

Premier Sylvia Lucas: Northern Cape 2015 State of the Province Address

19 Feb 2015

The Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature;
Members of the Executive Council;
Members of the National Assembly and National Council of Provinces;
Provincial Premiers;
Members of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Our Esteemed Judge President and Members of the Judiciary;
Heads of State Security Services;
Chairperson of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Mayors and Leaders in our system of Local Government;
Our Honoured Traditional Leaders and Veterans of our Liberation Struggle;
Heads of State institutions supporting our constitutional democracy;
The Director General, Heads of Department and Leaders of the Public Service;
Goodwill Ambassadors of the Northern Cape province;
Government officials;
Distinguished guests;
Fellow citizens of the Northern Cape;
Ladies and gentlemen.

Honourable Speaker

I stand here today humbled and proud to deliver our State of the Province Address in the same year that we celebrate the Freedom Charter and a few days after celebrating the 103rd anniversary of the mighty African National Congress, where 2015 was declared the year of the Freedom Charter.

Delivering the January 8 statement at Cape Town Stadium during the ruling African National Congress's 103rd anniversary celebrations, the Honourable President, Jacob Zuma said, "To achieve radical social and economic transformation, it was important for the country to use the Freedom Charter as a guide to shaping policies and legislation that are aimed at serving all South Africans." He called on all sectors of society to embrace the Freedom Charter as this year also marks the 60th anniversary of this historic document, which was penned in Kliptown, Soweto, in 1955.

The Freedom Charter states that South Africa belongs to all who live in it and that the people shall govern and this resonates true today in that we have achieved what was set out on that historic day in 1955. Today we enjoy the freedom and democracy dreamed of and fought for with blood and tears. The people shall govern and the overwhelming majority of the people have firmly placed their confidence in the African National Congress to advance economic freedom.

In essence the Freedom Charter sets out the bare elements of the democratic programme, thereby prompting the Governing Party to adopt for 2015, as its vanguard of governance, the theme: "The year of the Freedom Charter and Unity in Action to advance economic freedom."

Those who today claim to own this ideology are far removed from reality as it was and will always be the ideology and the goal of the African National Congress who with our alliance partners crafted this ideology back in 1955.

Honorable Speaker

I also wish to make use of this august occasion to pay tribute to the father of our liberation, the late and former president Nelson Mandela whom we will always remember fondly and with the greatest admiration.

Twenty five years ago, on the 11th of February, he walked out of the Victor Verster prison as a free man, after 27 years of imprisonment.

This day marked a giant leap in the long walk to freedom, not just for Nelson Mandela but also for the people of South Africa. It was indeed a momentous occasion and a major milestone not only for us in the liberation movement but for South Africans in general, the resistance movement in the continent, and the world over.

This day continues to represent the beginning of a special period in our country when outstanding patriots from both the democratic movement and the then apartheid regime affirmed the real possibility to create a united and non-racial society based on democratic values and the rule of law. It is a reminder to all of us of our innate capacity as South Africans to overcome even the most daunting challenges and ensure the triumph of good over evil.

Quite heroically, when President Mandela walked out of those prison doors, he did so not armed with anger and desire to avenge his painful experience as some in our country and beyond would have expected; he chose instead to advocate for forgiveness and reconciliation, because he correctly understood, as Mahatma Gandhi so aptly put it that, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world go blind."

We continue to be inspired by this teaching of forgiveness and national reconciliation as the cornerstone of the society envisaged by our forebears which is being at peace with itself and with the world.

Ladies and gentlemen

As we are about to complete 21 years of democratic governance - a transition from adolescence to maturity – I want to remind the people of the Northern Cape that the Freedom Charter, is widely considered to be the blueprint that gave rise to the birth certificate of our nation, namely our Constitution which is the supreme law of our land.

The Constitution makes a firm promise to our people that their lives will improve but most importantly it tells us, who has been entrusted with this task and how to deliver on that promise.

It is our intention to strengthen the planning and related functions within government. We are of the view that this will lead to greater efficiency in the area of service delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen

We meet at a time when our economy faces difficult times. Our provincial economy is premised on its vast natural resource deposits, which has historically been our largest foreign export earner. The poor global economic sentiment that currently still prevails puts us in a precarious position. We cannot deny that our country's economy, and even more so the economy of the Northern Cape Province, is sensitive to the global events. It therefore tells us that we would require a "radical economic transformation" way of thinking to quell the potential impact to the provincial economy. For us to propel the economy forward, we would need to shift the focus towards the development of productive economic sectors, which are labour absorbing.

In 2013, the provincial economy grew by 2.1%, declining by a marginal 1.2% from the previous year. The tertiary sector, which is the most prominent provincial economic sector, grew by 0.9%. What is promising, is the fact that 18 000 people found employment in the fourth quarter of 2014. The majority of these jobs were created in the agriculture and construction sectors. It is evident that construction of the renewable energy projects from Bid Windows 1 and 2 respectively, of the Renewable Energy Independent Producer Programme is starting to show results.

The value of agriculture to the economy of the Northern Cape is of great importance. It contributes its share in terms of employment creation. Therefore, the revitalisation of the agriculture and agro-processing value chain is critically important to us. Initiatives already under way such as the Vaalharts Irrigation Scheme will therefore be prioritised even more so in this regard. We are the lead province in terms of solar renewable energy initiatives and in terms of our Renewable Energy Strategy; we plan to be a net exporter to the republic and beyond of renewable energy by 2020.

Having said this, I wish to add that we remain resolute to the creation of employment in 2015; the provincial government will harness relations with both civil society and business to ensure that 18 000 more people have job opportunities.

Honourable Speaker

I am pleased to report that our drive to diversify the provincial economy through initiatives in the fields of renewable energy; agro-processing and aquaculture, amongst others, is very encouraging indeed.

We will leverage our comparative advantage that we as a Province have from our mineral wealth to build a dynamic industrial economy. As the Provincial Government, we believe that the partnerships that we have already set in motion with the private sector and the mining houses will go a long way in contributing positively towards economic growth and job creation, as well as entrepreneurial opportunities in the province. This will go a long way in transforming our economy, and creating jobs in order to halve poverty and inequality by 2030.

It is clear that our economy needs a major push forward and for this reason, the Honourable President Jacob Zuma, during the State of the Nation Address, announced a 9 point plan to ignite growth and create jobs.

The focus of these will be:

- Resolving the energy challenge.

- Revitalising agriculture and the agro-processing value chain.
- Advancing beneficiation and adding value to our mineral wealth.
- More effective implementation of a higher impact Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP).
- Encouraging private sector investment in the Province.
- Moderating workplace conflict.
- Unlocking the potential of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), cooperatives, township and rural enterprises.

State reform and boosting the role of state-owned companies (SOEs), as well as information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure.

Operation Phakisa, aimed at growing the ocean economy.

Ladies and gentlemen

The country is currently undergoing serious energy constraints, which reasonably can be argued is an impediment to the economic growth and is a huge inconvenience to everyone in the country. All however is not doom and gloom and much is being done by the power utility to sail us smoothly through these energy challenges. To this end, Eskom has connected 950 Megawatts (Mw) of renewable energy from Independent Power Producers (IPPs) to the grid ahead of the time that they were ready to generate.

Currently, over 500 Mw is absorbed into the Eskom National grid from these Northern Cape IPP's. The Province consumes 5467 Gigawatts (Gw) of electrical energy per annum, or 2.5% of the national total. With the newly developed IPP capacity (measured in Gigawatts or Megawatts, depending on the magnitude), the Northern Cape will produce more than 100% of its own power needs locally from renewable energy sources. The Province has received the lion's share of the IPP projects, namely 32 of the 64 projects, allocated during three of the five bid windows.

Eskom spent over R300 million on capital improvements in the Northern Cape, which included the new Schmidtsdrift Substation, as well as Canal Substation near Van der Kloof. These projects provided added capacity for farming in these areas. High Voltage Lines critical for Manganese Mining is currently under construction in the Hotazel area, and will be completed in the first half of 2015. The new 400 kilovolt (kV) line bringing power to the Kathu/Hotazel area (a total capital investment of R2.4 billion over many years) is due to be switched on during March this year. This will allow for increased mining activity in the area. Eskom has increased its maintenance across the whole of the Northern Cape Province, which has improved supply to customers.

Thus far 2000 households were connected onto the grid, between April 2014 and December 2014. A further 1058 households will be connected before end of March 2015. Capacity in the Eskom network is being increased in the Kuruman/Mothibistad area where the biggest backlog exists, and R800 million will be spent over the next five years by Eskom on this project.

Ladies and gentlemen

Political power, without economic power, is nothing more than just a hollow gesture. The ANC government is taking steps to enhance the developmental role and create a more conducive environment to achieve that objective.

In the past 20 years the circumstances of many South Africans has changed for the better. We cannot, however deny that the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality still persist. Our economy is still largely controlled by a minority. During the second phase of our democratic transition, we will therefore embark on a period of radical socio-economic transformation.

The small, medium, micro enterprises (SMME) sector is one of the major contributors to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and thus equally contributes to economic growth as well as one of the key job drivers in the New Growth Path and a catalyst towards sustainable job creation.

However, it is also one of the sectors that experience many challenges, particularly as far as access to finance, markets, skills, sustainability and growth are concerned. This is also the case with the Northern Cape, hence the need to enhance the skills base and versatility for transformation purposes as well as increased efforts to ensure access to financial start-up resources.

It is therefore within this context that the Northern Cape Province envisages to intensify sustainable SMME development training programmes for the financial years 2015/16 – 2019/20.

In order to stimulate for the development of local economies and facilitate job creation in that sector, the Provincial Government always strives to pay its creditors within 30 days. Departments are by and large managing to meet this target. Where there are challenges, the MEC of Finance has instituted various measures to improve on those challenges. For instance, departments are required to report to our Treasury on a monthly basis on the 30 day payment status with follow measures being undertaken on those reports.

Comrades and friends

The creation of jobs continues to be a major priority in the province. Unemployment remains stubbornly high, but the province presents a number of opportunities in skilled areas. Improved educational attainment is key to address the skills required by the province. We will continue to use all avenues of Government, including the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), to create decent work opportunities.

In the previous five year period, preliminary results indicate that the province created 80 756 work opportunities (representing 76% of the target). Municipalities on the other hand achieved 97% of their EPWP targets by creating 28 132 work opportunities against a target of 29 102. The province is required to create 85000 job opportunities over the next five years.

We are inspired to see the continued support of the private sector in job creation. Late last year the new zinc mine at Gamsberg near Aggenys in Namaqualand was launched which will employ 1 500 people during the construction phase, as well as 500 permanent positions going into operation. The venture is set to cost more than R7 billion and will be a much needed economic injection in the north western region of our province. The assistance given by the Northern Cape Government to ensure the establishment of this venture in this province on going.

Honourable Speaker

The Department of Roads and Public Works has made significant strides in addressing the daunting challenges presented by inadequate roads, as well as the lack of maintenance of infrastructure and public facilities. The past five years a total of R2.8 billion was invested on infrastructure development in the Northern Cape.

The focus of the department has shifted from construction to maintenance in order to preserve the assets that we have. We anticipate investing a further R2.4 billion over the next three years on infrastructure development, which includes:

- Road resealing worth R170 million, which includes the Loeriesfontein to Nieuwoudtville road; the Philipstown to Hanover road and MR795 in Strydenburg.
- Repairing floods damage worth R93 million, which includes Petrusville, Prieska North, Neilersdrift to Kakamas and Blouputs, to name but a few.
- Bridge Maintenance worth R25 million to critical bridges in the Namaqua District.
- Eradication of potholes worth R8 million.
- Road furniture (Road signs and guardrails) worth R20 million.
- Routine and preventative maintenance worth R205 million throughout the entire Northern Cape Province.
- The N14 in Postmasburg, that stretches over 55km has a project value of R100 million. A total of 50 job opportunities have been created. To date the project is 90% complete.
- The Hotazel to Tsineng road. The BHP Billiton mine contributed half of the cost for the upgrade of this road. An estimated cost of R60 million has been invested in this project. We are ready to commence with Phase 3, which amounts to R38 million. Phases 1 and 2 of the project are completed, with phase 3, between Tsineng and Gasesse, under construction and phase 4 is in the tendering process.
- The Joe Morolong, Wyk 10 to Laxey and N14 to Bothitong in partnership with Sishen Iron Ore Community Trust (SIOC): The department has appointed the contractors during September 2014 and construction is progressing well.
- The road linking Hondeklip Bay with the N7 near Garies. Phase 1 started in November 2013. The estimated cost of the road amounts to R240 million. Phase 2 of the project will start during the 2015/16 financial year.

Honourable Speaker

As a lead agent in the sector, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development will continue to champion land and agrarian transformation, promote and facilitate increased production and provide expertise for improved livelihoods, sustainable rural development and food security for all.

The government's Orange River Emerging Farmer Settlement and Development programme has to date seen the allocation of two thousand eight hundred hectares of water rights to communities and groups of Historically Disadvantaged Individuals (HDIs). The programme is used to assist beneficiaries of the Land Reform Programme with infrastructural and project coordination along the Orange River. The remaining water rights will be allocated throughout the period 2014-19.

Another key initiative is the implementation of the Animal and Veld Management Programme with its goal of reversing the legacy of the 1913 Natives Land Act. Leliefontein with a land size of 200 030 hectares, consisting of 10 towns with approximately 230 hundred and thirty farmers in four wards is being targeted.

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in the Northern Cape will continue to provide comprehensive support to smallholder farmers through the implementation of the new Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF).

Extensive support is also being provided towards food production and subsistence farming to promote food security, in line with the Fetsa Tlala Food Production Programme.

Last year Government launched Operation Phakisa. This is a results-based laboratory approach to planning and execution of programmes. Two projects in the Northern Cape have been highlighted as part of Operation Phakisa. The main focus of alternative animal production systems will be the development of fisheries and aquaculture with Vanderkloof Dam as the main fresh water area and a commercial project at Port Nolloth with an investment value of R80 million. The existing strategy will be expanded to include both fisheries and aquaculture in fresh and salt water.

Ladies and gentlemen

The Namakwa District has huge potential for agricultural development where the River Valley Basin Catalytic Project will be launched, eventually providing up to 4 800 permanent jobs. Currently, there are approximately 3 000 hectares of land with water licenses that need to be developed in Namakwa at an estimated cost of R1.3 billion. The province is in the final stages of drafting a Development Strategy for these irrigation areas which includes, Onseepkans, Coboop, Pella, Witbank, Goodhouse, Henkries, Bloeddrif, Sanddrif and the Richtersveld CPA.

Ladies and gentlemen

Education continues to be a major priority. We annually spend at least 65% of the Northern Cape's budget on education and health. The Northern Cape Government is intent on sustaining and improving the quality of education, which must reflect our developmental imperatives.

This ANC-led Government believes that no child should receive schooling in sub-standard circumstances, and the provision of comprehensive infrastructure remains key to ensuring that teaching and learning occurs in a conducive physical environment. The province therefore continues to invest massively in school infrastructure.

We are pleased to announce that we have overcome in the face of adversity. Our learners in John Taolo Gaetsewe have embarked on their supplementary examinations and we wish them the best of luck and success. Let it be known that no child will be prevented from learning and we shall do

whatever legally necessary to ensure that they enjoy this right guaranteed by the Constitution and the Freedom Charter.

To contribute towards optimal levels of learning and teaching, it is necessary to eradicate the backlog of schools without water, sanitation and electricity and also to replace those schools constructed from inappropriate material. The overall objective of the Northern Cape Education Department is thus to bring all schools to optimal functionality by 2025.

This year we will continue with water upgrades at 61 schools, including 28 ablution blocks. To offset overcrowding, 55 classrooms will be constructed, while six new schools (Emmanuel, Jan Kempdorp, Roodepan, Matjieskloof, Philipstown and Wrenchville) are expected to be completed. Construction will also begin on a further four schools. Replacement of one asbestos school (Sternham) will be completely financed through the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) programme.

As far as school hostels are concerned, the Kitlanyang Hostel and school replacement will progress into construction and two others (Lesedi and Batlharo-Tlhaping) will be completed in 2015/16.

The department will provide four school halls at large high schools. Upgrades to fencing will be done at 55 schools and seven schools are to be provided with administration blocks.

Honourable Speaker

The Northern Cape Government is constantly striving to improve learner outcomes.

Our aim is to promote skills and a knowledge based society, which in turn requires ongoing professional development of teachers and support staff.

To this end and in response to National Education Collaboration Framework Trust, the Northern Cape Department of Education has entered into a partnership with SIOC-cdt on an initiative called Program for Improving Learner Outcomes (PILO).

This is a three year partnership (2014-2016) and is anchored on five pillars, namely:

- School Support;
- District and Province Support;
- Learner Support;
- Communications and Stakeholder Engagement; and
- Programme Management and Monitoring and Evaluation.

The program is currently being implemented in all schools in the John Taolo Gaetsewe District. This District was one of the 15 districts countrywide that performed under 60% in the 2011 National Senior Certificate examination. The district has since improved its overall Grade 12 pass rate and shed the tag of an 'underperforming district'.

Honourable Speaker

The intense desire by Northern Cape matriculants to further their education within this Province was aptly illustrated by the large numbers who braved Kimberley's sweltering heat to stand in line, often for hours, in an effort to attain a placement in a tertiary institution.

While the number of potential tertiary education students' increases annually and financing remains a concern, a typical challenge is also the fact that students that gain entrance to such institutions search fruitlessly for rental accommodation near the city centre or else face additional transport costs when accommodated in the townships.

Building on the Sol Plaatje University (SPU) has commenced in all earnest and once completed some accommodation relief will be in sight for the students.

Ladies and gentlemen

It fills me with great pride that we as the citizens can today bear testimony to the realisation of the long awaited university - a learning institution right here on the soil of the Northern Cape.

Ek is trots om vandag hier te rapporteer dat die eerste groep van 125 studente wat geregistreer het aan die Universiteit in 2014 het baie goed gevaar. Die syfers dui daarop dat 80% van die studente al hul eerste jaar kursusse geslaag het, met 'n gemiddeld van 87% per vak. Dit is die hoogste slaagsyfer persentasie vir eerstejaar studente en ek dink hulle verdien applous. Die akademiese oorsig was behartig deur die Universiteit van die Vrystaat en die Kaap Peninsula Universiteit van Tegnologie.

Not only has the University proved its academic worth in its first year of existence, but the Sol Plaatje University developed the curriculum and obtained approval from the Higher Education Quality Council to offer a BSc degree in Data Science in 2015 - the first university in Africa to do so. This is to prepare the intellectual capacity in the Northern Cape to deal with a future world of "Big Data" and the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project. 26 students have registered on this programme this year - all from the Northern Cape. We are indeed a province of firsts.

The Sol Plaatje University also developed the curriculum and obtained approval to offer a Higher Certificate in Heritage Studies – once again the first in South Africa. The programme is intended to develop the young minds that will increase the Northern Cape's ability to tell its own story and to interpret its own archive. This year the University has set a target to take in 370 students, almost triple the initial intake.

At this point allow me Honourable Speaker to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Prof Yunus Ballim who is with today, on his appointment as the founding Vice Chancellor of the Sol Plaatje University. As Interim Head, Prof Ballim has served with honour and distinction and we have absolute faith that he will continue to do so in this very important position. Higher Education faces a mammoth challenge to develop and guide young minds to achieve what they start out to do. With the passion and zeal displayed by Prof Ballim I am confident that he will lead the University to realise its vision and to move education in the province forward.

Ladies and gentlemen

Education is seen as the foundation of every prosperous and progressive community, society and nation. It is on this premise that the Northern Cape Provincial Government is committed to ensure

that we wholeheartedly and with the resources at our disposal, invest in the education and development of our young people, both in school and out of school.

As a result, most of the Northern Cape Provincial Government Departments supported by the Northern Cape Education Premiers Trust Fund has been allocating bursaries to deserving and needy students. This year alone, the number of bursaries, student loans, and scholarships are in excess of 400. We also strongly encourage students to further their studies at our Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges as a means of preparing themselves for the job market.

I want to make use of this opportunity to thank our partners in the Private sector that place education as high on the agenda as government does. They know that by investing in the future of our children, we make an investment in the future prosperity of our country. In this regard, my sincerest thanks and gratitude to a number of private sector institutions such as the Mine Managers Forum, Standard Bank, Assmang, the Banking SETA and the ETDP SETA, who have so graciously contributed to the funding of tertiary studies of our learners. Your efforts go a long way in uplifting the skills and capacity base of the Province.

We are also grateful to the Mining Qualifications Authority that has awarded 90 bursaries to previously disadvantaged and female applicants that wish to take up study in the Mining and Engineering disciplines.

A special word of gratitude goes to the MaKhumalo Foundation that will be making bursaries and school uniforms available to learners from the Province.

Honourable Speaker

We are excited by the news that this year marks the beginning of the first broadband rollout. The Honourable President, Jacob Zuma announced in his State of the Nation address last week that eight District Municipalities in the country will be connected in the country and Pixley ka Seme District will form part of this pilot. Government has also identified Telkom to be the leading agent to assist with this rollout.

Businesses especially the hospitality industry can leverage broadband to increase their profits. This has a direct impact on job creation and economic development. The importance therefore of the accessibility and competitive advantage that broadband can create can therefore not be undervalued.

In an ever expanding digital world, the library service is meeting its challenges of providing relevant library services and materials to the most remote parts of the province. We envisage completing seven new libraries in the province by the end of the financial year. The expansion of broadband connectivity to all libraries in the Province has been high on the agenda and 148 already boast free public internet access.

We will be hosting the first ever Provincial Sports Awards to recognise excellence in Sports. The Florianville swimming will be upgraded to accommodate competitive swimming. The refurbishment of the Northern Cape Theatre will be completed this year. We will be constructing nine new libraries. We are proud of Tholwana Mohale from Steinkopf high school, a product of "Northern Cape has talent", that won the "South Africa has talent" contest.

Ladies and gentlemen

In 1994 we started the arduous task of transforming the health system from one that was systemically extremely skewed, fragmented and categorised to serve a few, both in the public and private sector. Huge resource inequalities existed in terms of their allocation in society and their distribution.

The democratic government in its founding stages already introduced free health services for the poor, women and children. This was meant to broaden access to health care as envisaged by the Freedom Charter.

Government had to put legislation in place in the form of the National Health Act that reflected the tenets of the African National Congress's Health Plan of 1994 as well as the 1997 White Paper on Health System Transformation.

Comrades and friends

Plans are afoot to improve the nurse training capacity of the province and fully capacitate the EMS College and disaster training initiatives as announced by the President during the opening of Harry Surtie Hospital in Upington.

We have done extremely well in the revitalisation and modernisation of our health infrastructure, and we will continue to do so, albeit focussing on a different dimension, namely the maintenance of our facilities. This should in the medium term also create jobs and serve as an opportunity to skill young people and create economic opportunities for them.

A massive programme is being launched this year to turn the tide against Tuberculosis and already last year we re-launched the HIV Testing and Counselling Campaign as a means of fighting the scourge of HIV and AIDS. This comes in light of the fact that according to StatsSA, HIV is the main cause of death, overtaking TB in 2013.

Honourable Speaker

In pursuance of the noble objectives of the second phase of our democratic transition, we reflected on the goals we set out for ourselves and those agreed on by the global community, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Consequently, President Zuma, in his State of the Nation Address in 2014, stated: "We will launch an adaptation of the Big Fast Results methodology in South Africa, and we have renamed the Malaysian approach Operation Phakisa."

The President also announced that the concept of a prototype clinic, the 'ideal clinic', will be the first to be piloted in terms of the Big Fast Results. The work in this regard has already started. The public will soon be provided with greater detail, because their participation is crucial.

This development must be viewed in the context of the re-engineering of primary health care and the introduction of the National Health Insurance (NHI). The NHI pilot site in the Northern Cape is Pixley Ka Seme District. The introduction of community and strengthening of school health services across the Province are an important component of the re-engineering of primary health care.

In just over a decade and a half we have raised the bar and set an impeccable record in the revitalization of health facilities. Just a few months ago, we launched the state of the art Harry Surtie Hospital and we are seeing the imminent completion of the new Hospital in De Aar.

These two facilities indicate the onerous route we have travelled in accelerating the delivery of mega projects in so far as the delivery of public infrastructure is concerned. There has been minimal delays, and in many instances those delays were reversed, we have come of age as we approach the 21st year of democratic governance; we are best poised to fulfil the aspirations of our people that the Freedom Charter clamours for.

We are also putting shoulder to the wheel to ensure that the Mental Health Hospital is finally completed. The project is presently 52% complete. We will do so through diligent effort, without throwing in the towel, jumping ship as others have done and losing hope in the ideals of the Freedom Charter.

Honourable Speaker

During this term, poverty reduction will continue to be reinforced. The South African Multi Dimensional Poverty Index (SAMPI) records improvement during the period 2001-2011. Notable investments have been made by government in education, health, infrastructure, social assistance and poverty alleviation programmes, but we are mindful of the fact that poverty continues to define the lives of many in our country.

In August 2008, government launched the National War on Poverty Campaign to reduce poverty among the country's poorest citizens. This is an ongoing campaign and the Department of Social Development and other government departments and stakeholders will, for the 2015/16 financial year, continue to assist in excess of 2 000 families in the War on Poverty areas to lift them out of poverty.

A case study conducted by StatsSA in the JTG Region has proven that the intervention programmes by government contributed immensely to the alleviation of poverty. We are encouraged by this and will escalate our efforts to systematically lift more people out of poverty and restore their dignity and worthiness.

To further consolidate our democratic gains, we will continue to advance and improve the lives of people with disabilities over the next five years. We aim to expand the existing services to ensure that the services reach persons with disabilities in the rural areas.

Ladies and gentlemen

In the year 2015-2016 Statistics South Africa who collects information on demographics, life circumstances and service delivery; will again conduct a large scale household survey, the Community Survey, in its ongoing quest to ensure that policy and decision-making is based on the most recent data available. I make an appeal to all citizens to support the work of the enumerators and to provide the most accurate and truthful information. The work of StatsSA cannot be underscored as it is the fact-finder of the nation.

Honourable Speaker

Positive progress has been made over the past five years in reducing the levels of serious crime, such as murders, aggravated robberies, and crimes against women, children and other vulnerable groups. Despite these gains, the crime situation still remains a cause for concern and we commit ourselves to not only work harder, but to work smarter in our quest to further reduce all levels of crime.

The Department of Transport, Safety and Liaison has developed our Provincial Crime Prevention Strategy for implementation by the sister departments and private sector within local communities. At the launch in Batlharos, Kuruman I made the commitment that this document will not be stored somewhere to gather dust only to be reviewed for compliance. It can no longer be claimed that fighting crime is the sole responsibility of government. We all as responsible citizens of this great Province must step up and declare that we too are important role players in ensuring that our people are safe, secure and at peace with one another.

Amidst the gains made in reducing crime, the scourge of woman and child abuse continues to blot the face of the Northern Cape province. Crime continues to be a major social economic challenge, and I urge communities to heed the call and become active participants in the fight against crime and all forms of criminality. We need to become part of a society that boldly declares that we have had enough and we are fighting back. We as the people of the Northern Cape, through cooperation and participation, can move this province forward. Working together we can and will make a positive change in the lives of our fellow citizens.

Now more than ever, Honourable Speaker, we must embrace the spirit of Ubuntu and live our Godly values to the fullest. When we have done that, the war against crime will be won, and I can assure you that there will be peace and stability.

Ladies and gentlemen

The abuse and dependency of drugs has reached alarming proportions. This is threatening to tear apart the fabric of our communities. Our young people, our future leaders are trapped in this vicious web of drug abuse and it requires urgent intervention. No longer can we look the other way and claim that it is not our problem.

The abuse of drugs and the flourishing narcotics and drug market it has created impacts directly on our lives. Drug abuse and drug peddling have a direct impact on our communities. We have found that where drug abuse and peddling is rife, the crime in the area escalates. Fighting drug abuse requires a multi-disciplinary approach. The Department of Social Development, with their Ke Moja prevention programme is at the forefront of this war we wage against drug abuse and dependency. Currently, the programme is implemented in sixty eight schools throughout the Province, and we aim to reach many more schools and learners. To this end, the South African Police Service in the Northern Cape has made significant strides in their fight against drugs. In the period from April to December last year they confiscated large amounts of illegal substances.

Honourable Speaker

Victims of crime and violence were provided with psychological and social support services inclusive of counseling and therapeutic services in two service sites funded by the department. Training was provided to social workers throughout the province to identify victims of human trafficking and

providing them with support services. A number of 1 569 victims of crime and violence received these psycho-social support services throughout the province.

Last year, during the 16 Days of Activism on no Violence against Women & Children campaign, with the theme "Count me in as we together move towards a safer South Africa", the Keimoes Safe House was officially opened on 10 December 2014. The safe house will provide safe and secure accommodation for victims of crime and violence in the ZF Mgcawu District.

Simultaneously, the Department of Social Development is rendering crime prevention programmes to children in conflict with the law and at risk.

The abuse of alcohol and substances contribute to all of these, especially the infinite social ills that are the product of the Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), which studies has increasingly indicated pervades a large section of communities in our province. Until recently, it was widely believed that FAS is endemic only in De Aar, but to the contrary, the red lights are flashing all around us. We call on the people of our Province to act responsibly in this regard in the interests of the common good. The abuse of alcohol is toxic for our social wellbeing.

Honourable Speaker

The Northern Cape is well endowed with natural and cultural heritage which must be fully exploited to benefit its entire people.

For far too long eco-tourism and more particularly visits to nature parks or reserves were the preserve of the rich and upper-middle class. This is all set to change when the five provincial nature reserves in the Northern Cape are officially reopened this year.

The tourism facilities in these reserves have been upgraded to an amount of R174 million in a joint provincial Department of Environment and Nature Conservation and national Department of Environmental Affairs EPWP project.

The past three years the local communities surrounding these reserves have seen a major increase in revenue and are likely to further benefit when aspects relating to the People and the Parks programme kick in. This programme, if properly implemented, sees communities surrounding the parks also benefit in economic activities relating to tourism.

The Department of Environment and Nature Conservation will also be utilising the facilities as part of its highly successful eco-schools programme.

Honourable Speaker

There has recently been criticism in some quarters relating to tourism in the province. The statistics however, does not paint the gloomy picture that the critics wish to propagate. The Northern Cape reported the highest growth to date in the number of tourists that visited the province, with an increase of 39.8% (to 49.990) in 2013. This number is set to further increase.

On the domestic front, the Northern Cape shows an increase in market share from 5% in 2012, to 26% in 2013. Its alignment with the National Tourism Sector Strategy helped to expand the domestic leisure market. This strategy is ideally suited to the Northern Cape province, as it focuses on the

rural, heritage and culture-based tourism “gems” that are fundamental to the Northern Cape’s brand pillar offerings.

A more structured approach to Business Tourism and events has seen a steady increase in events being hosted in the Northern Cape province and attendance at these events.

Signature events such as the Kimberley Diamond Cup, the Bloodhound Land Speed Record attempt, the Kalahari Desert Speed Week and Africa Burn supports the destination position of Extreme Nature, Culture, Adventure and Sport, and profile the Province internationally, as a preferred events destination.

Honourable Speaker

During the 2014/15 financial year, government made further investments in water infrastructure as this remains a critical factor in enabling the Northern Cape Province to attain its developmental goals of accelerating service delivery (improving access to basic water supply and sanitation) and ensuring water availability for sustained economic growth.

A number of water infrastructure projects were completed, including the Hopetown Water Treatment Works, the Kathu Waste Water Treatment Works, the Colesberg Bulk Water Pipeline and Water Treatment Works as well as Niekerkshoop Bulk Water Supply.

Good progress was also made with the construction of the Namakwa Bulk Water Supply Scheme, the multi-purpose Heuningvlei Bulk Water Supply, as well as the Kuruman Bulk Water Scheme.

The feasibility and the implementation readiness study for the Kalahari East Bulk Water Scheme and Vaal Gamagara Bulk Water Scheme have also been completed in 2014/15. Government will invest a further R341 million on the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant, R87.701million under the Municipal Water Infrastructure Grant and R47.5 million rand on refurbishment of water infrastructure in the Northern Cape during the 2015/16 financial year.

Honourable Speaker

The plight of the people of Loeriesfontein in the Hantam Municipality has received a great deal of attention. The assumptions and misinformation touted is far removed from reality.

Government have already spent more than R10 million on a temporary emergency solution, including drilling no less than 21 boreholes in an area known for its high salinity or dry boreholes as well as installing more than 30km of temporary pipelines and pumping equipment. Plans are also at an advanced stage to install a permanent water system, costing at least R45 million.

Honourable Speaker

As a means of addressing the many injustices of our Apartheid past, the provision of adequate housing remains a priority as we begin to implement the ideals enshrined in the Freedom Charter.

In this regard, the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (COGHSTA) has, in the current financial year, set about rectifying 700 houses, planned and surveyed 2 221 sites, serviced 2 948 sites, constructed 1 735 houses and eradicated 2 007 bucket

toilets. This financial year one hundred and R65 will be spent on the eradication of 3 000 bucket toilets.

The President also made pronouncements in the State of the Nation Address last week on the fact that R290 million has been approved for the upgrading of informal settlements in distressed mining towns such as Mpumalanga, North West and Northern Cape. As a province we also stand to greatly benefit from this announcement.

The allocation for the Human Settlement Development Grant for the financial year 2015/16 is R380.48 million and which includes R50 million for the following Mining towns: Ga-Segonyana, Tsantsabane and Gamagara. The department will focus on informal settlements upgrade programme for the coming financial year.

The department will continue to complete all contractually commits itself to development integrated human settlements through spatial planning, provision of basic services and security of tenure. The department plans to deliver 15614 planned sites, and service 833 sites with civil engineering services, and build 1592 houses.

The access to basic services in the province has improved in: water (from 94.4% to 97.4%); sanitation (from 70.5% to 75%) and electricity (from 76.3% to 85%). It has declined in refuse removal due to increasing rural areas and the lack of resources to provide services by municipalities.

Ladies and gentlemen

Last year the President called the second Presidential Local Government Summit, with the theme “Back to Basics – serving our communities better.” This was an intergovernmental forum to introduce stakeholders to the Back to Basics approach. The calling of this Summit shows clear intent that government is committed to delivery of quality services to our people. It calls on each official to make this a living document and this should reflect on the outputs. A Provincial Summit will be held to familiarise all stakeholders in Cooperative Governance of the Back to Basics Concept.

The province has embarked on the Back-to-Basics approach as a plan of action for local government in the Northern Cape. The Department of COGHSTA and National Department of Cooperative Governance has engaged with all the 32 municipalities towards the end of last year to finalise individual Municipal Action Plans.

Honourable Speaker

We witness an ever increase in the number of what has become known as service delivery protests. This is to be expected as we approach Local Government Elections in 2016. But we all know all too well that these protests are politically motivated and has now attracted a criminal element. We however remain resolute and deal with them as they are being orchestrated.

Our goal to make local government more effective and responsive is evident. We have intervened in troubled municipalities such as Dikgatlong, Phokwane, Renosterberg and NamaKhoi and we keeping a close eye on Kgatelopele. The collective efforts to bring about meaningful change in the administration of these municipalities is encouraging and we will escalate with urgency interventions and assistance wherever it is required.

Honourable Speaker

This ANC-led government is serious about services to our people as they have assigned this task to us and we will not fail them. I stand firm on this commitment. I wish to re-affirm, that contrary to negative perceptions that are being propagated, that we have capable people in the Executive who individually and collectively execute their legislative mandates with distinction and honour. These rumours and malicious attempts will not derail us. It in fact fuels our passion to serve with greater speed and passion.

Honourable Speaker

Plans for the final inclusion of the Khoisan communities in all the four remaining out of five districts have been embarked upon in anticipation of the assent of the Traditional Affairs Bill. Once this has been achieved, there will be five districts under traditional affairs with five district offices and a number of traditional councils; the number of which cannot be estimated at this stage.

Improvements have also been registered in the Provincial and Municipal Audit outcomes. Ten out of 13 (77%) departments received unqualified audit opinions with four having reached the 2014 milestone of clean audits namely, the Department of Social development, the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation, Provincial Treasury and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. This is a major improvement when compared to the 2011/12 outcomes where the Province had no clean reports, four unqualified reports, eight qualifications and one disclaimer. Overall, the Northern Cape's MFMA 2012-13 audit outcomes improved compared to the previous year.

The ZF Mgcawu District and the Frances Baard District Municipalities was exemplary in comparison to other municipalities as they progressed to a financially unqualified audit opinion, with no material findings on the quality of the annual performance report, or compliance with legislation (also known as a "clean audit"), thereby becoming the first municipality in the Northern Cape to achieve a clean audit since the 2009/10 financial year. The Department of COGHSTA is committed, working with all stakeholders, to continue implementing measures aimed at building a responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local government system.

All departments that are mandated the responsibility to oversee municipalities and departments have clearly indicated that they will lead by example when it comes to prudent management of finances as all have been unqualified. The improvement is welcomed.

Honourable Speaker

We are a government that knows where people live and that responds timeously and in a caring manner to the people's concerns. With that in mind, we travelled to every village, farm, township and rural homestead, covering every corner of the province in order to make sure that we listen to the needs and challenges experienced by our people. During this process, we have interacted with more than 100 communities, no challenge being too big or too small to listen to and seek a lasting and valuable solution for it.

Bearing testimony to this, during a recent handover of a brand new house in Rietfontein was Anna Bok, whose mother had succumbed last year when their house burned down. For her and her

nephew, who she has in her care after his mother was killed by his father several years ago this was the best news ever. She now feels happy that with this house they can start rebuilding their lives and expressed her gratitude to this provincial government for coming to their aid.

Hierdie program skep ook hoop vir Oom Gert van Concordia, wat weet hierdie Regering doen iets daaraan om hom ook te huisves om hom die vernedering te spaar om op sy sewentigjarige ouderdom van die een plek na die ander te swerf. Dit skep ook hoop vir Portia van Hopetown wat onderwys kan studeer met 'n Beurs van die Regering om haar in staat te stel om 'n bydrae te lewer vir die ontwikkeling van Hopetown se kinders; vir Thenjiwe van Ouboks wat nou teen die koue Winter elemente van Colesberg beskerm kan wees in haar eie huis. Vele ander wat gehelp is om hulle eie besighede te begin, werksgeleenthede gegun is, kospakkies ontvang het en die wete dat 'n beter lewe ook vir hulle bestem is kan hiervan getuig.

In Conclusion Honourable Speaker

The past 21 years have not been easy. I wish to assert boldly that the Northern Cape Provincial Government, under the leadership of the African National Congress has, and continues to face, troubled times head-on. Not yielding to the easy way out as we strive to better the lives of our people.

We have come to greatly appreciate the lessons of struggle; and to paraphrase the words of Frederick Douglas, an African American Abolitionist: 'we know better that freedom is hard work, there can be no crops without ploughing the ground, you cannot want rain and not expect thunder and lightning, you cannot have the oceans without the roar of its awful rivers'. These are lessons elegantly cemented by successive electoral endorsements because we have done it all with the people and they have been with us; the maxim "The people shall govern", emboldened in the Freedom Charter and enshrined in our Constitution, has come to life in our lifetime.

Let us make 2015 the year of unity and cooperation amongst all South Africans, as we continue to transform our beautiful Province and country into the prosperous one described in the Constitution, the Freedom Charter and the National Development Plan.

As we move South Africa forward in 2015, let us take a conscious decision to everyday make the country a better place for all to live in.

Let us embolden the rights of every South African as enshrined in the Constitution and honour our obligations as citizens to each other and the country. Though it may be difficult to envisage South Africa overcoming poverty, unemployment and inequality, let us – in the spirit of the Freedom Charter – reach out to each other and create the country and society of our dreams.

I thank you, Kealeboga, Baie dankie, Ndiyabulela, Gan/gans

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