



— **NORTHERN CAPE** —

STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS

THURSDAY. 29 FEBRUARY 2024 | 08H00 |
Mittah Seperepere Convention Centre

Premier Dr. Zamani Saul

A Modern, Growing and Successful Province



Province of the
Northern Cape
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF THE NORTHERN
CAPE, DR ZAMANI SAUL**

KIMBERLEY, FRANCES BAARD DISTRICT

29 FEBRUARY 2024

Speaker of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature, Ms Newrene Klaaste,

Deputy Speaker, Mr Mangaliso Matika,

Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Sylvia Lucas

Minister for Public Service and Administration, Ms Noxolo Kieviet

**Deputy Minister for the Department of International Relations and Cooperation,
Mr Alvin Botes**

Deputy Minister for Small Business, Mr Dipuo Peters

Members of the Northern Cape Provincial Executive Council,

The Chief Whip, Mr Neo Maneng

The leader of the Opposition, Mr Harold McGluwa

The Leader of the EFF, Mr Shadrack Tlhaole

The Leader of the Freedom Front Plus, Mr Danie Coetzee

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

Members of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature,

**Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders, Kgosi Pelonomi
Toto and all our Traditional Leaders**

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Judge President of the Northern Cape High Court Division, Judge Pule Tlaletsi,

Heads of State Security Services,

Chairperson of the South African Local Government Association Northern Cape

Mayors and Councillors,

Traditional Leaders,

Heads of State Institutions supporting our Constitutional Democracy,

The Director General and Heads of Departments & Government Officials,

Provincial Secretary of the ANC and other political parties,

Leaders of the Alliance & Mass Democratic Movement Formations

Leaders of Organised Labour

Business leaders,

Members of the Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Fellow citizens of the Northern Cape

Ladies and Gentlemen

Madam Speaker, it is my distinct honour to deliver this State of the Province Address today, in a year in which we commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the democratic South Africa. That is a watershed moment in the struggle for political and economic freedom for all South Africans, particularly the black majority. This is a moment that forces us to reflect on our path, that began on April 27, 1994, when many South Africans nationwide casted their votes for the first time. A vote that resulted in the birth of the Northern Cape Province, as one of the nine provinces that constitute the Republic of South Africa.

Madam Speaker, this is indeed an important year in the life of our promising constitutional order. Besides, the 30th Anniversary, South Africans will go to the polls on the 29th of May and I take this opportunity to encourage every resident of the Northern Cape to engage in this noble exercise of democracy by casting their vote. I am very optimistic that the voter turnout on election day, will exceed expectations as many young people have registered to exercise their democratic right.

Madam Speaker, this year, I was one of the participants in the debate on SONA and I highlighted that in 2020 the country and the entire world was engulfed by the COVID-

19 pandemic, that same year our Honourable President Ramaphosa likened Gender-Based Violence and Femicide to a second pandemic confronting our country. With these upcoming elections, we are confronted by a third pandemic called memory loss; In Afrikaans, sê ons geheue verlies. The character Tintswalo, that the President spoke about serves to remind us that, despite all the challenges that the country is faced with, there are areas of serious progress.

Tintswalo, demonstrates the cumulative impact of Government policy interventions. This character represents the real life story of success of many young people, from impoverished backgrounds in our province. These are young people who benefitted from the rollout of various services since 1994 such as free access to healthcare, free public basic education, school nutrition, grants, free access to housing and tertiary education funding.

Today we have in our midst thirty young people who identify with the character Tintswalo. These are young people, whom with the assistance of the various government intervention programmes are now respected professionals and are making a positive contribution to society. Amongst them, we have doctors, Nurses, Engineers and Educators. We will continue to tell the story of Tintswalo because it is the story of this democracy, a good story to tell that resonates with the lives of many young people in the Northern Cape.

Madam Speaker, as we meet here today in Kimberley, we are aware of the challenges that are faced by Sol Plaatje Municipality in the recent years. One amongst them, is the water interruptions due to backlogs in the maintenance of ageing and inadequate infrastructure. Over the years, the Municipality was faced with an inadequate budget and that hindered its ability to properly maintain, repair or refurbish its water infrastructure.

The Municipality has put in place a plan of action to address these challenges. We are happy to announce that this year the National Treasury has approved funding of R2.5 billion through the Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI). This allocation is aimed at addressing infrastructure challenges. This funding will enable the municipality to embark on a comprehensive plan to upgrade the infrastructure, reduce water losses, and enhance water quality.

Linked to this, is our programme to accelerate housing delivery in Sol Plaatje Municipality. In addition to the R 365 million Hull Street Housing Project that I announced in the 2022 SOPA and is now under construction; an additional 1,000 houses will be built in this municipality for our people.

In partnership with Ekapa Mining; Sol Plaatje Municipality is working on the implementation of a 120MW combined Renewable Energy Project amounting to R2.4 Billion creating about 400 job opportunities.

Madam Speaker, Sol Plaatje Municipality is host to the Sol Plaatje University, a new university; which just celebrated its 10th Anniversary. SPU is the iconic landmark in Kimberley and continues to play a very important role in providing quality higher education, training, research and innovation in the province and the country at large.

This year, SPU experienced the largest intake of first-year students since its inception, with more than 2,000 first-year students. From an initial intake of 124 students in 2014, enrolment has now grown to over 5,000 students this year. What distinguishes this university from other universities in the country is the fact that it is an investment made by this democracy. This investment makes it possible for Kimberley to diversify its economic outlook from a mining city to a university city.

Madam Speaker, in 2019 we articulated a vision for the Province, to build a modern, growing and successful province. Driven by this vision, we successfully mobilised our stakeholders for support to steer the Province to greater heights. Ladies and Gentlemen, we now stand on the cusp of a binding vision that all of us can claim ownership of. During my Inaugural Address, I highlighted the tenets of a Modern, Growing and Successful Province.

In line with this vision, over the past five years we have shown our commitment towards addressing the challenges faced by our Province. As a result, we are approaching the end of the term of the Sixth Administration with greater optimism. This is but just the end of a term and not the end of the incumbency of the governing party.

Madam Speaker, the ANC as a governing party have worked relentlessly over the past 30 years to fundamentally alter the quality of lives of our people in the Northern Cape. As reflected in the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Census 2022 report, it is evident that we have achieved a lot. HDI is the combination of three basic

dimensions of human development: A long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living.

In 1995 the Human Development Index (HDI) of the country was 0.66 and that was an indication of medium human development and now it is standing at 0.727, which is a high human development. During the past five years in the Northern Cape, there has been a noticeable increase in the HDI and the Northern Cape is now one of the six Provinces in the country with an HDI above 0.70. This reflects the strides that we have made in improving the quality of public education, public health and households' income.

Madam Speaker, ladies and gentlemen, we have indeed improved the quality public education and all indicators attest to that. The proportion of persons aged 5-24 who attended an education institution increased from 64,2% to 70,3% in 2022 in the Northern Cape; this represents the largest increase in attendance observed in all provinces. The percentage of persons aged 20 years and older with no schooling in the Northern Cape declined from 22,7% to 6,7% in 2022.

We have a total number of 554 public schools, including the 11 Special Needs Education schools, which accommodates about 310 000 learners in this year. The number of educators has increased from 9 270 in 2019 to about 9 600 in 2024. This all demonstrates our commitment to improve the quality of public education.

Madam Speaker, the school nutrition programme has a total of (276 088) two hundred and seventy-six and eighty-eight beneficiaries, which means that 90% of our learners receive a nutritious meal at our schools every day.

Our Grade 12 results show a positive growth in that in 2020 our matric pass rate was 66%, in 2021 it was 71.4%, in 2022 it was 74.2% and last year we have 75.8%. This is a cumulative increase of ten percent over the last four years. Our Matric results also shows an increase across all five (5) districts.

Madam Speaker, we noted with excitement the improvement in the quality of Grade 12 results from poor schools. Learners from no-fee paying schools accounted for almost 50% (48.3%) of the total bachelor passes obtained in 2023. Between 2019 and 2023, the number of quintile 1 to 3 learners with Bachelor passes increased by 9.8%.

This success is significant as the quality of the NSC pass determines access to bursaries or loans for further studying at a tertiary institution.

The Sixth Administration built 19 new state-of-the-art schools to the value of R600 Million and 8 are completed. Since 2019, we spent more than R274 Million for refurbishment, upgrades and maintenance work to 167 schools. Very important is our programme for sanitation upgrades which benefited 74 schools.

We call on our communities to continue to partner with us to promote the best interest of our schools and strive to ensure that our schools remain institutions of quality learning and teaching. You are therefore encouraged to form part of the School Governing Body Elections that start on the 1st of March this year. We thank all the outgoing SGB's for their selfless commitment and their contribution in the governance of our schools in the Province.

Madam Speaker, we have indeed improved access to the provision of public healthcare services in the province, and all indicators attest to that. The overwhelming majority of Northern Cape household members (85% in 2022) continue to use public health systems as their first port of call.

The health profile has gradually increased in the Northern Cape with life expectancy increasing for both males and females; males saw an increase from 51 to 58 in 2023; females saw an increase from 56 to 65 during the same period.

The infant mortality in-facility rate decreased from 17.3% per 1000 live births to 16.1%. The maternal mortality rate was 109,9/100 000 in 2019 is reduced to 80/100 000 in 2023. This constitutes a major achievement against Sustainable Development Goal.

Madam Speaker, the improvement in healthcare provision to our people can largely be attributed to the quality and access to health services in our healthcare facilities across the Province. We have a total of 513 medical officers in the Province, of which 293 are at Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital here in Kimberley. The Department has a total of 2 539 nurses in different categories, spread across the province. To further strengthen our nursing capacity, the Department of Health continues to fund nurses to improve their skills.

Due to the decisive manner in which we managed the COVID-19 pandemic, the Northern Cape experienced the least number of deaths in the country. The improved Case Fatality Rate is a result of better patient care in our health facilities including early treatment-seeking behaviour by the communities.

The HIV positivity rate declined from 4,5% in 2018 to 2,4% in 2023. Care and treatment for people living with HIV, and retention of patients into Antiretroviral Treatment Therapy (ART) has improved significantly, and the number of people on treatment increased from 62 471 in March 2021 to 68 863 in 2023, representing a 10% increase.

Madam Speaker, since 2019 we have procured 146 new and better-equipped ambulances, 50 patient transport vehicles and 6 emergency rescue vehicles. All to the value of more than R200 Million. This has enabled us to improve our EMS response time to 80% for Rural and Urban areas. This is consistent with the national target set for 80%.

We remain committed to improving the quality and access to healthcare in the Province. In this regard, we will make more resources available for healthcare infrastructure, ambulances, patient transport, staffing and medication.

Madam Speaker, ladies and gentlemen, I have another special guest in the gallery, Ntate Sarel, who turned 100 years old last month on the 04th of January. He lived 70 years of his life under apartheid colonialism and 30 years in democracy. His life encapsulates the past, the transition and the present. He got his first old age grant when he turned 65 in 1989; because he was black he received only R131 once in two months.

This amount was by far less than the R372 that was received by his white peers on a monthly basis. In 1994 the democratic government removed this injustice, and all old-age grant beneficiaries irrespective of their race received the same amount of R390 every month and now it stands at R2100. This is but one incident of the history of racial injustice that the democratic had to deal with.

Madam Speaker, social assistance through grants has been this democratic government's most effective poverty-reduction tool. In comparison. The number of social grant beneficiaries increased from (66 000) sixty-six thousand in 1994 to (538 447) five hundred and thirty-eight thousand four hundred and forty-seven in 2024.

As of August 2021 on average a total of one hundred and fifty thousand unemployed people benefited from the Social Relief of Distress Grant at a value of more than R1.5 Billion in the past three years.

The implementation of pro-poor policies by this government is beyond question and is unparalleled. On top of all these interventions, we have more than 267, 000 learners benefitting from the National School Nutrition Programme, 26 539 benefitting from learner transport and 74,4% of the schools declared as No-Fee Schools.

Honourable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, according to the latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) released by StatsSA, the unemployment rate for the Northern Cape is still the second lowest (26.9%) in the country. Job increases were recorded in the following sectors Agriculture (5 000), Mining 10 000 and Energy (4000).

The number of employed persons during the 2nd Quarter of 2020 was 255,000 and now in 2023 we have 329,000 employed people in the province, which is the highest ever. This represents 74 000 increase in the number of employed people. As we move forward into the Seventh Administration, we need to strengthen our response to unemployment and create more jobs for the people of the Northern Cape.

Madam Speaker, when the sixth administration assumed office in 2019 the Provincial economy was estimated at R119 billion and it is now estimated at R 148 billion as of 2023, highlighting an increase of R 29,6 billion, in four years. This growth in the GDP demonstrates the collaborative efforts by the Provincial Government and the private sector to grow the economy. The resurgence in the provincial economy during 2021, was at the back of a robust mining sector, which recorded growth of around 18% largely due to a surge in commodity prices and investments in renewable energy.

Madam Speaker, the provincial government is the province's single biggest procurer of goods and services. Through preferential procurement, we are contributing towards redressing the economic imbalances of the past as well as stimulating and promoting local economic development. The total spent on goods and services by the Sixth administration amounts to R25.97 billion.

The preferential procurement spending on woman-owned suppliers amounts to R5,03 billion (19,37%), youth-owned suppliers R1,48 billion (5,68%), and people living with disabilities owned suppliers R51,03 million (0,2%). Spending on black-owned suppliers amounted to R15,08 billion (58%) during the sixth administration.

The Provincial Government has spent an amount of R13,83 billion (53,26%) on small businesses (SMEs), aiming to advance economic growth and employment in the province. This commitment to empowering our local suppliers continues by ensuring that suppliers are paid timeously for services rendered, within 30 days and in most instances less than 30 days.

Madam Speaker, these figures prove that our democratic dispensation is on a positive trajectory in changing the lives of the people of the Northern Cape. We have observed improvements in access to basic services with the province's performance for access to water, electricity and sanitation consistently being above the national average. This is further reflected in the Census 2022 report which indicates that the number of households with formal dwellings increased from 78,3% to 85,9% in 2022.

The total number of households that have access to onsite piped water (either inside the dwelling or yard) increased to 82% in 2022; the percentage of households that had no access to piped water in the Province declined from 19,7% to 8,7% in 2022. The total amount of households that had access to electricity as a main source of lighting increased to 92,5% in 2022, all the municipalities in the Northern Cape have more than 80% of their households having access to electricity as a main source of lighting in 2022. The total number of households in the Northern Cape that have access to flush toilets increased to 73,0% in 2022. This indicates a huge improvement in the provision of basic services.

Madam Speaker, in our pursuit to modernise the Province, we stated that such a Province must have connected residents. The internet is a vital resource to access information and to communicate with others. Households' access to the internet from anywhere in the Northern Cape increased from 16.2% in 2010 to 68,5% in 2022. Broadband generation in the Northern Cape is at 70%.

Madam Speaker, Honourable members, Ladies and Gentlemen, last year, we announced the close to R1 Billion investment in broadband infrastructure and base stations by our operators, Vodacom, Telkom and MTN as well as the work on the

development of a Provincial Broadband Strategy. As a result of the social compact and collaborative initiatives with these mobile operators, the Northern Cape's cellular network coverage stands at 98%. We are pleased to announce that we have completed the broadband strategy, and the development of an implementation plan is underway.

Madam Speaker, we have conceptualised a digital Thusong App and I am happy to announce the completion of phase 1 of the development. On completion of this project, it will put under one roof the online services of the various Government Departments.

Honourable members, Ladies and Gentlemen, Over the past five years, we have made significant progress with Modernising the education and health sector in the Province. Education in the Northern Cape experienced ground-breaking transformation over the past five years in an era marked by rapid technological advancements. We have introduced an online registration system and this makes placement of learners seamless. The online admission system was launched in August 2020 and currently caters for grade 1 and 8 learners.

To date, all 554 public ordinary schools; including 11 Special Needs Education schools, have connectivity for administrative purposes. We are continuing through the SA Connect programme to connect schools for teaching and learning. To date, a total of 98 schools in the Pixley Ka Seme District have been connected. Efforts are underway to ensure that all schools are connected for teaching and learning in our Province.

As part of modernising our education system, 12,000 tablets; loaded with offline Edu-Kite software, were distributed to Grade 12 learners last year. This year we are expanding the programme with the procurement of tablets for Grade 10 and 11 learners, which will commence 1st April 2024.

A total of one hundred and seventy-three (173) schools have been identified for the Coding and Robotics Pilot, of which fifteen 15 are between Grades R to 3, hundred and eleven (111) are between Grades 4 to 7, and forty-seven (47) are between Grades 8 to 9.

Five (5) classrooms, one in each district, have been converted into cyber labs and fitted with state-of-the-art 4IR equipment, including coding, robotics, and virtual reality resources.

Madam Speaker, libraries play a crucial role in society for access to free educational resources, safe sanctuaries for learning, economic support, language learning and much more. To date, 215 out of 223 community libraries have been connected to free internet in the province.

All our youth service centres now serve as Wi-Fi Hotspots for young people to access Internet services.

Madam Speaker, in pursuing e-health we have connectivity to 91% (145/159) of all health facilities, an electronic dispatch system at the two EMS call centres has been initiated. The Botshelo App will be used for vehicle tracking systems in ambulances. In 2018 we moved from manual systems to various automated Hospital Systems which assist in managing Revenue, Patient Visits and tracking patients from where they receive the services and avoid the patients duplicating access to health care services.

Madam Speaker, through the Vaalharts Agricultural Distribution Centre (VADC) and Farm Smart Technology, the province intends to organise and structure support, logistics and marketing hub, utilising modernised technologies for increased access to high-yield markets for emerging farmers, as well as selected commercial farmers.

Madam Speaker, our total spending on public infrastructure, which includes hospitals, clinics, schools, libraries, roads and human settlements since 2019 to date is R14.8 billion. This reflects an unprecedented level of spending on infrastructure in the Province.

Madam Speaker, road infrastructure remains the province's priority to create seamless access to economic opportunities and improve people's mobility. We reported in the last SOPA that we will transfer some of our strategic road networks to SANRAL and that process has been finalised. Currently, SANRAL has a footprint of 4 409 kilometres of which 952 kilometres were recently incorporated with more roads to be transferred shortly.

Madam Speaker, since the implementation of the Operation Vala Zonke programme; to date, the Province can report that 23 334 potholes have been fixed and this was achieved through the utilisation of internal maintenance teams.

Since 2019 through the Human Settlements Development Grant, we have invested almost R 1. 5 billion to provide housing to our people. This commitment to providing quality housing is evident in the bold step that we have undertaken to pilot a unique funding model, that enabled us to launch the R1 Billion Housing Project, which is the single biggest investment in human settlements in the Northern Cape.

This will accelerate the pace of the provision of houses for the poor. The R1 Billion Rand Housing Project is based on the fact that there are approximately 18,000 serviced sites ready for the construction of houses throughout the Northern Cape Province.

Through the implementation of key catalytic projects which include amongst others, the Namakwa Special Economic Zone (SEZ) that will be launched in April this year; Boegoeberg se Baai Port; the Green Hydrogen Project and the Kathu Industrial Park, we will ensure that our objective of growing the economy is realised. In preparation for our Port development, we have sent five young people from the Province to Vietnam to study Marine Engineering at the Maritime University.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable President, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa initiated the annual Presidential Investment Conference to realise R 1,2 trillion investment over five years. Since its inception in 2018, to date, R 1,14 trillion worth of investment has been realised by South Africa. A substantial amount of this investment was made in the Northern Cape amounting to R 70 Billion with key investments in the energy and mining sector.

Major investments in the Province thus far include amongst others, commitments from Vedanta, PMG, Orion, Unigreen, SCATEC and ACWA to mention but a few.

The Northern Cape is at the forefront of driving investment in green energy. As a Province, we have launched a Green Hydrogen Masterplan. This highlights the need for substantial infrastructure development, leveraging the province's renewable energy resources and strategic location to drive economic growth and exports. A noteworthy milestone is the completion of the pre-feasibility study with very positive results.

Madam Speaker, through focused partnership efforts in key areas, we have together with mining houses made significant strides investing about R690 Million in education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, economic development, water and infrastructure enhancement as well as roads.

Madam Speaker, the South African Government is in the process of commercializing Cannabis. To date, there are nine (9) Hemp permit applications from the Northern Cape and four (4) have been approved for Hemp permits. It is expected that the number of Hemp permit holders from the Northern Cape will increase with time.

We welcome the registration of Karoo Lamb as a South African Geographical Indication (GI) under the Agricultural Product Standard Act, Act 119 of 1990 on the 27th of October 2023. This protects the name Karoo Lamb under designations of origin and will have economic spin-offs in the local and international markets. The Northern Cape is one of three provinces producing Karoo lamb and this GI designation should benefit farmers in terms of the farm gate price.

Madam Speaker, the Northern Cape is leading the way in land reform in South Africa. Since 1994 to date about 1, 600 000 million hectares have been redistributed to the value of R 1.6 billion, benefitting 1,183 women and 711 young people. With regard to land restitution, 658,000 hectares of land were given back to our communities benefitting 26 054 households comprising 137 430 beneficiaries to the value of R 934 million. In addition, R 1.4 billion was spent on financial compensation. This brings the total expenditure on land restitution to R 2.3 billion.

So, **Madam Speaker**, the total spent on both the land redistribution and restitution programme in the province amounts to R4 Billion and involves about 2.3 million hectares of land to about 200, 000 beneficiaries.

Madam Speaker, on land tenure we have secured tenure rights for the communities of Leliefontein, Concordia and Richtersveld through the Transformation of Certain Rural Areas Act (TRANCRAA). Five hundred and fifty-one thousand five hundred and ten (551 510) hectares have been transferred to the affected communities.

Madam Speaker, since 2021, the province has experienced outbreaks of veld fires, especially in the ZFM, JTG and Frances Baard districts. The intergovernmental relations of all stakeholders including national departments have greatly improved to the extent that the province now has Fire Protection Associations in all districts registered by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment. As the Province we have assisted affected farmers with fodder from our fodder bank.

Madam Speaker, since 2019 to date the implementation of the EPWP Phase IV, resulted in the Province creating 84 594 (81%) jobs by Q3: 2023/24 against the 5-year target of 104 031. Similarly, we have exceeded our targets for the Community Works Programme for the period 2019/20 to 2022/23 with performance at 103% and a total of 76 086 job opportunities created.

To address the issue of youth unemployment and building on the achievements of the Expanded Public Works Programme, the Government introduced the Presidential Employment Stimulus three years ago. To this end, as a Province, we have appointed twenty-six thousand and sixty-one (26 061) young people.

Furthermore, the Northern Cape provincial government in partnership with the SETAs continues to provide young people with skills development programmes such as Internships, Learnerships, Artisanships, Apprenticeships, Work Integrated Learning and Skills Programmes.

Together with MERSETA, we will be launching the skills development and bursary programme amounting to R210 million benefitting 2,000 young people. Since 2019 our partnership with SETAS has benefitted a total of 14 800) young people.

To improve coordination and to ensure that we offer bursaries to deserving students in line with the scarce and critical skills needed for the economy of the province, a centralised bursary model was adopted by this administration and bursaries were located within the Office of the Premier. This resulted in the writing-off of student debt, to the value of R154 million, which was awarded through study loans. Through our centralised bursary scheme, we have assisted a total of 530 beneficiaries. All of these combined efforts have resulted in a steady decrease in youth Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) in the Province.

The Northern Cape Construction Company was launched in August 2022 with 50 employees selected for a CETA learnership programme covering Road Construction Level 3. Currently, 38 employees remain in the programme. From mid-April 2023 to December 2023 have been fixing potholes. This first intake will shortly conclude with an enterprise mentorship programme, and the second intake will be in the next financial year.

Madam Speaker, as this Sixth Administration we have committed ourselves to sound and prudent financial management and governance. In 2019 we inherited two clean audits; 7 financially unqualified and 4 unqualified audit opinions. Through deliberate efforts, we turned the situation around and can now report the following progress:

- There are now 5 clean audits, which represents a 150% improvement on what we inherited;
- Two departments namely Economic Development and Tourism and Education, which we inherited in the qualified audit space have improved. The Department of Education, a key service delivery department, which accounts for about 40% of our provincial budget, improved from qualified to financially unqualified during the sixth administration.

Madam Speaker, ladies and gentlemen, throughout our term, we ensured no provincial department was in a disclaimer audit space. The clean audit goal in all provincial departments is still alive and we are committed to doing more towards attaining it.

Madam Speaker, it is also important to announce to this sitting that for the past three years in succession we have closed the exchequer account on a positive bank balance. This attainment inspires confidence in the management of provincial finances. We could only achieve this because of our unwavering commitment to cut the executive frills and wastages in the system. I forgone some benefits as Premier and equally so, the MEC did the same.

Madam Speaker, in terms of the Municipal Audit Outcomes 2021/22, the province has noted improvement in the audit outcomes of municipalities since the start of the sixth administration. The number of municipalities with clean audits increased from one (1) to four (4) from 2018/19 to 2021/22.

Furthermore, the number of municipalities with disclaimers reduced from seven (7) to four (4) in the same period. Throughout the years, clean audits were only achieved by the district municipalities; however, Hantam Municipality changed the narrative by becoming the first local municipality in the Province to obtain a clean audit for two (2) consecutive years i.e., 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years. The audit for the 2022/23 cycle is currently ongoing and the province is looking forward to achieving even better outcomes.

We continue to strive to maintain the positive trajectory on improved audits through Operation Clean Audit (OPCA) which steers integrated improvements, coupled with targeted intervention through the Municipal Support Intervention Plans (MSIP). Already we have seen an improvement between 2020/21 and 2022/23 financial years on the State of Local Government. Further improvement will be supported through a Multi-Disciplinary Team, inclusive of SOEs, Government departments and SALGA for focused support to municipalities.

We have remained committed to reducing corruption and to this end, we have embarked on Lifestyle Audits across all Provincial departments in conjunction with the Special Investigations Unit (SIU). As part of our fight against corruption in the Public Service several people are facing charges and others have been convicted.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have demonstrated our collective effort in the fight against corruption. The establishment of the Provincial SIU Offices is our clearest demonstration of our commitment to fight the scourge of corruption.

Madam Speaker, ladies and gentlemen, to build a capable and developmental state is critical for the realisation of people-centred development. Consequently, over the years' government has systematically introduced enabling levers including legislation, policies, and programmes.

To ensure the acceleration of our initiatives to build capacity we re-launched the Human Resource Development (HRD) Council last year, which is a multi-stakeholder advisory board which consists of representatives from government, labour, and civil society aimed at increasing the skills base of our youth. The Council will provide strategic leadership and direction for addressing human resource development challenges as well as to drive the skills agenda designed to be inclusive.

Madam Speaker, as part of our commitment to ensure that Government further in-sources security guards and cleaners, this year we have launched the first phase which will see the migration of the security function for the Provincial Government under the Department of Transport, Safety and Liaison. This will be followed by incremental insourcing which will soon see the advertising of 150 security officer posts.

Our absorption rate has seen significant improvement as far as the advertising and filling of vacant posts in the Administration is concerned. In 2021/2022 we had a vacancy rate of 13.01%, to date our vacancy rate for all Departments stands at 7.82% against the national norm of 10%, which augurs well for good governance in our Province.

Madam Speaker, ladies and gentlemen, as announced in the previous SOPA, a Ministry responsible for seamless coordination of Youth development, is in place and hit the ground running. Significantly, a lot has been achieved since the establishment of the Ministry. During this reporting period, an intense benchmarking process was undertaken with the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities to streamline and re-orientate the provincial operations.

To this end, the Northern Cape Integrated Youth Development Strategy has been finalised. The strategy ensures coherent and meaningful implementation of the National Youth Policy 2020-2023. Several programmes have been implemented that benefit our designated groups such as the appointment of Media Attachès, Vota Lutsha Brigade, the introduction of the Youth and Women Development Fund and the Unboxing Basha programme.

Madam Speaker, to deal with the social ills of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, which the Honourable President Ramaphosa referred to as the second pandemic we formed an Interdepartmental Task Team to tackle Teenage pregnancy, GBVF, and substance abuse in the province and a strategy has been developed and adopted which is currently being implemented. The programme was established for the monitoring of GBVF hotspots supported by intervention programmes and further expanded services to victims of gender-based violence in collaboration with the NPA by establishing two more Thuthuzela Care Centres in Springbok in the Namakwa District and Upington in the ZF Mgcawu.

Madam Speaker, for the third quarter of 2023/ 2024, sexual offences decreased by 5.9%, attempted murder by 2.6%, common assault by 5.6% and rape by 5.5%.

Northern Cape is amongst the first provinces which have successfully managed to establish a Victim Empowerment Shelter in all 5 Districts of the Province. Two shelters were established in 2023, one in Nababeep and the other in Ritchie. We remain cognisant of the social challenges experienced by the youth of the Province and will draw on our social partners, NGO and community structures to tackle this head-on.

The fight against alcohol and drug abuse needs a multipronged approach, with efforts aimed at improving parenting practices, spiritual care, knowledge, influence and a healthy mind. Developing youth and keeping them constructively engaged through social cohesion and developmental programmes will remain our focus.

During this sixth Administration, we have worked tirelessly to grow the economy and to this end, we have positioned the Northern Cape as the hub for renewable and green energy. Huge gains have been made in laying the foundation for the Province to build a Modern, Growing and Successful Province to improve the quality of lives of our people, which includes tackling the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

We will continue to leverage these mammoth gains and advance people-centred development. We remain committed to investing in improving the quality of our health and education in the Province as our apex priorities.

Madam Speaker, Ladies and Gentlemen, besides presenting to your good selves a picture of our major achievements and accomplishments for the past three decades of our emancipation, we have also presented factual statistics that attest to our collective determination to reduce the debilitating effects of unemployment. The Northern Cape has the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country.

Moreover, **Madam Speaker**, we presented comprehensive details of our endeavours in growing the provincial economy. The information we have presented has been independently verified and we continue to engage in projects that will benefit the provincial economy.

In our modernisation efforts, the current Administration in close collaboration with our partners; we are succeeding in living up to our vision of building a Modern, Growing and Successful province, especially in the areas of broadband technology, e-health, e-commerce and e-education.

Madam Speaker, our increased funding and investment in both social and economic infrastructure has yielded positive results. Aligned to this, is the sustained improvement in our Grade 12 outcomes during our term of office.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the youth in our province continue to benefit from various projects and programmes we have initiated. As a result of the training opportunities that we provide; our youth are in a much better position to access gainful employment.

We made a commitment to work hard towards having a soccer team in the Premier Soccer League (PSL) division. We could not achieve this but we can report that we now have two teams in the National First Division, Hungry Lions FC and Upington City FC. We also have a ladies' team in the top echelon of ladies' football in the country, the Richmond Ladies. For the past two years, we spent about R14 million in support of these three teams. Our dream to have a team in the PSL is very much alive.

Madam Speaker, as part of maintaining and improving our public infrastructure we will make available R30 million for the renovation of Mayibuye Centre. Similarly, we have also allocated R10 million for upgrades at the AR Abbass stadium in Kimberley.

We also introduced various measures to improve the audit outcomes, and better audit results were achieved. We will not rest until every Provincial Government entity receives a clean audit. There can be no other way.

I take this opportunity to thank the people of the Northern Cape for their faith and trust in this governing collective and we remain confident that after 29 May you will once more be part of our journey in building a Northern Cape that will be characterised by prosperity, a transparent and progressive government.

Madam Speaker, a special work of gratitude goes to my family, they saw me hustling for this province to the best of my ability. I tried my best, and I accept it that to some people my best was not enough. But that does not mean that we must stop doing our best. With your support I believe the province is on a much better development trajectory. Thanks again for your support and love.

As I close, **Madam Speaker**, when I was in high school I used to write poems, I lost my bundle of poems when I was at university. Since then, I got very discouraged and never wrote any thereafter. For the first time this Tuesday, I summoned extraordinary guts to write one, and I did. The title of the poem is:

IN MY UNGOODNESS

Mine was an ungood conception

But a beautiful moment for my mom to celebrate the fertility of her fragile eggs and the incubation strength of her godly womb,

Birthing pains and splattering blood were beautiful signatures of life

As without pain and blood, there is no life

I was an ungood baby

But one that signified the unending symmetry of life

The captivating mixture of cries and smiles,

The moment that glorifies the motherly duty of dipping one's hands in poo as a sign of intricate love.

Mine, was an ungood upbringing

But a fulfilling adolescent, and youthful life

Despite, the grinding poverty and hardship

I was showered with true love and affection from a lioness that never betrayed her duty of motherly care

In my ungoodness, I've learnt that the beauty of life is not in worldly possessions

But innate capacity to love and appreciate small priceless things like respect for others, humility and compassion.

I was, an ungood student

But one that embraced the beauty of learning, the fruits of discipline and hard work

In my ungoodness, I shunned the tribulations of short cuts, diligently completed tasks and respected my elders.

In my ungoodness, I started to feel the glory of achievements as I migrated seamlessly from one grade to the other.

I was, an ungood activist

But a caring individual, that appreciated the different talents of his comrades for collective agency to change the world

In that ungoodness, I saw people working in teams, closing ranks and prepared to sacrifice their lives for each other.

Now, I am, an ungood Premier

But I appreciate every moment to serve the people of this beautiful province

In that ungoodness, on many occasions,

I spoke to the many vulnerable people in the Karoo, Kgalagadi, kalahari, Namakwa and Teemane

Who dutifully collected their grants every month

Who otherwise would have nothing

In my ungoodness, I felt the pounding hearts of recipients of RDP houses

I witnessed the jubilation of rural children as they take their first steps into new state of the art class rooms

I've seen the quizzical smiles of communities when for the first time they had piped water in their yards and decent sanitation

I've witnessed community excitements for new clinics

I've touched the pondering hearts of youngsters who just got their first employment

In my ungoodness, I can still feel the smell of the new-borns delivered in our public hospitals

Vivid in my memory, is the futuristic smiles on their mothers,

Telling a story, that in this ungoodness there is an unmatched good.

I've seen the tears of joy, of hopeless youngsters who were given opportunities to further their studies

In my ungoodness, I spoke to young addicts whose lives were changed for the better

My ungoodness, is not badness

But is a warrior life of vigor in a world contrived with deceit, duplicity and double-dealing

My ungoodness, is life of action, in a world where human energy is colonised by the fear of tomorrow

My ungoodness, is life of movement, in a world where everything tends to be immobile

My ungoodness, is life of being abused, in a world where idiots have stolen primacy in public discourse

My ungoodness, is a life of heavy-lifting and strife

My ungoodness, is a life of many failures that are spiced with profound successes

Simply put, my ungoodness; is a life of ceaseless and sincere efforts, to live meaningfully

Thank you Honourable Speaker