universities within the country supported through the ***Ephraim Mogale Bursary Scheme***.
131. The Department continued to support 221 students (bursars) who are furthering their higher education studies at various level in the Federal Republic of Russia.

132. Following my recent visit to the Russian Federation towards the end of last year, we are evaluating and reviewing this programme in order to eliminate deficiencies within the system.
133. Let me take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to all our social partners who have for many years provided bursaries to our learners.
134. ***Siyabonga, Siyabulela, Siyathokoza, Yikhensile, Re a leboha, Rolivhuwa.***

SOCIAL PROTECTION

HEALTH & SOCIAL WELFARE

135. Madam Speaker and members, a healthy nation becomes a productive nation. It is therefore imperative that the socio-economic growth and development of our province is underpinned by the health and the wellbeing of our citizens.
136. We are committing ourselves to continue providing our citizens with affordable, efficient and effective health care across the province.
137. We have seen improvements in a number of health indicators in our province, whilst others will need more dedicated attention before we see remarkable progress.
138. We have appointed a significant number of specialists, super specialists and professionals, an area that has always been under scrutiny.
139. We have entered into a collaboration with Wits University with the aim of developing tertiary services , training and developing health professionals whilst strengthening health care services in general.

140. The medical oncology services initiated in Rob Ferreira hospital and Witbank hospitals , has managed to attend to 7847 patients and this has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of patients referred to Gauteng whilst also reducing overtime expenditure and long waiting times.
141. 111 patients requiring radiation services are still referred to Steve Biko Academic hospital, however in the 2023/2024 financial year, the Province will establish radiation oncology services by constructing a bunker at Rob Ferreira hospital.
142. We have restructured and consolidated 5 TB hospitals. Each and every hospital will have a TB ward with Witbank TB hospital forming part of the new Witbank Tertiary complex.
143. We will ensure that the average medicine stock availability within our facilities moves from 82% to 95% in all our healthcare facilities and above.
144. The provincial HIV/AIDS 90-90-90 status that I pronounced on last year stands at , 75% of those who are positive who know their status, 95,4% who are on Anti Retro-viral Treatment (ART) and 90% of people who are on ART whose viral load is suppressed.
145. Madam Speaker and members, our government will intensify its efforts of assisting those who have fallen on hard times and find themselves abusing substances and alcohol.
146. The majority of whom are young people who come from poor families and cannot afford the services of private rehabilitation centres.
147. During the year under review the government assisted more than 2000 of those in need of help through our two centres, Swartfontein and Nkangala Treatment Centre.

148. Madam Speaker, the low economic growth in our Province and relatively high unemployment rate , impact negatively on poverty and inequality. According to the Stats SA report, our provincial poverty rate is around 50%.

149. In an endeavour to address this , we have decided to add a new dimension in our fight against hunger and poverty. We will be providing household equipment to the poor for self-sustenance.

150. We will also continue to provide food parcels to households in need.

151. Let me take this opportunity and thank families that have agreed to become foster parents to children who would be loitering on the streets. Thus far, our foster care programme is working well.

SERVICE DELIVERY

INTEGRATED HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

152. Madam Speaker and members, having a roof above one's head is a right enshrined in the Constitution.

153. During the year under review, we were able to service 5 938 stands under the Informal Settlements Programme against a planned target of 2 934 sites.

154. We also delivered 2 453 housing units through the various programmes; including the Rural Housing Programme as well as the Military Veteran Housing Programme.

155. With respect to the Finance Linked Individual Subsidy and government individual subsidies, we managed to deliver 1 179 housing units.

156. We have built 7 Child care facilities and a community Hall; 7 Social amenities facilities are almost complete and 2 of them have reached practical finalization stage.
157. We issued out 1 616 Title Deeds to rightful owners.
158. One of the challenges we face is that most houses requiring title deeds are in rural areas, un-proclaimed townships and in state owned land which causes delays with the registration and issuing of title deeds.
159. Other key basic services intervention to be implemented in partnership with the municipalities include;
- The servicing of 600 sites at KaMhlushwa have been completed to date with more planned for delivery in the 4th quarter and in the 2023/24 financial year;
 - The servicing of 220 sites at Rondebosch; is progressing well and these are planned for completion by March 2023 together with the bulk infrastructure.
 - Construction of Empumelweni extensions 7 & 9 Internal Sewers in Emalahleni has been completed as the Municipality is dealing with the outflow sewers.
 - In Emakhazeni, we will commence with the construction of 900 top structures in the 2023/2024 financial year as serviced land is readily available; and
 - Through INEP, we have secured R110 Million for the electrification of Siyanqoba in Emalahleni which will commence in the 2023/2024 financial year.

BASIC SERVICE DELIVERY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHALLENGES

160. Madam Speaker and members, refuse removal remains a challenge for most of our municipalities.
161. In order to address this problem, we are pleased to announce that the MIG framework has been revised to allow Municipalities to procure solid waste removal trucks through MIG allocation to improve access to refuse removal.
162. Significant progress has been made in addressing water challenges in the Thembisile Hani and Dr JS Moroka Local Municipalities through the Loskop dam water project. The project has since been divided into 5 work packages, which include reservoirs, bulk pipelines, and water treatments plants.
163. The Regional bulk water infrastructure project in Gert Sibande would also see the communities such as in Lothar, Chrissiesmeer, Warburton, Balfour to quote just a few, also getting consistent and reliable bulk water supply.
164. In response to many of our bulk water infrastructure challenges and distribution thereof, a Provincial Water Master Plan has already been developed and shall soon be entering its final stages for approval as a Blueprint to guide water infrastructure development in the Province.
165. Madam Speaker, I am happy to announce that the long awaited Mountain View Regional Dam to augment water supply within the Ehlanzeni District is now a reality. The Department of Water and Sanitation has commenced with the feasibility and environmental impact assessment studies for the dam. Indications are that this project will be completed by 2027/2028 financial year.

166. All these projects shall be implemented through the District Development Model approach.
167. In responding to the challenge of unfunded catalytic projects and programmes in the DDM One Plans, we approved the Public Private Growth Initiative (PPGI) Operational Framework/Model in the pilot impact zone of Ehlanzeni District.
168. The model will be extended to Gert-Sibande and Nkangala Districts to assist in mobilizing investors or partners on unfunded programmes.

GOVERNANCE AND STATE CAPACITY

BUILDING A CAPABLE DEVELOPMENTAL AND RESILIENT NATION

169. Madame Speaker, we are hard at work to stabilize the public service, by filling vacancies and professionalizing the workforce. Since September 2021, when the moratorium was lifted, we have filled approximately 6 000 vacancies.
170. Other than educators and nurses, who constitute about two-thirds of these appointments, other critical and scarce skills recruited include those in social work, radiology, paediatrics, orthopaedics, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology.
171. As promised last year, we have hosted a Provincial Labour Summit with organized labour within the public service. Subsequent to that, we have since been implementing the resolutions thereof. Starting in the 2023/2024 financial year, we shall be institutionalising the summit resolutions, while consulting further – to make sure that we leave no one behind.
172. As part of our vision of building a capable developmental state, we believe in a form of public servant leadership in which public officials become stewards

of the rights, values and principles enshrined in the Constitution.

173. Such leadership must be collective in nature with the obligation of senior administrators to shift their thinking toward the mobilisation and empowerment of others to create a governance system based on the fundamental values and principles of the Constitution.
174. We therefore welcome the work of the Public Service Commission, which has produced a Professionalisation Framework for a capable, ethical and professional public service. Our government is going to be an active and willing participant in the implementation of this Framework.
175. Part of building a capable developmental state includes creating and strengthening resilience within various government institutions. To this end, and in line with my announcement last year, the process for the review of our state-owned entities has started.
176. The fight against fraud and corruption will be intensified, with the training and accreditation of all ethics officers in the province. In line with the recently gazetted Framework, we are going to undertake lifestyle audits on designated members of staff.
177. On Good Governance, we continue to strive for the achievement of clean audits by all our departments and entities. The building blocks to achieving this ultimate objective are limited not only to the financial health and accounting practices of an organization. Instead, our focus is also about staffing, capacity to deliver, performance against predetermined service delivery outcomes.
178. Because the audit outcomes of many of our municipalities remain a major cause for concern, we have committed ourselves to additional support measures. These include quarterly meetings with the audit committees of all

municipalities, at which areas of improvement will be picked up and actioned early.

CONCLUSION

179. In conclusion, Madam Speaker.

180. As a province we are now standing at a crossroad, where we can either find pathways to inclusive growth and shared prosperity, where no one is left behind or as a nation we collectively descend further into the abyss of extreme poverty, unparalleled inequality and social instability.

181. We can either rise from the ashes as we have done in the past, and take our rightful place among prosperous nations of the world or join the list of many other failed states.

182. We have shown time and again that we are a resilient nation. Our desire to rebuild and find pathways that will lead to economic growth supersedes what prophets of doom and forces of darkness see as insurmountable challenges that lie ahead.

183. We are facing strong headwinds in front of us, but we are battle and combat ready.

184. The belief in our own capabilities to be agents of change than mere spectators and passive recipients, cannot be questioned.

185. I call on all our people to stand united. In our diversity we declare our commitment to hold each other's hands black and white, poor and rich, young and old, urban and rural to build, protect and defend our democracy in this magnificent province we all call home. We dare not fail.

I thank you.