



Province of the
Northern Cape
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS

By Premier, Dr Zamani Saul

TUESDAY, 02 MARCH 2021



The Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature;

Members of the Executive Council;

Members of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces;

Members of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature; the leader of the official opposition Andrew Louw, Aubrey Baartman (EFF) and Danie Coetzee (FF+)

Acting Judge President of the Northern Cape, Judge Violet Phatshoane;

Heads of State Security Services;

Chairperson of the South African Local Government Association Northern Cape (SALGA NC);

Mayors and Councillors;

Our Traditional Leaders;

Veterans of our Liberation Struggle;

Heads of State Institutions supporting our Constitutional Democracy;

The Director General and Heads of Department;

Acting Provincial Police Commissioner, General Henriëtte de Waal

Secretary of the ANC and opposition parties;

Leaders of the Alliance;

Government Officials;

Captains of Industry;

Distinguished Guests;

Fellow citizens of the Northern Cape;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good evening

Madam Speaker, from the onset let me greet and appreciate everyone present here tonight at this State of the Province Address. I wish to express my deep and sincere appreciation to this House and all Honourable Members for the support I enjoyed since my appointment as Premier of the Province. I assumed office as a novice with no experience in an executive position. Everyone, including opposition MPLs, were prepared to share their hard-earned experiences with me and I thank you for that, I have no words to express my indebtedness to you. In my role as Premier I came across this wise counsel **“ACCEPT COMPLIMENTS AND CRITICISMS, FOR IT TAKES BOTH SUN AND RAIN FOR A FLOWER GROW”**.

Madam Speaker and honourable members, allow me with profound humility and respect, to dedicate the words of His Grace the Right Reverend Bishop BE Lekganyane (2007 Eastern Cape Mass Prayer Meeting) to all my Honourable colleagues in this august house **“GOOD LEADERSHIP CARRIES THE ABILITY TO FIND FROM ONE ANOTHER, A SEED OF SUCCESS. A TRUE LEADER IS GENUINE AND MATURE AND FOCUS ON PROBLEMS OF THE NATION”**

Madam Speaker, many more people would have loved to be part of these engagements today, but are unable to do so due to Covid 19. We however, thank all those that joined us virtually. Taking keen interest in the development and progress of the Province is an admirable trait of the diverse people of our province. Our principal task is to modernise our province, grow its economy and make it successful for everyone. To achieve this, we need the people of our province to unite in their diversity and to work together.

Madam Speaker, this year 2021, had dramatic beginnings characterised by the second wave of the novel Coronavirus sweeping across the World. It is a year that carries a historical significance, in that it marks thirty one years since the unbanning of liberation movements in our country and the release of our founding President, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela from prison. This year, also marks the centenary of the founding of the South African Communist Party.

Madam Speaker, the period that we are living in is one that tests our faith. We have come so far as a people because we have withstood the on-going Covid 19 pandemic challenges that has left countless graves throughout the province.

In these trying times let no sense of loss and hopelessness be bigger than our faith, let us not be unhinged, like the doubting Thomas's who would be tempted to question the possibility of achieving our collective vision to build, "A Modern, Growing and Successful Province".

When we gathered for a similar occasion on the 27th of February last year, none of us could have imagined that we were standing at the dawn of an imminent global attack on humanity by an invisible and ruthless pandemic, destined to destroy lives and our wellbeing.

Madam Speaker, the Province recorded our first case of COVID-19, on the 25th of March, twenty days after the first case in the country, in the Phokwane municipal area. The first death in the Northern Cape was reported in the same Municipality on the 11th of May 2020.

Ladies and gentlemen, between the first case recorded in 2020 and the 1st of March 2021, 34 039 people were infected by the COVID-19 virus, with a recovery rate of 91%. It was not until July 2020 that the number of reported cases began to surge, which was the beginning of our first wave.

The second wave in the Province started around the second week in December 2020. By the beginning of February 2021, we had a case load of 32 060.

Madam Speaker, to date, 686 of our people succumbed to the virus. At this point, I must extend our deep and sincere condolences to all the families that have lost loved ones due to COVID-19. I want to wish everyone who has been infected by the virus a speedy recovery.

Madam Speaker, in our Province our death rate translates to a little over 18 deaths for every 1 000 people who were infected with the virus. This is much lower than the national death rate of just over 31 deaths per 1 000.

This suggests that our investment as a province of about R530 million, to strengthen the response capacity of the healthcare system, is bearing fruit.

Provincial Government together with our partners and stakeholders, prepared in excess of 3 300 beds, including intensive care and high care capability, with a huge investment in personnel, equipment and vehicles. This ensured that the public health care has the necessary capacity to respond effectively to COVID-19.

During this financial year, we appointed more than 424 clinical professionals, ranging from medical officers, pharmacists, nurses and allied health professionals in all districts, at an annual cost of R197 million.

Madam Speaker, let me pause here to appreciate and acknowledge the Cuban government who seconded 11 Cuban Medical Brigade personnel, comprising 7 medical doctors, 2 health technologists, an epidemiologist and a biostatistician, to enhance our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful for their act of solidarity.

Madam Speaker, during December we launched 65 emergency ambulances, 10 non-emergency patient transport vehicles and 55 clinical outreach bakkies; to strengthen the delivery of healthcare to communities in the Province. The total cost of these vehicles was R75 million.

We have also invested heavily in additional medical equipment to combat the pandemic. This investment is made up of 35 ventilators, 225 Constant Positive Airways Pressure (CPAP) machines, 2 268 infusion pumps, 16 blood gas analysers, and 107 automatic defibrillators. The cost of this investment is R120 million.

I also want to recognise and thank all our stakeholders – the NGOs, Independent Power Producers and our private sector in general that continue to support our fight against the pandemic. A special word of gratitude to the mining sector in, that made a contribution in excess of R100 million to help us wage war against COVID-19.

Madam Speaker, the first phase of vaccination has started; targeting frontline workers both in the public and the private sector. Our target is to ultimately vaccinate 67 per cent of the population, or just under 900 000 people in the Province, in order to achieve population or herd immunity.

I also recognise that some of our people are vaccine hesitant and others cannot be given the vaccine due to health vulnerabilities. No one will be forced to take the

vaccine; this will remain a personal choice. For those of us who are eligible, vaccination remains the best defence against many life-threatening infections, including COVID-19.

Madam Speaker, whilst we have commenced with the vaccine rollout. I want to emphasise that we must continue to adhere to social and non-pharmaceutical interventions to stop the resurgence and transmission of COVID-19. These non-pharmaceutical interventions include:

- The correct wearing of face masks,
- Regular hand washing with soap and water or the use of a sanitizer
- Physical distancing of two metres from each other
- Avoiding crowded places and super spreader events Ensuring adequate ventilation when indoors

I also call on everyone to always be on the lookout for the symptoms of COVID-19 and to quickly quarantine if you show symptoms, get tested, and if necessary isolate for the required period of time.

The devastating second wave was as a result of care-free and negligent social conduct by some amongst us, with enormous negative consequences for the people of our country and province.

Madam Speaker and honourable members, we are here today because of the collaborative efforts across political party lines. I want to thank all political parties for their efforts to mobilise our communities to comply with COVID-19 protocols. Poverty and hunger have found in COVID-19 a suitable companion for deepened structural deprivation, which has worsened the conditions of many of our people.

We wish to celebrate the outpouring social and community solidarity from individuals and organisations, which have strengthened the response capacity of government and ensured that poor families survived the dual effect of COVID-19 and gender based violence.

It is because we have held one another's hands that we can look back and acknowledge the fact that we withstood the challenges of the time with resilience and courage.

As Government we commend business and civil society for partnering with us in the fight against COVID-19. The people themselves have been our ground troops using all available arsenal to push the virus back.

Ladies and gentlemen, we also lower our banner for our most advanced detachment, the frontline workers, who are now operating for almost twelve months at the frontline of the battle against COVID-19, without any rest or retreat.

This detachment is constituted by our various health professionals, teachers, Emergency Services, public transport operators, police and Correctional service personnel, retail workers, security personnel and many others who tirelessly execute their duties.

Madam Speaker, amongst the 683 Covid 19 related fatalities in the province, we have lost many of our frontline workers; 24 staff members from the Department of Health, 28 from Department of Education and 17 from SAPS. Our message to these gallant fighters is that WE SHALL GO ON TO THE END, WE SHALL FIGHT THIS PANDEMIC, WE SHALL FIGHT WITH GROWING CONFIDENCE AND GROWING STRENGTH. WE WILL FIGHT THIS PANDEMIC IN OUR STREETS, IN OUR HOUSES, IN OUR WORKPLACES, IN OUR SCHOOLS THE FIGHT WILL GO ON, and victory is certain...

Madam Speaker, allow me to dedicate this poem "The Victorious Dead" written Jai Karkhanis to these fallen gallant fighters:

"Victory is in the fight that was fought.

For they that wage the good war, and fight the good fight, all is victory.

Defeat is beyond question. Life is not of consequence.

The act alone reigns supreme.

For victory chooses not the last man to stand, but the last to fall in defiance."

The selfless contribution of our frontline workers in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic will always reign supreme in our work, in our minds, in our hearts and our souls.

Madam Speaker, the virus caught this Sixth administration when it was just under a year in office. It derailed our plans and disrupted our programmes as we had to embark on pandemic planning. This pandemic planning reversed some of the gains that we had made. As the province we are now relatively in control of the pandemic, which reflected in the following trends:

- Daily infections are on the decrease,
- Fatalities are on the decrease,
- Decline in hospitalization of COVID-19 patients, and
- Recovery rate is above 90% and rising.

We are not out of the woods yet and must therefore not lower our guard, as there are real fears of a third surge. Scientists note that this surge could be more contagious taking into cognisance the prevalence of the new variant. We must be extra-vigilant and not reverse the gains that we have made together with the people of the Province.

Madam Speaker, the President of the Republic Mr Cyril Ramaphosa has laid bare the “economic catastrophe of enormous proportions” facing South Africa and its people due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Madam Speaker, in our response to the socio-economic impact of Covid 19 we had to embark on an extensive social relief programme to cushion the poor. The social relief interventions initially targeted 47, 700 households across the province. However, due to the dire need and the determination of government and our partners, through social compacting more than 63 000 households were reached during the first phase.

Madam Speaker, the South African Social Security Agency procured an additional 10 496 food parcels to the value of just above R 12 million. To date, a total of 63 128 food parcels for the purpose of COVID-19 social relief of distress to the value of about R 56 million were secured and distributed in the Northern Cape.

An additional amount of R33 million as part of the second phase food security plan, benefitting 116 630 people, in areas where there are no departmentally funded Food NPO's has been rolled out.

This is in addition to the re-opening of 121 food providing NPO's funded by Government as well as a total of 143 nutrition centres which operated across all Districts in the Province.

Furthermore, **Madam Speaker**, we wish to thank the Solidarity Fund for the donation of 10 000 food vouchers which will be benefitting an additional 10,000 households.

Madam Speaker; in respect of the National School Nutrition Programme, during the lockdown last year, 6 855 households and almost 270 000 learners benefitted, which constitutes 85% of the total learners in our public schools.

These interventions are part of a comprehensive approach to stretch the social security net to encompass all the poor, disabled and vulnerable from the ravages of unemployment, inequality and poverty.

This includes the thousands of recipients of the Special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant and the provision of social grants benefitting about 479 704 people in the Northern Cape.

Relief packages offered at a national level resulted in thirty-nine (39) enterprises from the Northern Cape being successful in their applications, leading to three hundred and fifty-nine (359) jobs being saved.

In the Province, a total of 38 spaza shops were successful in securing funding as part of relief interventions.

Madam Speaker, the United Nations Development programme and SALGA also provided funding to 25 SMME's across the province for the manufacturing of masks.

Through funding received from the national tourism COVID-19 relief incentive schemes, 124 tourism enterprises received support in business survival via a collective amount of R6.2 million received from the Tourism Relief Fund. In addition, 105 freelance tourist guides were financially supported to the amount of R472 500 to sustain themselves during lockdown.

Madam Speaker, this challenging period has given us the opportunity to give practical expression to the social compact, partnership and bonds that government has fostered with civil society and business. This emerging unity of purpose is central to our growth and development.

It has been the goal of this administration to forge such unity. This will enable rapid advancement in meeting the goals of the Medium Term Strategic Framework and the National Development Plan 2030.

Madam Speaker, in order to address water shortages in specifically informal settlements, a partnership was formed between various government departments and various water boards to ensure that all citizens of the province have access to water. This resulted in the delivery of 869 water tanks and 80 water tankers to all Districts across the Province.

Madam Speaker, we embarked on a massive campaign of deep cleaning and fumigating our schools and provided the necessary infrastructure for the reopening of schools. We opened the schools during these challenging times without any incidences. We are grateful that the parents entrusted us with their children, displaying their trust in our Government.

Madam Speaker, this has been a difficult period for people in the creative industry. To this end, the National Arts Council provided R1.5 million funding to artists in the province who lost income due to COVID-19. Provincially an amount of R4 million was also availed to the Relief Funding Programme for Artists under Covid-19 conditions.

Madam Speaker, due to the lockdown, all economic sectors were negatively affected. As a result, the South African economy recorded a negative growth rate of 51% in the second quarter of 2020 and Global insight projections estimates that the province recorded a negative 54.1% growth rate for the same period. However, with the easing of economic restrictions, the Provincial economy rebounded sharply. As computed by IHS Markit, the Provincial economy recorded an estimated impressive growth of 78.1% for the third quarter of 2020.

Honourable Members, mining and manufacturing had significant growth rates in the second quarter, leading the provincial economy's resurgence, with a 263% and

211% respectively. This bodes well for the Northern Cape Industrialisation ambitions; as the resurgence of the provincial mining and manufacturing could be the catalyst to achieve the industrialisation feat. The Mining sector continues to be a sunrise industry in our Province.

The trade and transport sector followed closely, with strong growth rates, reflecting 134% and 80% respectively, in the quarter under review. The agricultural sector continued on a positive growth trajectory, having been the only sector to record a positive growth rate at the height of the pandemic.

Madam Speaker, the government services sector is however estimated to have a slower growth in comparison to the other sectors; growing at 9% during the third quarter of 2020.

Madam Speaker, the impact of the lockdown restrictions led to a total of 80 500 jobs being lost in the Northern Cape during the second quarter of 2020 (Stats SA). The sectors that shed most jobs were Agriculture, Construction, Trade and private households. However, the Province recorded a recovery of 52 000 jobs in the third and fourth quarters of 2020. Government services and the financial sector led the job recovery.

Although the province is making progress in increasing the number of those employed, the provincial unemployment rate stood at 28, 7% at the end of the fourth quarter of 2020; showing an increase of 3, 8% from the 25.1% recorded in the second quarter. Of grave concern, is the persistent increase in the discouraged work-seekers cohort, which increased by over 28 000 in comparison to the second quarter of 2020.

Unemployment amongst young people stands at 44%. These difficult socio-economic conditions increased the expectations people have on government at a time when the government does not have the fiscal capacity to adequately respond.

We therefore wish to thank the National Government for the extension of the COVID-19 social relief grant until the end of March this year. Almost half of the population of the province are grant recipients, so we cannot underestimate the impact of the extension of this grant.

Madam Speaker, in the previous financial year we committed to close with a positive bank balance at the end of 2021 but little did we know that we will experience a pandemic which would require the redirection of resources towards the department of Health to contain the spread of COVID-19. The pandemic had a negative effect on our plans. Notwithstanding the impact that COVID-19 had, we are projecting to close with an improved bank balance, namely the reduced bank overdraft when compared to the two previous financial years.

Madam Speaker, let me remind this House that the Sixth Administration inherited debt amounting to almost a R 1 billion. I can report today that in just over a year in office we have managed to reduce that debt to R 434 million.

Madam Speaker, due to the non-implementation of the 2018 wage agreement by Cabinet, an amount of R702 million had to be surrendered to National Treasury. This weakened our financial position in the Province, which led to an undesirable moratorium and freezing of all vacant funded posts. Without this intervention, this Provincial Government would now have been in a very precarious financial position that could have threatened payment of salaries to more than 30 000 public servants in the province.

Madam Speaker, the disastrous impact of the pandemic on the economy, was experienced across the world and was declared the worst ever. Being a responsible government and a government that places its people at the core of its planning and interventions, the National Government developed an Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan. This Plan was tabled in Parliament on 15 October 2020.

A provincial Economic Reconstruction and Recovery plan which mirrors the national plan has been developed. The plan aims to resuscitate the provincial economy and recover the jobs that were lost during the lockdown. The Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan identifies interventions within the short, medium and long term that will be implemented by government and its partners. The plan is premised on four pillars namely:

- Massive Infrastructure rollout
- Expedite expansion of electricity generation

- Employment stimulus to create employment, sustain livelihoods and social reproduction
- Drive for industrial growth, putting manufacturing, localisation and beneficiation at the core of the programme.

The Provincial Economic Reconstruction and Recovery plan will be funded through the following sources:

- Presidential Employment stimulus - R281, 1 million
- Provincial stimulus R124 million
- Commitments from mines through their Social Labour Plans R83,8 million and
- IPP Economic Development Commitments R117,3m

Madam Speaker, from the provincial stimulus the following interventions are prioritised, namely Improvement of road infrastructure, Boegoebaai port development, Agriculture business rescue plan and Enterprise Development in partnership with the National Empowerment Fund. These interventions will benefit amongst others youth and women.

Madam Speaker, infrastructure development is at the centre of economic growth and development.

Madam Speaker, we can report that a draft feasibility study has been developed on the establishment of the provincial government owned Construction Company. Linked to the establishment of the Provincial Construction company is the work for the remodelling of the Department of Roads and Public Works. The remodelling is meant to put the planning and implementation of all infrastructure projects under one department. As we work earnestly towards finalising our plans for the Provincial Construction Company, we will take into consideration some of the key resolutions of the Provincial Infrastructure Summit.

Madam Speaker, within the next two financial years, in Kuruman we will complete the Forensic Mortuary; we shall construct the Medical Waste Storage Rooms and upgrade the Tshwaragano Hospital in Batlharos. .

We will continue to renovate the Mayibuye Centre in Galeshewe. The Mayibuye centre is an important cultural precinct and a symbol of re-imagining our society as it stands on the site where apartheid had constructed one of its many oddities of social destruction, the number three (3) Beer Hall.

Madam Speaker, the recent rains and resultant floods ravaged the road and social infrastructure in the province. The John Taolo Gaetsewe District in particular was severely impacted with several communities being inaccessible due to roads being flooded and bridges washed away.

The flood damages are currently estimated at R 682 million. Our limited remaining budget has been reprioritised to attend to this disaster, which has included the urgent purchase of additional yellow fleet. The 2021/2022 budget is also being adjusted to prioritise the repair of the damaged roads and bridges.

Ladies and gentlemen, the construction of the two roads in the John Taolo Gaetsewe District in Dithakong and Laxey is currently under way. This development is undertaken in a partnership with the SIOC Development Trust.

Madam Speaker, for the current financial year, the Northern Cape is targeting 20 538 work opportunities through the EPWP programme. In order to achieve the set target, we will increase the labour intensity of the projects, shift focus from road paving projects to road maintenance projects and enhance the Sol Plaatje Cleaning project. As part of resuscitating the economy, a list of 50 priority Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIP) and 12 special projects were gazetted in July 2020 by the Minister for Infrastructure and Public Works. Amongst the gazetted projects, four are in the Northern Cape, which are:

- Two projects under SIP 19 Water and Sanitation, which includes the Vaal Gamagara and the Rehabilitation of the Vaalharts-Taung Irrigation Scheme between the Northern Cape and North West which will benefit the community of Majeng through water supply.
- SIP 21: Boegoe Bay Deep Water Port with an investment value of R13.2 billion and 2971 job opportunities during construction and
- SIP 24: Human Settlements Hull Street Social Housing project which aims to erect 600 units for 600 beneficiaries. The Social Housing Regulatory

Authority (SHRA) approved the proposal by the South African Swedish International Housing Company (SASIHC) to build 372 social housing units in the Hull Street Social Housing Project in Kimberley. The value of the Consolidated Capital Grant investment in the project by Social Housing Regulatory Authority is about R101 million. The total project cost is almost R144 million. Implementation of the project will commence this year and will be completed over a period of 20 months.

Madam Speaker, the Province has also invested R 50 million towards 190 Community Residential Units (CRU) in the Lerato Park Integrated Project. Furthermore, the province will continue to implement 16 Human Settlement projects, in 5 local municipalities namely Sol Plaatje, Dawid Kruiper, Gamagara, Emthanjeni and Hantam creating 1 010 job opportunities. Due to our improved capacity to deliver on human settlement projects; the province secured an extra R200 Million from our normal baseline budget. This amount was due to reallocation from other provinces.

Madam Speaker, the Department of Water and Sanitation will implement 46 projects to the value of R 331 million throughout the Province. The delivery of social infrastructure which includes building and renovations of Schools, Libraries, and Hospitals amongst others remains a priority of the Sixth administration. This will enable provincial government to deliver the much-needed services to the people of the province. We thus have a plan to deliver a total of 839 projects in the medium to long term in the Province.

Madam Speaker, in expediting the expansion of electricity generation, the Province will focus on capacitating our municipalities to be able to generate their own electricity. Eskom will continue to roll out their electrification projects which include implementation of 14 projects amongst others resulting in at least 2 081 connections.

The Province will also explore the establishment of the Renewable Energy Cluster to support SMME's operating in the renewable energy sector.

Madam Speaker, job creation is at the core of resuscitating the economy. As I have already stated, many communities in our province depend on social grants and many

young people are unemployed. It is thus critical for government and its partners to work together to create the much-needed jobs.

Madam speaker, it therefore pleases me to announce that through the Presidential Employment stimulus the Province managed to:

- Employ 6,842 Education Assistants
- Employ 171 new Community Health workers

Through the second phase an amount of R2. 1 million has been made available for the Artist Relief Fund, we encourage artists to apply. In this regard the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture must assist artists to meet the stipulated requirements.

Madam Speaker, honourable members, the province shall continue to implement other projects that have been prioritised in the Presidential employment stimulus; such as improvement of road infrastructure, Early Childhood development, food relief, Community health services and Municipal Cleaning and Greening Programme which will be rolled out in partnership with Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries with a total budget of R46.8 million. This will enable us to create a total of 1 560 jobs.

Madam Speaker, the Namakwa Special Economic Zone, based in the Khai-Ma Municipality is one of our most exciting investment opportunities in the province and country. This investment is supported by the commitment of Vedanta Zinc International mining expansion combined with the incorporation of a zinc smelter and sulphuric acid production facility with an array of downstream activities. This project is supported by the Presidential Infrastructure Investment Committee and for now has a committed investment of R 26 billion.

The Northern Cape has appointed a dedicated Project Management Team and experts to develop the Namakwa SEZ Designation and Licence application. The Namakwa SEZ Designation and Licence Application will be submitted by the end of March 2021. This will be one of the five critical nodes being developed from 2021 onwards in the Northern Cape Industrial Corridor. We are furthermore confident that soon to follow will be the Kathu Industrial Park, Upington Industrial Park, Boegoebaai harbour and De Aar rail cargo hub.

Madam Speaker, the Namakwa SEZ will be implemented in phases and the establishment phase is already in place. It has the potential to realise up to 6 000 direct and indirect jobs between the public and private partners in the years to come.

Madam Speaker, I wish to emphasize that there is a need for us to form partnerships with the private sector and embark on a massive investment drive to achieve the objectives of the recovery plan. To this end, the province has finalized the investment booklet which will be utilized to attract investment into the province.

Madam Speaker, this year during September, we will be launching the provincial chapter of the South African Investment One Stop shops. This will afford investors one central address to obtain information, be assisted with services from SARS, Home Affairs to business registration to mention a few.

The Northern Cape Investment One Stop Shop will be part of the National Network of Trade and Invest South Africa with direct national support. This will really open the Northern Cape for local and global investors.

Madam Speaker, I now wish to turn my attention to how far we have come as a Province to deliver on the vision that we have articulated; with particular focus on modernising the Province.

Madam Speaker, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018) reported that the public sector is challenged with a multifaceted and intricate collection of interrelated difficulties. This happens at the time of increasing expectations from the people, diminishing budgets and continuous macro (political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal and legislative) changes, which generate increased instability rather than stability. Thus, to lead service delivery improvement during the Fourth Industrial Revolution requires leaders to be agile, implement new technologies, bring about a new organisational culture and develop new innovative strategies.

Madam Speaker, the Office of the Premier, has already developed an Information Technology Shared Services Centre Proposal with the following envisaged benefits such as a single provincial IT vision, reduced operational costs, improved services to the public, business and other customers and improved overall operating efficiency amongst others.

Furthermore, an Implementation Plan has been developed for the Information Technology Shared Services Centre and a feasibility study is in its final stage of completion. Budget for the next three years has been secured and implementation is scheduled to start in quarter one of the new financial year with the appointment of five 4IR specialists.

Madam Speaker, we have made progress in advancing the modernisation of the services of government. In the past we had witnessed an untenable situation where parents had to journey from one school to the next in an effort to register their children. Some were at the worst end having to sleep in the cold just to apply for the admission of their children.

To improve access and service quality on the 14th of September 2020, we launched the Northern Cape online Admissions School System. ,

By the 9th of October 2020, a total of 56,449 applications were recorded. The actual applicant learners were 40, 964 with the majority being for grade R, Grade one (1) and Grade eight (8).

Madam Speaker, this has been our first year and the system has not been without teething challenges. We will improve, especially, as it relates to the placement of learners.

Madam Speaker, plans for training of the ten municipalities on GovChat has been hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown that followed. The ten municipalities which are utilising the GovChat platform for service delivery complaints are Magareng, Gamagara, Joe Morolong, Kamiesberg, Richtersveld, Kareeberg, Renosterberg, Siyancuma, Kai Garib, and Kgatelopele.

This web based platform as announced last year is intended to improve government's engagement with society.

Madam Speaker, the Henrietta Stockdale Nursing College Multimedia Centre sponsored by MTN was officially opened in November last year. This state of the art multimedia centre is one of the MTN Foundation's Corporate Social Investment projects. The Multimedia Centre aims to contribute to the national quality of teaching and learning by providing ICT solutions to disadvantaged schools in the country.

The implementation of a project to introduce electronic systems into the Emergency Medical Service control room is underway. The first phase to automate Emergency Medical Service call logging in the control room has been completed and went live in October 2020. Phase two involves integrating this to an ambulance dispatch system. Phase 3 will be the integration of the vehicle location and tracking system.

These developments are aimed at bringing to an end the unexplainable delays of ambulances our people are subjected to. We are pained by the existing drawbacks and therefore work hard to modernise government systems.

Madam Speaker, through this we fulfil a commitment we made to the people of the Northern Cape to modernise the Emergency Medical Services and ultimately ensure that they receive quality and dignified services. For many of our people the Emergency Medical Services are the first point of contact with the health system during their hour of need.

Madam Speaker, five (5) classrooms, one in each District, has been converted into Cyber Labs and fitted with state of the art 4IR equipment including coding, and robotics and virtual reality resources.

Moreover, in collaboration with South 32 and the Department of Mineral Resources and Split Second Science Education Foundation we established a Robotics Academy Project in John Taolo Gaetsewe district. This was a yearlong project.

The purpose of the project is to influence learners to take Mathematics as they ready themselves for further education and training phase. The project is rolled out to six schools. It was however, in many respects hindered by the forced lockdown occasion by COVID-19.

Madam Speaker, the roll out of the Free Public Internet and Wi-Fi to Community Libraries in the Province has now been completed in about 190 Community Libraries.

The delay in the roll out was due to the closure of libraries during the national lockdown and the related economic lockdown. We are confident that we will reach the set target of 200 libraries by the end of March this year and the remainder of 25 sites will be completed in the next financial year.

Madam Speaker, our task is to make the transition to 4IR possible especially to prepare our youth for a future that is already shaping our present. The national Broadband Phase Two feasibility is completed and waiting release by the Minister for the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies. The results of the feasibility study will inform the Phase Two roll-out options for our province.

Madam Speaker, the National Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development allocated the Northern Cape with drought relief funding of R35 689 000. As government we assisted farmers in all districts by availing vouchers for fodder to a total of 3 907 farmers, transportation of fodder for farmers who had no means to fetch from suppliers as well as assist farmers in the Frances Baard district who suffered as a result of veld fires between September and October last year. These farmers received 110 tonnes of fodder from the fodder bank to mention some of the interventions.

It should however be noted that the adverse cyclical weather patterns we are experiencing are but mere signals of the depleting opportunities we have to reverse the trend of rapid climate change. The effects of the drought are going to be long term despite the recent torrential rains.

Madam Speaker, as already alluded; the recent severe rainfall also resulted in massive damages to the houses and roads including bridges.

Madam Speaker, as an immediate response, the Provincial Government supported by the Gift of the Givers, SANDF and SAPS distributed food parcels and blankets to the affected communities. The Province has declared a state of disaster, which was followed by a National Disaster being declared. To this end, an amount of R 71 million has been made available for emergency housing whilst national is still busy with the total disaster report in respect of the infrastructure that has been damaged.

Madam Speaker, during my address in the last State of the Province (SOPA) Address, I indicated our commitment to training, skills development, and capacity building as key elements of a developmental state. It pleases us to announce that the Human Resource Development Strategy for the province was approved in August last year. This Strategy clearly outlines the skills requirements and other priorities geared towards improving all sectors of the economy.

Madam Speaker, in 2019 we announced that a total of R 3 million will be set aside for a vocational and artisanal training project intended for the unemployed youth of Lerato Park with a senior certificate, grade 11 and grade 10 school leaving qualification. We can announce that a total of 258 unemployed young people were enrolled in this programme of which 166 successfully completed.

Participants were offered skills programmes on the following seven (7) unit standards – National certificates in construction, Electrical, Carpentry, Building and Civil Construction Bricklaying, motor vehicle driving licenses, Hairdressing, Plastering and End User Computing.

Madam Speaker, through partnerships between SETA's and the provincial administration a total of 1519 unemployed youth benefited from skills development programme such as Internships, Learnerships, and Work Integrated Learning.

Furthermore, **Madam Speaker**, a total 2843 TVET Students benefited from the NSFAS bursaries and a further 253 students were offered financial assistance by various departments as well as the Premier's Bursary Trust Fund.

Madam Speaker, a target of 500 learning opportunities is set by the National Youth Service as part of our EPWP Skills Development programme.

Similarly there is an Artisan Apprenticeship Programme in Engineering and Construction which will be for a period of three years. This is offered through the Department of Roads and Public Works.

One hundred and twenty four (124) people enrolled of which 44 % (54) are women and 56 % (70). This speaks to our vision of breaking the glass ceiling of social inequity and ensuring that youth and women participate in all spheres of the economy.

Funding to the value of R9, 9 million has been granted by the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector and Training Authority (MERSETA) for development of Engineering trades namely, Riggers, Refrigeration, Welding and Diesel Mechanics with a total of 60 unemployed youth enrolled throughout the Province.

Madam Speaker, honourable Members, the Phakamile Mabija Apprenticeship programme commenced in 2018 with 24 young females enrolled. The learners have successfully completed and are currently busy undertaking their workplace training.

Madam Speaker, we can report about the following Skills Development programmes that are taking place namely, Road Maintenance in Prieska, Building and Civil Construction in Pampierstad, ICT System Support at NQF Level 5 in Upington and Kimberley which is a 12 months programme, a total of 89 youth of which 53 % (47) are women and 47 % (42) are male is at completion stage.

Increasingly, we will see the Department of Roads and Public Works serving as an incubator for the development of artisanal skills.

Madam Speaker, we have made steady progress in the rollout of the National Health Insurance (NHI), with immeasurable obstacles arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. National Parliament will soon conclude the urgent task of finalising the legal framework for the NHI. This will be based on the extensive consultation that has also been undertaken here in the Northern Cape.

Madam Speaker, a phased process of contracting of doctors in Pixley ka Seme, Namakwa and John Taolo Gaetsewe districts has started. In the medium to long term, the goal is to ensure that every clinic has scheduled access to services of a General Practitioner.

Madam Speaker, as per the pronouncement made, the former Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, and the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation are being consolidated into one (1) department.

This development was subsequently proclaimed in the Government Gazette on 27 March 2020. Consultation on the macro organisational structure with the Minister of Public Service and Administration is currently underway, and transversal systems changes have been submitted to National Treasury, with the intention of having the new Department fully functioning by 01 April 2021. This consolidation saved the Provincial Government millions of Rands.

Madam Speaker, placement of personnel will follow soon, as per nationally agreed upon bargaining processes. We want to assure affected employees that none of them will lose their jobs, those who will be in excess from this process will be placed.

Madam Speaker, insourcing is a policy decision of the current administration and we announced that we will commence with the insourcing of security services. A shared service model is proposed and will be located in the Department of Transport, Safety and Liaison. Our plans were delayed due to Covid 19 that resulted in a number of restrictions. Implementation is expected to be rolled out in a phased-in manner.

Madam Speaker, in terms of the transfer of Early Childhood Development (ECD) function, from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Education. A final proclamation still needs to be made, and the function shift should be completed by April 2022.

Madam Speaker, in our quest to ensure that every ten year old should be able to read for meaning, a commitment I made at the inaugural State of the Province Address (SOPA), the Department of Education has appointed 121 Reading Assistants across the province to support reading and learning. The success of our children to read for meaning at Primary School level is the foundation for ensuring success of our province.

Furthermore, 2 224 Foundation phase teachers, 647 intermediate phase teachers and 260 Primary School Management Teams were trained on methodologies associated with the teaching of reading through the Primary School Reading Programme (PSIRIP).

Madam Speaker, a few days ago the grade twelve class of 2020 finally got to close what has been a difficult chapter as the Department of Basic Education released the results of their final examination. The Province recorded 7 665 full-time candidates that passed, bringing the overall pass rate in the Province to 66%, a decrease of 10, 49% in comparison to 2019. There are two primary contributors to these poor results, first, out of about 10500 educators, 2758 (24%) applied to work from home due to age and comorbidities and secondly more than 2700 Grade 12 learners did not return to class when schools were reopened after the March hard lockdown, but showed up for the exams.

Plans are underway to improve on the weaknesses and poor performance in the 2020 National Senior Certificate Examination. The Provincial Improvement Plan will include, amongst others, programmes with a specific focus on underperforming schools, novice teachers, progressed learners, learner performance, leadership and management and most importantly, consequence management.

Madam Speaker, we want to thank the learners, parents and teachers; who through sheer determination and commitment refused to see the academic year going to waste. What the entire cohort of learners have learned in the past year is that in life, giving up is not an option.

We wish to implore parents to ensure that the learners who dropped out do not lose out, they ought to have returned to school this year; hopefully they did. The other option is home schooling, where possible.

Madam Speaker, on this occasion last year, we made a commitment for a centralisation of different bursary schemes in the Province to be an effective single centralised bursary, located within the Office of the Premier.

Ladies and gentlemen, as a matter of emphasis we will be awarding bursaries and not loans, to the beneficiaries, from Northern Cape, who are in need and who are academically deserving. The budget for bursaries has been centralized in the Office of the Premier since 1 April 2020. It is heart-warming for me to announce that the R150 million debt owed by former beneficiaries will be written off as from the 1st of April 2021.

Transitional arrangements of the bursary solution are being implemented while sorting out all the legalities pertaining to the dissolution and winding up of the operations of the Trust Fund.

Madam Speaker, the founding President of our democratic country, Rolihlahla Mandela stated "It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine; that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another." This truism remains and is much more relevant as we traverse the age of the knowledge economy.

Madam Speaker, we remain concerned about service delivery as it relates to the local sphere. This Administration will continue to support this sphere of Government to ensure that we place our people first by ensuring that the coalface of service delivery runs smoothly and effectively. There are in essence four challenges that are confronted by the municipalities in our province, these are:

- Governance challenges: political infighting, interference and instability, poor oversight and inaction.
- Service delivery challenges: failure to provide services.
- Administrative challenges: high vacancy rate especially CFOs, technical services, engineers, planners and environmental specialists, poor strategic leadership.
- Financial management challenges: poor audit outcomes, financial distress, and high levels of irregular expenditure and adoption of unfunded budgets.

Madam Speaker, a joint coordinated intervention has been initiated by the Office of the Premier, Provincial Treasury and COGHSTA to address these challenges in the context of Operation Clean Audit. A Water Services Master Plan has been submitted to DBSA to address the challenges associated with water provision in the province.

Furthermore **Madam Speaker**, a District Development Model (DDM) with District Profiles have been developed and submitted to the National Department of CoGTA. MECs in the Province have been assigned to districts as District Champions. The launch of the District Development Model was planned for the current financial year. This progress was however hindered by the impact of COVID-19. Plans are underway to finalise the One Plan, One Budget for all Districts.

Madam Speaker, as we set out to improve the performance in our municipalities; it should be noted that the payment culture dropped drastically in all our municipalities and most municipalities could not implement their credit control policies because of COVID-19. Just last year alone, our municipalities lost more than R800 million in revenue. This placed most of our municipalities in a precarious financial position, which to a large extent hampered service delivery. We encourage our community members to pay for their services to allow for improved municipal services.

Madam Speaker, in the past two years we have set up a Technical Task Team of both provincial and national governments to work on the re-demarcation of about 15 villages in the Baga Mothibi area that are currently in the North West. Thus far, the team has reported on the assets in the area and what the expectations would be from us as the Northern Cape Provincial government.

Madam Speaker, the Traditional Khoisan Leadership Act will come into operation on the 1st of April this year. The process will unfold with a Commission that will be established to receive applications for recognition of Khoisan communities and Khoisan leaders. At the conclusion of the process Khoisan Traditional leadership will be recognised in accordance with the Act.

Madam Speaker, as part of our commitment to clean governance, we commissioned our Internal Auditors to look into all Personal Protective Equipment Procurement by Provincial Government. It was found that most of the departments complied with procurement processes. Already this report reflects positivity.

The reports have been shared with the SIU for further processing. We will continue to exercise transparency and remain committed to the principles of clean governance. In light of this; we wish to welcome the opening of the Provincial SIU Office in April this year. This will go a long way in supporting us in our fight against rooting out corruption. Working together with our social partners and our law enforcement agencies, we will fight tirelessly and uncompromisingly against corruption, fraud and money laundering. We therefore thank the Minister for Justice and Correctional Services, Mr Ronald Lamola and the SIU Head Advocate Mothibi for responding swiftly and positively to our request in this regard.

Madam Speaker, we remain committed in gaining public confidence through the improvement of accountability by the Provincial Government. The Province recorded an improvement in clean audits, from two to three, and six unqualified audit opinions. This gives hope that the Province is steadfast in its commitment to good financial governance.

Ladies and gentlemen, our government is concerned about the senseless and endless cycle of violence meted out against women and children, these crimes must

receive our undivided attention, and the perpetrators must feel the weight of our justice system.

Building an inclusive society requires us to create conditions where individuals from the affected groups can thrive and prosper. Where they can dream and flourish without social, economic and political prejudices.

Madam Speaker, the year has been very difficult; we lost a number of luminaries, sons and daughters of our country who have played a role in various sectors of our country. The country lost some of its leading lights in the struggle for freedom, such as:

- Denis Goldberg
- Andrew Mlangeni
- Jonas Gwangwa
- Jackson Mthembu
- Zindzi Mandela
- Priscilla Jana
- George Bizos
- Hishaam Mohamed
- Nomvuzo Francisca Shabalala

Most painfully, death visited us a couple of times in the Northern Cape, taking with it amongst the most eminent sons and daughters, amongst these are the following personalities:

- MacCollen Jack - a brother and comrade who served our people with distinction in EXCO and various other roles,
- Nombulelo Hermans – who previously served as a Mayor and subsequently as a Member of the National Parliament
- David Molusi – who previously served as an MEC and Executive Mayor of Sol Plaatje Municipality
- Credo Muthwa – the Great Sanusi an author and oracle; who foretold many of our lived experiences
- Motlwaahatshe 'Laaities' Keupilwe – who laid a strong foundation for Setswana traditional song and dance

Madam Speaker, I want to thank my family for their unwavering support to my work, the Office of the Premier and all people that put their shoulders to the plough. There are still difficult and heavy battles ahead of us 2021 is no easy year, though there are some glimmers of hope, to catch the moment of hope we need to be smart, thrifty and pragmatic in responding to the socio-economic challenges in the province.

Building “A Modern, Growing and Successful Province”, is the pledge of this Sixth Administration. We shall do everything in our power to build a society in which knowledge and opportunity inequity shall be condemned to history; in which poverty will be a thing of the past; in which success shall be the normative defining factor of every child and resident of the Northern Cape.

I thank you

#wearamask #sanitise #besafe

