



Province of the
Northern Cape
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SOPA

STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS 2023

THURSDAY. 02 MARCH 2023

*'Building a Provincial Roadmap for Decisive Action
through Resilience, Hardwork and Progress'*

#ModernGrowingandSuccessfulProvince



**FINAL STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF THE NORTHERN
CAPE, DR ZAMANI SAUL
CALVINIA, NAMAKWA DISTRICT
2 MARCH 2023**

**Speaker of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature, Ms Newrene Klaaste,
Deputy Speaker, Mr Mangaliso Matika,
Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Ms Sylvia Lucas
Members of the Northern Cape Provincial Executive Council,
Members of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces,
Members of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature and Leaders of the Opposition,
Deputy Minister of Public Works, Ms Noxolo Kiewiet
Deputy Minister of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Alvin Botes
Members of the Diplomatic Corps joining us virtually
Judge President of the Northern Cape High Court Division, Judge Pule Tlaletsi,
Consul General of Russia, Mr Aleksei Malenko
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 Department & Government Officials,
Provincial Secretary of the ANC and other political parties,
Leaders of the Alliance & MDM Formations
Leaders of Organised Labour
Business leaders,
Members of the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Fellow citizens of the Northern Cape,
My spesiale gaaste Tannie Hesther Stander en Jeremy Dewee albei van Calvinia Hoerskool
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Alvorens ek my Provinsiale Rede aan julle voordra, wens ek graag my waardering aan u uit te spreek om dit hier in Calvinia te kan doen.

Dames en Here, ons is vandag hier bymekaar in Calvinia, Hantam Munisipaliteit, in die noordwestelike hoek van die provinsie, in die Namakwa Distriksmunisipaliteit. Hantam is 'n Khoi-naam wat beteken "**berge waar die bolle groei**". Die IXam, 'n San-stam, was die eerste mense wat die land bewoon het.

Dames en Here, julle sal ook opgemerk het dat die Provinsiale Regering die afgelope dae baie teenwoordig was in die streek om aan te vul wat ons reeds op 'n gereelde basis doen en wat ons maandaat vereis, ons moet doen.

Ek is ook baie bly om aan te kondig dat in ons strewe om die Provinsie te moderniseer, het ons aan Graad 12 leerlinge met eTablette begin voorsien wat gelaai is met wereldklas studie materiaal. Die tabletprojek vir graad 12 is hierdie week in Frances Baard Streek geloots en ons het alreeds aan vyf skole in die Hantam e-tablette voorsien. Die res van die tablette sal nou in Maart aan alle graad 12-leerders versprei word. Hierdie belegging van meer as Tagtig Miljoen Rand is gedoen om die kwaliteit van onderwys te verbeter en die gebruik van tegnologie te normaliseer. Ek is optimisties dat hierdie belegging in ons jongmense die goeie uitslae sal lewer.

In Williston het ons 'n projek gaan loots van 150 huise om tydelike en modder strukture te vervang en sodoende die waardigheid van ons mense te herstel en vervul. Ek is ook bly om aan te kondig dat in ons poging om gesondheids dienste te verbeter en ook ons reaksie tyd op ambulans dienste te verskerp, het ons veertien addisionele ambulanse afgelewer wat die mense van die Namakwa streek sal bedien. 9 ambulanse en 10 pasient voertuie

Ek wil ook die gemeenskap aanmoedig om probleme of ontevredenheid oor ambulans dienste onder die aandag van die Departement van Gesondheid te bring.

Daar word wyd bespiegel dat hierdie dienste nou eers gelewer word omdat die Provinsiale Staatsrede nou hier plaasvind, maar ek kan U verseker dat dit nie die geval is nie. Elke dag-Maandag tot Vrydag ontvang kinders onderrig in ons skole. Elke dag word gesongheids dienste gelewer in die streek. Elke maand, op die regte tyd en plek ontvang mense hul maandelikse toelae sonder om enigeen van ons te herinner dat dit tyd is daarvoor nie.

Elke dag het ons munisipale en ander stads dienste in ons gemeenskap en elke dag voorsien hierdie regering vervoer en ten minste een voedsame maaltyd aan ons leerlinge.

Dames en Here, die Provinsiale Regering is deeglik bewus van die water nood as gevolg van die droogte in die Hantam Distrik is. Die lae reënval in die distrik het n negatiewe impak op die munisipaliteit se kapasiteit om water te voorsien. Die Regering gee aandag aan hierdie probleem en ek kan vandag met trots aankondig dat 'n projek van ongeveer **Een Honderd En Tagtig Miljoen Rand** die probleem van waterbeperkings hok sal slaan. Met die opgradering en belegging kom ook baie werksgeleenthede wat die mense van die Hantam Streek sal bevoordeel.

Ek wil namens die Provinsiale Regering en wetgewer ons dank uitspreek aan die gemeenskap van Calvinia en die omliggende dorpe vir julle vriendelikheid waarmee hierdie verrigtinge vandag kan geskied.

Ladies and gentlemen, this year marks a decade since the passing of the father of the post-apartheid democracy, former president Nelson Mandela, in 2013. He was this iconic leader who ratified our country's first democratic Constitution that gave birth to the new South Africa. That historic signature brought with it a constitutional pledge for a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa.

It is therefore appropriate that the world leaders at the Nelson Mandela peace summit declared 2019-2028 as the Nelson Mandela decade of peace.

We recall the sacrifice of our struggle hero's such as Chief Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Winnie Mandela, Charlotte Maxeke, Sophie de Bruyn and Brian Hermanus and many heroes and martyrs of our struggle.

The theme for this State of the Province Address is **“Building a Provincial Roadmap for Decisive Action through resilience, hard work and progress”**.

Standing before you today, in my capacity as Premier I have responsibility to reflect on the State of the Province. It is clear from the SONA 2023 and other policy documents, that the execution of our priority service delivery areas for 2023 are:

- **energy security; climate change and a just transition;**
- **fighting poverty, unemployment and inequality, infrastructure,**
- **fighting crime and corruption;**

- **skills development, and**
- **localisation and investment,**

In the State of the Nation Address this year, the President, His Excellency Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, raised the importance of social compacting and joint implementation of our priority areas. Each one of us in the province has an important role to play in achieving the objectives stated above for a better life for all.

Madam Speaker, little did I know that soon after my inaugural address in 2019 that COVID-19 would be sweeping across the globe, the country and every corner of the Province, where the poorest of the poor were left the most vulnerable.

Honourable Members, as you know we had to reprioritise a huge portion of the budget to support the most vulnerable of our communities. Covid 19 rushed all of us into a new digital era, which required new systems and structures such as; e-health, e-education, and e-government. We did not “let a crisis go to waste”.

Honourable members, three years back we made a commitment to drive the modernisation programme in the province. Last year we stated how access to the World Wide Web (WWW) can enhance the provision of government services including e-health, e-education and e-government. At that time we started the development of a provincial broadband strategy. I am now happy to report that our broadband strategy will be in full swing through its prioritised building blocks for implementation starting 1st April 2023.

We know that a provincial broadband network is a digital highway, in the past year we had significant investment in broadband infrastructure deployed by both Vodacom and MTN.

Madam Speaker, Vodacom Central Region, has invested R230 Million in our province this Financial Year to expand broadband coverage in deep rural areas, upgrading base station sites and network resilience.

Madam Speaker and Honourable members, MTN also built 5 new connectivity sites for the Northern Cape. This year, MTN is planning to build 25 new connectivity sites and modernise 48 sites in our province at an estimated cost of R180 million.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, in total Vodacom and MTN will invest about R410 Million this financial year in our province. These investments will ensure connectivity for all and drive inclusive digital access in the province. Connectivity and inclusive digital access are the central pillars for modernisation of our province.

Madam Speaker, SA Connect Project will implement one thousand five hundred and ninety nine (1 599) sites for Phase two over the next three years in clinics and schools in our province. This will expand access to internet services and improve the efficiency of public services. This initiative lays the ground for much complex domains of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) such as artificial intelligence.

Madam Speaker and Honourable members, our project for a digital Thusong Service Centre model App has been conceptualised. This App will take government services to your cell phone; we are quite excited to start the development of this App.

The Office of the Premier together with the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) is driving this initiative. I am happy to announce that the appointment of software developers at the CPSI is at a final stage

Honourable members, as part of modernising the Education sector the plans on the expansion of broadband connectivity is on track. All Public ordinary and Special Needs Education schools are provided with routers (3G Dongles) and receive 3Gigga Bytes of data on a monthly basis to facilitate their connectivity for administration. This remains a temporary measure given the fact that connectivity at schools is not only needed for administration purposes; but more so, for teaching and learning.

In view of Cabinet approval of the revised model of South Africa (SA) Connect Phase 2 and its implementation thereof, the Department has been engaging different role players to ensure that all Northern Cape public schools are connected during this second phase of SA Connect.

It should be noted that Government investment of the Grade 12 education tablets is part of rolling out our e-learning support strategy for this year. These tablets are loaded with Edukite software which can be accessed, anytime and free of data costs. More intensive support will be provided to schools, in line with the whole school development approach, which will focus on school

management development, teacher development, infrastructure support and parental involvement. These are some of the critical pillars needed to improve learner outcomes and school performance.

Ladies and Gentleman, indeed, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is transforming the provision of health services and medicine. These scientific and technological advances promise to yield breakthrough diagnoses and therapies including precision medicine and medical cures. These technological advances will transform public healthcare.

The implementation of phase 2 of our digital patient record system will continue in 2023 with the digitisation of the existing files in selected facilities.

Honourable Speaker, the implementation of improved systems as well as IT systems and connectivity has also contributed to the implementation of the Bokamoso Digital Health Strategy. This enabled JTG to improve connectivity in facilities from 30% to around 70%.

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members; the implementation of the Digital Call Centres for EMS in partnership with VODACOM in Upington and Kimberley has seen a drastic increase in the number of calls from an average of 3000 to 10 000 calls per month. We also note the improvement from 45% to 85% in the management of calls for ambulances

Government in conjunction with the World Health Organisation has established the Health Informatics Unit and the Provincial Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHOEC).

This will help to improve health management, data analysis, planning, emergency and disaster response. The official launch will be on the 23rd of March 2023. This will be the first of its kind in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

Madame Speaker, according to “*StatsSA Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for Q4: 2022*, 12 000 jobs were gained between the third quarter and the fourth quarter of 2022. The total number of persons employed now in the province is 336 thousand. Accordingly, the number of unemployed persons in the Northern Cape decreased from 116 thousand to 95 thousand. The above changes in employment and unemployment in the province resulted in the official unemployment rate decreasing by 4, 3 percentage points from 26, 4% in the third quarter to 22, 1% in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Honourable Speaker, these are the lowest unemployment figures in the province in 14 years; and directly correlates to the more than 25% increase in our GDP from R96 Billion in 2019 to R124 Billion in 2022.

Honourable members, now we have the lowest official unemployment rate in the country.

The expanded unemployment rate is also on the decrease by 1,9 percentage points to 44,0%. The unemployment rate by sex (gender) in the Northern Cape shows that female unemployment rate (19.1%) is lower than male unemployment rate (24.4%). This is the only province in the country where the female unemployment rate is lower than that of male.

Honourable Members, it is also worth noting that the province has the lowest unemployment rate amongst the youth at 30.1%. We have made these strides despite the challenges posed by the intermittent load-shedding.

Madame Speaker, we remain determined to continue to break the back of the persistent challenge of youth unemployment. The MEC responsible for Youth, Women, Disability, Children, Communication and e-Government will assemble an expert team that will assist us to come up with district based interventions to tackle youth unemployment.

Furthermore, **Honourable Speaker**, the MEC will interface, facilitate and coordinate extension of Youth Service Centres across the Province, youth social cohesion initiatives, youth economic empowerment and youth health initiatives with all relevant sector departments and the private sector.

We expect this team to conclude their work by August this year so that our focus moves towards practical implementation of their recommendations.

Madame speaker, through collaborative efforts a total of eleven thousand eight hundred and fifty two (11 852) unemployed youth benefitted from skills development programmes such as Internships, Learnerships, Apprenticeship, Artisanhip, Work Integrated Learning and skills programmes.

Furthermore the Provincial Government has entered into a multi-year partnership with MLAB South Africa for the provision of training of young people. The programme is designed to help

participants acquire the much needed skills such as building WordPress websites, social media marketing and develop mobile Apps that will be tested via the Youth Service Centres.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have also seen an increase in the number of students opting for vocational education through the increased enrolments in our TVET colleges:

- A total of **11 897** students have enrolled to study in various programs on offer at the TVET colleges within the Province.
- The Namakwa Rural TVET College has been accredited as a trade test centre for Engineering trades. This will provide an opportunity for apprentices to be certified as artisans.
- In terms of the Expanded Publics Works Programme 65 570 work opportunities were created, and
- This year a total of 7000 Education Assistants and General School Assistants will be appointed in Phase IV of the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative.

It is collectively these interventions that have made a positive impact on the reduction of the provincial unemployment rate especially amongst the youth.

Honourable Speaker, it is also important to note that all Provincial Departments have developed capacity to pay correct invoices within 30 days, except for the Department of Health which has managed to reduce the waiting time from 92 days to 46 days. This is a positive development for our small businesses.

Honourable Speaker, the frequent load shedding is an impediment to conducting business in South Africa. Similarly, challenges in the transportation system limit the economic benefits from the commodity boom. Rising inflation hurts the purchasing power of low-income households and negatively affects the country's competitiveness and financing costs. With all these challenges the provincial economy grew by 2.0% in 2022. For 2023 the provincial economic growth is expected to be around 2.7%.

Madame Speaker, Infrastructure investment is the backbone of a thriving economy. Through the implementation of an integrated infrastructure growth path the province will be able to improve the socio-economic conditions of the residents of the Northern Cape.

The infrastructure expenditure for the last three financial years amounted to about R 10 billion, with R 5.7 billion for Economic Infrastructure and R 4.2 billion for Social Infrastructure.

For 2023/24 MTEF we have a projected infrastructure budget of R 9 billion of which R5 billion is for Economic Infrastructure and R4 billion for Social Infrastructure. The annual breakdown is as follows; R3 billion in 2023/24, R 2.7 billion in 2024/25 and R3 billion in 2025/26.

Madame Speaker, our infrastructure priorities focus on building of schools, health facilities, roads, housing, energy, water and sanitation.

Madame Speaker, this infrastructure portfolio will be further enhanced through the receipt of additional capital investment via the application and sourcing of additional funding to realise the objective of economic growth through infrastructure delivery.

Madame Speaker, the opportunity regarding recycling of tyres has not been exploited fully in our province. To this effect, the province will be investing R 15 million in the establishment of a tyre granulator facility in Kimberley. These granules have a myriad of uses and could be the first step in creating a series of industries linked to the use of this tyre crumb. This project will be launched in May this year.

Madame Speaker, in 2022 we signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Western Cape Provincial Government to develop a green hydrogen corridor stretching along the west coast of SADC. Plans are afoot as part of this endeavour to also sign an MOU with the Eastern Cape Government. These initiatives support the collaborative effort between the Northern- and Western-Cape, to expand to Namibia and the Eastern Cape.

This corridor will achieve energy resilience and security towards a Western SADC Green Hydrogen Corridor. Green Hydrogen is emerging as a global solution towards a 'Just Energy Transition', which will also provide local benefits to our community where it will contribute to attracting foreign direct investment, economic growth and job creation. This is part of an energy security social compact, which will include a diverse range of social partners. Through this, we will achieve a consensus on how to achieve energy security for our Province and country.

Madame Speaker, nationally, a R600 billion investment pipeline has been identified and designated under our country's Green Hydrogen National Programme. We are happy that additional projects were gazetted in December last year as part of the Green Hydrogen National Programme (GHNP). Of the nine projects, four are located in the Northern Cape (**the Prieska**

Power Reserve, Ubuntu Green Energy Hydrogen Project, Upilanga Solar and Green H2 Park and Boegoebaai Green Hydrogen Development Programme).

These projects are aligned to the Provincial Growth and Development Plan 2040 and anchor the much-needed development towards achieving a growing province.

Since the launch of our Green Hydrogen Strategy, we have made significant progress on the master plan for a green hydrogen special economic zone, which aims to support 40 Gigawatts of electrolyser capacity by 2050.

Madame Speaker, our province expects to yield substantial investment going forward. The N14 Industrial Corridor has advanced very well to date and one of the earliest breakthroughs is the Uppington Industrial Park, which will see phase one construction starting in the new financial year. The Kathu Industrial Park has received support from Anglo and Infrastructure South Africa to fast-track implementation.

Madame Speaker, our government is pleased to announce that the designation of the Namakwa Special Economic Zone is at an advanced stage, approval has been granted by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) and we are just awaiting Cabinet approval. The DTIC and the Province signed a 50/50 agreement, wherein we each committed R1 Billion for cost sharing towards the top structure and the Province will further contribute R600m for Bulk infrastructure development.

Madame Speaker, despite lack of a sufficient budget to service our provincial roads, we are committed to increase access to affordable and reliable transport infrastructure. The Province also transferred 16 roads over to SANRAL on 02 November 2022. This will help the Province to focus on roads which are used mainly by local motorist.

A pivotal development related to the latter is the fact that SANRAL will also be opening an office here in the Northern Cape; this will help to strengthen focus on our roads which are critical to the success of our provincial and the national economy.

Madame Speaker and Honourable members, through the Operation Vala Zonke the Province completed twenty three thousand square meters of potholes and this was achieved by utilising internal road maintenance teams and some work was outsourced which created over 120 jobs.

The Province will continue with the Contractor Development programme as part of developing small contractors to compete in the bigger market. In this regard we are targeting an intake of 50 small contractors annually into the incubation program.

We are also very pleased with the strides made by the Northern Cape Construction Company. The first intake of staff completed their training and is currently sharpening their skills through conducting practical work in Kimberley.

Madame Speaker, we have previously announced the initiative directed towards the development of our small towns, including our mining towns. We have rolled out the Township and Rural Economy Grant in pursuance of this goal. Notably a number of our socio-economic partners are buying into this ideal as stated in our Provincial Growth and Development Plan.

Honourable Members, our province remains the future of the mining sector in the country. Hence, we had many interactions with mining companies and have concluded various social compacts in the area of skills development, SMME support and Corporate Social Investment.

Vedanta mine pledged a R21 billion rand investment in the Northern Cape. In Phase one of the project, a R6 billion investment created 2700 permanent jobs in the Aggeneys area. Phase 2 was launched in August 2022 with a R7 billion rand investment, estimated to create 2500 jobs during construction and a 1000 more jobs once in operation. This will also generate massive opportunities for SMMEs. The mine's capacity will be doubled in phase 2, with the construction of a smelter, which will create many downstream opportunities.

Honourable Members, in partnership with Provincial Government, Vedanta will build an oncology treatment centre in Springbok, which will strengthen support for Cancer patients through the referral pathway towards the tertiary hospital in Kimberley (RSMH). We are also working in partnership with Indumeni Expectra Consortium and HealthCare Professionals to provide innovative, creative and cost effective solutions at our healthcare facilities. This includes infrastructure upgrades. These and many other ventures we have referred to, account for the successive improvements and reduction of unemployment in the Province.

Madame Speaker, I have the pleasure to announce that the Vaal- Gamagara bulk water supply phase one was completed. This bulk water supply scheme is supplying water to several towns and mines in the Mining Corridor. The project also created over 179 jobs over the construction phase. The construction of the Vaalharts Revitalization Multi-year Project will continue, and this

work will include overnight reservoirs, installation of sub-surface drainage to rehabilitate salinisation and water logging of irrigated land.

Furthermore, the Department of Water and Sanitation is currently funding 42 projects in the Province and seven were completed in the last financial year. Planning is also underway for twelve regional bulk infrastructure projects which will focus on addressing bulk water and sanitation challenges at various municipalities. Importantly, national government has called for nominations for the Vaal Orange Catchment Management Agency (VOCMA) Governing Board. It is important that qualifying persons apply before the 31st March 2023.

>, the government's food security interventions includes the following:

- Provision of Grant support for infrastructure development of Land Reform Farms for improved and increased production;
- Training and Capacity Building of farmers;
- Technical and extension advisory services;
- Support to households to address food insecure challenges in the Province.

In addition we will continue to provide Pre and Post Settlement support to land reform beneficiaries in our province.

Honourable Members, government's first priority is to address the infrastructure challenges faced by all our towns and as a starting point we are focusing on Kimberley. In 2021 the Province put in place a turnaround strategy for Kimberley and R500 000 000 was made available to address disconcerting and urgent infrastructure challenges.

In addition, National Treasury has now allocated R1.9 billion to the Sol Plaatje Municipality to improve Water and Sanitation services. This allocation forms part of the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant, which will support the Sol Plaatje Municipality's Integrated Bulk Supply System Intervention over the next three financial years. This will enable the Municipality to realise their priorities in terms of urgent refurbishment of old water supply infrastructure that is in a poor state of repairs.

Honourable Speaker, Sol Plaatje University had 3 693 students who registered for 2022. From the revised enrolment plan (2023 – 2025), the institutional intention is to grow the student numbers in Natural and Applied Sciences and Economic and Management Sciences.

For the 2023 academic year a total of 28 454 applications (undergraduate and postgraduate) were received. This is an increase of just under 9000 against the applications received for 2022. In terms of infrastructure the University total spent on infrastructure development, since inception in 2013, amounts to R2.2 Billion, of this R350 million was spent in 2022.

Honourable Speaker, through the Unemployed Agriculture Graduate Programme the Province is placing unemployed Agricultural graduates in various commercial enterprises across the Province for two years. The next intake will be in 2023/24 with about 80 graduates to be placed.

Honourable Speaker we are pushing full steam with the insourcing. Seven Departments have already insourced cleaners and by the end of this financial year we will be done with the in-sourcing of security services in the Treasury, Premier's Office, Transport, Safety and Liaison and Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform. As I have mentioned in the SOPA 2022 that the Department of Transport, Safety and Liaison will create a Directorate in their organogram that will take full responsibility and accountability of in-sourced security services.

Madame Speaker, through the Premier's Bursary Fund we continue to support students to advance the skills development in the Province. Bursary allocation for 2024/25 will be R14, 9 million.

Our young people continue to benefit from financial assistance from various funders to further their studies at the Institutions of Higher Learning. We can report that a total of 3 866 students benefitted from NSFAS funding and other bursaries.

Honourable Speaker, the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan (JET IP) was announced by our President Cyril Ramaphosa at COP27 which outlined the investment requirements towards South Africa's decarbonising commitments and promote sustainable development in our vulnerable communities. One of the new policy developments in the Northern Cape is the Northern Cape Green Hydrogen Strategy which is centred on driving economic growth and mitigating climate change towards a just transition.

Honourable Members, since 2019 the turn-around time on Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) in the Province improved from about 40% to 85%. The commitment is to reach 100% by 2023/24.

The Province has developed a renewable energy strategy that focuses on rooftop solar PV installation. The strategy seeks to address the limited participation of small, medium and micro-scale enterprises in the renewable energy value chain. The objective is to assist the SMMEs in entering into power purchase agreements with the government and Private sector to acquire loan funding from banks to procure the PV systems. 51 SMME's have received the PV Green card training. The Northern Cape Solar Energy Business Incubator (NOCSOBI) was also established and we will launch it in April 2023.

Madame Speaker, Northern Cape has been plagued by a number of natural disasters such as floods, droughts and sinkholes, amongst others. The effects of climate change have been felt very close to home. I am reminded of the farm workers who tragically passed away reportedly due to heat stroke and the severe drought where more than half of the farms in the Pixley ka Seme District have been impacted for almost a decade, the raging fires in and around Kimberley and the flooded areas of the Lower Orange River. These natural disasters threaten the provincial livestock and crops industries.

I want to thank the *Gift of the Givers* for the aid to areas affected by floods and drought in the Province. Special reference can be made to the increased flow in the Gariiep River, cutting off communities from areas around Keimoes. Communities in that area have been assisted with aid in the form of food and bottled water, the drilling of 238 boreholes, and contributing to food security by providing fodder.

The JET Investment Plan has committed R1, 6 Billion over the next five (5) years to pilot Skills Development Zones (SDZ) in Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape, and the Northern Cape. This will boost our efforts to create the much needed job opportunities.

Honourable Speaker, a total of thirteen thousand five hundred and seventy four Grade 12 candidates wrote all subjects in the 2022 National Senior Certificate examination. Ten thousand and seventy two candidates successfully completed their final examination, bringing the overall pass rate to 74,2% which represents 2.8% increase. This reflects the second highest total of Grade 12s for the 6th Administration. These results also marked an increase of candidates that received Bachelor Degree University entrance.

Honourable Speaker, We remain committed in achieving an 80% matric pass rate and central to this is to strengthen student support and teacher development. Linked to this is the urgent need to strengthen our intake capacity for Early Childhood Development as about 75% of our children in the province do not have access to ECD. ECDs should be effective centres for learning and the Department of Education must within the next two weeks provide me a plan on how to achieve this.

It is important for us to join hands in improving the education system and make partnerships a priority to achieve this. We collaborated with the following partners in Education namely; A Better Africa/NECT and Glabaleq/Accione.

Noteworthy is the fact that 9 schools in the Province have obtained a 100% pass rate. Out of the thirteen thousand five hundred and seventy four (13 574) full time candidates that completed the NSC Examination, a total of 30.8% received a Bachelor's degree university entrance, 26.9% received Diploma entrances and 16.5% received Certificate entrance.

To ensure that Text books are delivered on time the Province has a text book procurement model to support and coordinate the timeous delivery of text books.

Honourable Speaker, in the past nine (9) months, no COVID-19-related deaths has been reported. The Province has maintained its level 4 vaccination program success rate amongst all nine Provinces. Our goal for this year (2023-2024) is to attain Ideal Facilities Status for at least fifty percent of our sites. This will ensure that we are prepared for the launch of the National Health Insurance in 2026. Our relationship with Anglo American and Right to Care will facilitate this objective's realization.

Honourable Speaker, for the 2022–2023 fiscal year, the Northern Cape has appointed 6 958 staff members, comprising contracts, temporary employees, and permanent employees.

We have increased medication availability to stabilize at an average of 85% across all of our facilities. The procurement of three new delivery vehicles for R2, 1 million has helped to ensure that there is improved supply of medication.

To expand the present pool of available vehicles and replace aging vehicles, we are purchasing ambulances. Out of the 54 ambulances anticipated, we are launching 14 new vehicles, some of which have off-road capabilities. We will do rehabilitation outreach as part of the Resetting of the

Health System to strengthen our Districts. The waiting time for wheelchairs for those in need has decreased. We have distributed 1 531 wheelchairs.

The Northern Cape has experienced attrition of more than 5% of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) on Antiretroviral. However, with the ease and lifting of lockdown regulations in 2022, an increase in the retention of People Living with HIV who are on antiretroviral treatment.

Honourable Speaker, the burden of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension has increased. Our number of patients who are now treated for these conditions are 4 398 for diabetes and 6 186 for hypertension in 2022/23 from 900 and 1 781. Showing an increase of 3 498 and 4 405 respectively.

Honourable Speaker, the Northern Cape is amongst the highest proportion of households that experience hunger. The 10% increase in food insecure households is concerning and requires multi-sectoral approach. More than half of the households with young children that experienced hunger were in urban areas. The R350 social relief of distress (SRD) grant has become a lifeline for many people who lost their source of income during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

Before Covid-19, Provincial government funded 143 Non-Profit Organizations, serving 33 000 individuals at R 26.6 million annually. Through Covid-19, the food security programme identified 88 un-serviced areas and invested R10 million. There is allocation to fund the establishment of an additional 70 new nutrition centres during the 2022/23 financial year. In the process, we created 177 work opportunities demonstrating the resilience we had endured during the difficult times.

The Provincial government therefore continues to work together with different stakeholders, government, non-governmental organisations and civil society to address food insecurity. As a Province we will continue to support food insecure households. We will ramp up our efforts to support subsistence farmers with garden starter packs, garden equipment in all 5 Districts for own food production.

Honourable Speaker, domestic violence continues to be a deadly crime, a social menace, and a costly public health and economic problem. Most victims are women and children, the brutal killing of our women and children is completely unacceptable. This atrocious behaviour shows a need to move from policy to action and provide a stronger societal focus on prevention and early intervention to support women and children against this scourge.

Last year we convened a successful Provincial GBVF Summit that was attended by more than 300 participants drawn from all sectors of society. Working with our communities and the police, we will prioritise the GBVF hotspots, which include Galeshewe, Kimberley, Roodepan, Kagisho and Upington.

The Province has completed its District One Plans for the five districts, and these are in the process of being published for public participation. We encourage communities to participate in these engagements. Once the One Plans are finalised and launched by end of 2023 it will be ready for full implementation. It is also expected that a DDM Monitoring & Evaluation Plan would be finalised by the end of June 2023.

Honourable Speaker, we have already started with the rationalisation of Provincial Public Entities and Trusts utilising internal capacity across provincial government to drive the respective processes. All preliminary work (legal, financial and HR) pertaining to the Rationalisation of Provincial Public Entities will be finalised by end of March this year followed by full implementation.

The two regulatory entities in the Province, which are the Liquor Board and Gambling Board will also be merged by the end of 2023.

One of the key pillars of the 6th Administration is good governance. Thus Operational Clean Audit was driven from the centre to assist and support Departments to obtain improved audit outcomes in the 2022/23 financial year. This resulted in the Province attaining improved audit outcomes, with 4 Departments attaining clean audits (Office of the Premier, Department of Social Development, Provincial Treasury and Sport, Arts and Culture). The Provincial Government Departments have all migrated out of disclaimers.

This coordinated approach to improve audit outcomes in the Northern Cape Provincial Government will be intensified in the 2023/24 financial year to ensure that we continue achieve the objective of 100% clean audits across the provincial departments.

The state of local government remains a concern, thus the Office of the Premier expanded the scope of the Operation Clean Audit to include municipalities. In this regard we are proud to announce that all municipalities in our Province managed to submit their Financial Statements to the Office of the Auditor General on time in terms of the MFMA for the 2021/22 financial year.

The Local Government Anti-corruption forum was launched with all hands on deck to deal with corruption cases at municipal level.

Honourable Speaker, the Province concluded and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Office of the Public Protector to strengthen cooperation in combating and eradicating fraud, corruption, maladministration and malpractice in the Northern Cape. We are confident that this intervention will yield the required results

Ladies and Gentleman, last year we proclaimed that we were at the mid-term of the sixth administration. We have now entered the twilight of the current term of governance; we are thus focusing on the consolidation of our work to build a modern, growing and successful Province. We have stated in 2019 what constitutes the priorities of this 6th Administration. Hence the question.

What did we present here today?

- We presented figures that attest to the fact that we are reducing unemployment, with lowest official unemployment in the country.
- We also presented figures to demonstrate that we are growing the economy.
- We presented projects that show that, together with our partners we are succeeding in modernising our province through massive investment in broadband infrastructure, e-health and e-education.
- We presented figures that demonstrated increased spending and investment in both social and economic infrastructure.
- We presented information that demonstrated that there is sustained improvement in Grade 12 outcomes, both quantitatively and qualitatively.
- In this SOPA we demonstrated that there are increased training opportunities for young people in the province.
- We also demonstrated the fact that there is maturing of social compacting with labour and business community.
- We also demonstrated that there is intensification of the fight against corruption.
- It is for everyone to see that there are significant improvements in audit outcomes.
- We also demonstrated that measures are in place to intensify our fight against GBVF.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, this SOPA is an accurate reflection of the work done by this 06th Provincial Administration in the past few years and a true reflection of our commitment for the year ahead of us.

Madam speaker, Ladies and Gentleman, I am certain that with our collective resolve and determination, we will, as a Province overcome our current difficulties and challenges with the necessary resilience and hard work.

In this regard I think it entirely appropriate that I close this address with the life changing experience of our home-grown gift to the world, our operative soprano, Pretty Yende.

Pretty Yende was born in Mpumalanga and with hard work and perseverance she is now a regular and globally much-sought after leading lady by opera houses.

About a decade ago, Yende made her debut at the New York Metropolitan Opera House. The lead soprano fell ill and Yende was given that role. She just had a week to practice all the songs.

During the opening night, Yende proceeded down the stairs to deliver her debut performance to New York's most discerning classical music audiences, and she suddenly tripped and fell.

A moment later, Yende got up, dusted herself off and sang her heart out. At the conclusion she received a rapturous standing ovation which is unprecedented for a first performance.

Ladies and Gentleman, I share this incident with you with unbridled pride. You see, we South Africans are made of stronger stuff and I am confident that when we act in unity behind a common purpose or cause, we will achieve whatever we set out to do. If Pretty Yende could mesmerise the world after a dramatic fall, so can we, both as a Province and Nation, united in faith, hope and resilience.

Honourable Speaker, let me then, thank all my colleagues, the MECs and all the MPLs for their continued support. I also want to thank the Director General of the Province and his army of more than 26 000 public servants for their hard work and sometimes working under extremely challenging circumstances. Let me also express my gratitude to my beautiful wife for her unwavering support that she's always combat ready to give me. My mom, siblings and children will always serve as my energiser and I want to thank them for that. To all the Northern Capers, let's push this thing and make it work for our common prosperity.

I thank you.