

**PREMIER HON MANDLA NDLOVU 'S RESPONSE ON SOPA
DEBATE, 06th OF MARCH 2025 (MPUMALANGA
LEGISLATURE CHAMBER)**

Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature, Honourable Masina;

Deputy Speaker of the Mpumalanga Legislature, Honourable
Masango;

Honourable Members of the Executive Council;

Honourable Members of the Legislature;

Director General, Ms Skosana

All HODs

Ladies and Gentlemen

Our esteemed citizens following this session through various
Media Platforms;

Good Afternoon;

1. Hon Speaker and members, I listened attentively when members were debating State Of the Province Address. I was impressed that members were responding to the address, they were not negative but objective.

2. You can never win an argument with negative people. They only hear what suits them and listen only to respond.
3. It is against this backdrop that I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all members who were selected by their organisations to participate in the SOPA debate including those who attended the debate but were not necessary part of the list of speakers.
4. Personally, I place immense value on the debate as it assists us as government to identify areas that may need serious attention and those that we may build upon since the government has done well.
5. The debate sharpens our critical thinking and make us see things from many different perspectives and force us to respond accordingly and improve our strategies of how we selflessly serve our people.
6. Honourable Speaker since 1994 it has always been our quest to fight poverty and address inequality.
7. To achieve this work, we have committed ourselves to provide people their basic rights to shelter, food, health, electricity, education, healthcare, water and sanitation, and all aspects that promote the physical, social and emotional well-being of all in our society.
8. Last Friday's SOPA, we were able to report on progress made, challenges and what we will be doing moving forward. As we are still at the beginning of the 7th administration, we

are very clear about the challenges and the tasks ahead of us. We are always guided by the wise words of Imam Ali:

9. **“There will come a time where nothing will be hidden except the truth, and nothing will be revealed except falsehood.” We always tell no lies and claim no easy victories.**
10. Honourable members the province has made some significance improvement to what it was before 1994. Our GDP was R64 billion in 1994 and had risen to R550 billion in 2023. The very same house we are in, used to have 30 members for 30 years, today we are 51.
11. The issue of growing the economy, skills development, agriculture with an emphasis on food security and employment, infrastructure, job creation, safety and service delivery will also continue to be priorities of the ANC led government. We will always try to grow the economy.
12. Our province has the potential to create 60,000 jobs per annum, especially if we can increase our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate to 3% or more per annum. That will impact positively on job creation. It is important to focus on high labour-intensive industries in the process and that our catalytic projects are also implemented to create much-needed jobs.

13. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) of Stats SA, Mpumalanga recorded net job gains of more than 60,000 jobs in only Q3 and Q4 of 2024. Manufacturing, finance, community services, agriculture and transport, can be highlighted in this regard.
14. Industries with high potential for job creation (due to relatively high economic growth, high labour intensity, projects etc) in the next couple of years, include agriculture and hemp; Agro-processing (MIFPM for example), manufacturing (roll-out of the Mpumalanga industrial development plan), construction (infrastructure projects), the trade industry (tourism, SMMEs, including the informal sector for example) and finance (including business services).
15. I have clearly indicated that some new job opportunities can be created when we embark on the process of developing new tourism products, building a viable Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) value chain, getting the more than 100 000 subsistence farmers into the main stream of agriculture, Solar energy and farming integration, (agrivoltaics) agriculture value chains such as citrus, wood and industrial hemp, manufacturing linked with renewable energy projects and also construction and infrastructure projects with its high GDP and employment multipliers. These are only a few opportunities to mention.

16. Just a reminder Hon Members, we can only be successful to bring down the unemployment rate to at least 25% by 2029 and the youth unemployment level to a much lower level than the current 48.9% in Mpumalanga, if our young people have the right qualifications and skill in line with what is require by the labour market. The youth should after all be employable at the end of the day.

17. We are hopeful that a Provincial Government in partnership with our social partners and specifically Business, will achieve the MTDP economic targets in the next 5 years, we want to make a difference and impact in the lives of our people.

18. On the 7th March 2025 we will be networking with big businesses in the Business Connect session in Emalahleni. The aim is to promote integrated business in order to build the inclusive economy. This is a game changer that will see:

- **Mpumalanga as an Investment and Tourism destination of Choice**

- **Innovative funding for key strategic economic infrastructure Projects**
- **Industrialisation capacity through localisation, decarbonisation and economic diversification**
- **Leverage and repurpose existing and underutilized infrastructure to optimise economic growth**
- **SMMEs support as a catalyst for economic growth**
- **Skills development through upscaling of business incubation and agricultural training**
- **Economic transformation that addresses the duality of all economic sectors and support black owned enterprises**
- **Strategic land for economic growth through land acquisition and expropriation**

19. Over and above this, the Province through DEDT has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Takealot Group. This ground-breaking partnership aims to transform the economic landscape of township communities by providing a platform for local entrepreneurs.

- Takealot has a series of initiatives under the Township Economy Initiative, aimed at fostering economic development and job creation in the province.

- This partnership with Takealot is more than just an economic collaboration but it is a commitment which will create jobs through a series of programs that will be launched across the province.

20. Hon Speaker and Members, the government through DEDT, has incubation programmes such as Furniture Technology (FURNTECH) and Mpumalanga Stainless-steel Initiative (MSI) that are geared towards supporting young people and women to enter the manufacturing sector:

- The Mpumalanga Stainless Initiative (MSI) was established to benefit stainless steel and assist and support SMMEs with business skills within the stainless steel and steel industry.
- The MSI Incubator, on the other hand, is situated within the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality but assists SMMEs from across the Province, especially those who have a connection or desire to be part of the stainless steel industry.

21. Currently, the youth, women and other SMMEs are undergoing training in business skills and technical skills in the stainless-steel industry to obtain contracts from the industry to start their own manufacturing operations or get employment with some ongoing concerns. As far as MSI is concerned, 58 SMMEs were supported, of which 20 of 58 SMME Companies are owned and operated by women.

22. The 2025 SOPA Medium Term Developmental Plan(MTDP) 2024 – 2029. In my detailed speech the MTDP key priorities of the 7th Administration were listed.

Just as a reminder, I will repeat them:

- Driving Inclusive Economic Growth
- Reducing Poverty and Tackling the High Cost of Living
- Building a Capable, Ethical and Developmental State

23. The matter of dilapidated schools that you raised has been addressed in my SOPA. We even gave the total number of schools that need urgent attention. These are the 53 schools.

24. Besides these, the site has been confirmed in Emalahleni Local Municipality for the school of the disabled learners. The inception report has been completed and is currently at the concept development stage. The designs are

anticipated to be completed by June 2025 with procurement to take place in the 2nd quarter of the 2025/26 financial year.

25. Hon Speaker, there is no school in our Province currently that is ONLY operating on pit latrines, the 3 schools which were only relying on pit toilets have been addressed. However, there are still 49 schools which have a combination of both waterborne flushing toilets and pit latrines on site due to that:

- Some of these schools (23) have a challenge of insufficient number of adequate toilets due to increased learner numbers.
- Some of these schools (13) have adequate waterborne ablution facilities however they are experiencing a challenge of water supply and the boreholes provided are not enough. As such, when these schools do not have water, they use

the existing pit latrines as their temporary recourse.

26. We have quantified 13 schools with Pit Latrines that need to be demolished without providing any additional facilities.

The Department is proceeding with the programme to eradicate and replace unsafe toilets.

27. Hon Speaker, the Nkosi City Development remains one of the DDM Catalytic projects, but its implementation is not without challenges. The issue of bulk infrastructure for water and sanitation is the main challenge amongst others preventing progress to the implementation of this project.

28. There has been an attempt which has been made through the Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) for bulk infrastructure funding. In this regard, the Department of COGHSTA assisted with the preliminary designs or technical feasibility report for water and sanitation.

29. However, the National Treasury recommended the project to be considered for project preparation support to ensure a comprehensive submission of the application during the Window period of 2025.

30. Hon Cathy Dlamini you are correct about the need to prioritize skills development because without a skilled workforce, we cannot achieve the kind of economic growth that we have envisaged.

31. The focus should also be in the missing middle, that is, those who are not at school, not in any skills training and are not working. They make up the biggest cohort of unemployed youth. They are desperate and are in need of our attention.

32. Hon Mashiyane, you raised a valid point on the matter of the Lily mine disaster. No one among us does not know that the government is currently engaging all stakeholders that are involved in this issue. We all know that lives were lost and we are at pains that the bodies of our beloved children of the province are still in the bowels of the earth.

33. Let me remind you once more that on the 5th of May 2024, the Minister of the Department of Minerals and Petroleum Resources, Hon Gwede Mantashe called for a meeting that was attended by stakeholders representing Vantage Goldfields, the Lomshiyo Traditional Council, the business rescue practitioner, organised labour and government leaders, in a session that sought to inculcate cooperation between all stakeholders involved in the efforts to reopen the Lily and Barbrook gold mines.

34. The DMRE permitted Vantage Goldfields to reopen the mines under Section 11 of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act.
35. The company is expected to sink a decline or shaft to gain access to the underground workings to retrieve the container and the three missing employees at Lily mine.
36. Hon Makhabane, Hon Manzini, and Hon Thomo you are correct about consolidating the gains that we have achieved and our quest for social transformation that will bring about the desired change in society. What we are engaging in now is to involve motive forces in the changes that will improve, not only their perceptions of what needs to be done but the lived reality of their cultural, social, and economic well-being.
37. Hon Mashilo is correct to say that basic service delivery is a cornerstone of all our efforts in improving the lives of our people for the better. We have agreed with all municipalities in the province that in all their integrated development plans, the provision of water must receive the highest priority. All water and sanitation projects that are currently being implemented have been prioritized and are on acceleration plans.
38. On the issue of the Moloto rail corridor, which was put on hold due to budget constraints, the Province has already started to re-engage with the minister of the National Department of Transport. The project has been registered

with the Infrastructure South Africa (ISA) to assist with business plans and possible funding solutions. A new feasibility study is required to determine the current commuter needs and requirements to implement the project.

39. It is very important to understand that government alone cannot respond to all the needs of society. We have therefore engaged the private sector to also make a contribution in the provision of basic services. We are pleased that indeed companies are responding and we have evidence of projects that are a collaboration between government and the private sector.

40. On trade and investment, we will be strengthening our relations with provinces in African countries that have similar economies to ours. We will make full use of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement.

41. The people of Mpumalanga expect us to represent their interest in this very important house. We have to be realist and honest if we share the vision of making the Place of the Rising Sun, Mpumalanga better. Striving to make Mpumalanga better should unite all of us as it is the expectation of the people that brought us here.

42. We are in this 7th admiration of Mpumalanga, and the Legislature with 51 members for the first time after 30 years. It is because of the growth of the population of the province that led to that determination. We are here because of the outcome of the 2024 National General Elections.

43. The people shall govern. The EFF and DA know better, their volume of thinking that one day they will take over from the ANC is becoming softer, it is no longer roaring.
44. The new party in the legislature, that has a mere nine (9) seats, the MK party dreams to be a government in waiting, just like Mondlana in Mozambique, they will wait until the crack of the doom. They are a flat spare tyre.
45. No government can justly claim authority unless it's based on the will of all the people.
46. Bafo, simanxebanxeba ngenxa yenu nama Guptas.
47. The ANC-led government is busy, the people can see that we are busy fixing the mess that you created for the people of South Africa
48. Ndza Khensa