

**Draft State of the Province Address (SOPA) by the Premier of the Northern Cape, Ms Sylvia
Lucas, on the occasion of the Fifth session of the Fifth Legislature
28 February 2018
Mieta Seperepere Convention Centre in Kimberley**

**The Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature;
Members of the Executive Council;
Members of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces;
Members of the Northern Cape Provincial Legislature;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Judge President of the Northern Cape, Judge Tlaletsi
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;
Vice Chancellor of Sol Plaatje University, Professor Ballim
Goodwill Ambassadors of the Northern Cape Province;
Chairperson of the ANC
Secretary of the ANC
Leaders of the Alliance
Government Officials;
Distinguished Guests;
Fellow citizens of the Northern Cape;
Members of the Media;
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my profound privilege to address you here today as we enter the year of renewal, unity and jobs. As we gather here, we find ourselves in the midst of a major transformation in our country. A period of renewed hope as we set about building a national democratic society. Indeed, we are experiencing the commencement of a new era in our country's political landscape characterised by a new hope, enthusiasm and optimism amongst the masses of our people.

Honourable Speaker, in memory of our icons who would have celebrated their centenary birthdays this year, we will be honouring the life of the late Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela and Mamma Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu.

We pledge this year, the centenary of Mandela, as the year ***of unity, renewal and jobs*** as part of emulating the good example of service and selfless dedication to the course of our people and recognise the centenary of his birth by declaring both as public office bearers and public servants that indeed **our people come first!**

Tata Madiba is remembered as the founding father of our democracy. In the Northern Cape his centenary celebrations will be marked by various activities that will be outlined during the course of the year in a bid to foster nation building and social cohesion. We will also commemorate his legacy through memorial lectures and round table discussions across the Province. The Department of Sport Arts and Culture, together with the McGregor Museum will put together an exhibition detailing the impact of Madiba's projects in the Northern Cape. It is our belief that all infrastructure such as buildings and streets named after our South African icon, former President Mandela would be preserved and accorded the respect they deserve.

This year also marks the 40th anniversary of the passing of the Pan Africanist leader, **Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe**. The history of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe would never be complete without referring to the city of Kimberley. Driven by that belief, the Northern Cape Provincial Administration seeks to rename the Kimberley Hospital Complex to the Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital. The honour of renaming the Kimberly Hospital Complex is to retain the revolutionary connection Kimberley as a City has with the South African father of Pan Africanism. As part of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of his death, the Province paid tribute to this great leader through a wreath laying ceremony at his home and office located in Galeshewe yesterday and a memorial lecture that took place at the Sol Plaatjie University last night.

There is a renewed commitment to address the human consequences of the legacy of apartheid. The achievements of the democratic developmental state must always be measured by its capacity to promote pro-poor, people-centred, shared, sustainable development, growth in an environment which respects, nurtures democracy and upholds the constitution and the rule of law.

It would be remiss of me in this regard if I do not immediately refer to the dispossession of our people's land by a litany of colonial and apartheid rulers in the past and the urgent need to address the situation. The expropriation of land without compensation will be among the key mechanisms available to government to give effect on the land reform programme. This was reaffirmed at the 54th conference of the ruling party and emphasized by President Ramaphosa during his maiden State of the Nation Address. It forms an integral of the ruling party's plan for the future.

Further to this, Parliament yesterday agreed to the principle of expropriation of land without compensation in the context of ensuring food security, economic growth and radical economic transformation. The amendments tabled by the ANC; resolved that the Constitutional Review Committee of Parliament reviews Section 25 of the Constitution and other clauses, where necessary to sufficiently cater for the principle of land expropriation without compensation. The Constitutional Review Committee has been directed to prioritise this issue and report back to Parliament by end of August this year. we welcome this initiative.

Ladies and gentlemen

We remain committed to accelerate land reform in our Province. To date, in the Northern Cape, over 1.5 million hectares of land that has been transferred to our people through restitution and redistribution programmes.

Honourable Speaker

President Ramaphosa made it clear in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) reply that *"...we have a plan and that is the National Development Plan. That is our plan"*.

The NDP is the only document other than the Constitution that has been approved by Parliament which gives it substantial standing and therefore qualifies to be referred to as our South African Plan. The foundational directive of this document embraces the idea that the people are to be active champions of their own development. It is out of this resolve that I must state that the Northern Cape government is serious about development for the people by the people.

Honourable Speaker, the Northern Cape Province, will be developing the Provincial Growth and Development Plan (PGDP) and a revised Provincial Spatial Development Framework (PSDF) as part of enhancing implementation of the National Development Plan.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to extend a personal invitation to members of society to actively participate in the forthcoming dialogue sessions to be held in our Province on the Provincial Growth and Development Plan (PGDP) Vision 2040 and the revision of the Provincial Spatial Development Framework (PSDF).

Further to this, the Province is currently crafting the Northern Cape Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Bill. Through our own bill we will observe the urgency accorded to integrated planning because therein is a proposal that relates to the function shift of municipal integrated planning, spatial planning and land use management to be located in the Office of the Premier. It is my plea that this bill be finalized within the 2018/2019 financial year.

Honourable Speaker

We would like to invite the youth of our province to participate in a Provincial vision 2040 competition to be launched at the end of September this year to develop a logo for the PGDP and PSDF, which would highlight the uniqueness of our Province and encompass our rich cultural heritage. The Northern Cape Provincial Government will pledge a bursary to the winner of the competition as a reflection of our commitment to youth development.

Honourable Speaker

Over the past decade a number of social dialogue sessions or summits have been held throughout the Province. We will therefore be convening a **Special Task Team** to take stock of the resolutions taken at these various summits and conferences to assess the implementation of those critical decisions and resolutions.

We will similarly also look at the lack of implementation thereof in order to establish the actual reasons for none implementation and compliance. This will provide us with an opportunity to gauge the impact in relation to the intended outcomes and purpose of those decisions and resolutions.

Honourable Speaker

The fight against corruption remains on the agenda of Provincial Government so much so that we have ensured that all provincial departments have anti corruption policies and strategies including anti corruption implementation plans. When we say that we are serious on fighting corruption, we stand firm alongside the President of the Republic when he called for stronger action against corruption and crime be it in the public or private sector.

In the last audit cycle, four provincial departments obtained Clean audits namely Office of the Premier; Treasury; Legislature; Environment and Nature Conservation. During this audit cycle, the Northern Cape was the only province where the three oversight departments got clean audits. Seven other departments were financially unqualified with findings. We stand firm in building on this improvement in the coming year because we are encouraged by the fact that no department for the fourth year in a row has been disclaimed.

We will continue to work towards improvements in delivering good and quality services to the people of the Northern Cape within the confines of good financial management prescripts.

The implementation of the Back to Basics approach has also made significant improvement in the audit outcomes of municipalities. When the programme commenced in 2014 there were 15 dysfunctional municipalities. As at the end of 2017 there were only 6 dysfunctional municipalities in the province namely Ga-Segonyana, Joe Morolong, Siyathemba, Phokwane and Ubuntu. The audit outcomes of Magareng, Dikgatlong and Renosterberg local municipalities have improved from a disclaimer opinion to qualified opinion.

The department with the support of the National Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs will continue to assist and support the dysfunctional municipalities to ensure that they improve from their dysfunctional status. The status of the municipal valuation rolls of all municipalities has been assessed. The department will also continue to support and assist municipalities in this regard to ensure that they enhance their revenue generation.

Honourable Speaker

The Local and Provincial House of Traditional leaders have been successfully reconstituted and we are pleased to report that for the Provincial House we have witnessed for the first time that a female senior Traditional leader, Kgosi Pelonomi Toto, was duly elected as the Chairperson.

Ladies and gentlemen

We are pleased to share with you that the Office of the Premier and the Director General has been shortlisted for Best Functioning Provincial DG and Best Functioning Department by the Department of Public Service and Administration. The outcome will be announced at an event scheduled for this Friday. This nomination is a clear indication that this is a Province at work and our efforts are being recognised at a national level.

Honourable Speaker

As part of our efforts to ensure an integrated response to service delivery as well as improve the impact of our interventions and to address the challenges of fragmentation; we are busy developing an integrated service delivery model that will enable government to respond comprehensively to the challenges of our people. The importance of young people as agents for change is acknowledged therefore we have undertaken a study in the Province to pinpoint the challenges and also provide possible remedies to these challenges.

Government spends a substantial amount of money on programmes aimed at young people, however these programmes remain ineffective and with little or no impact. This led to us developing an integrated youth development strategy for the Province. This will be the first such strategy for the province, and importantly, it will ensure that our interventions are targeted and informed by the needs of young people. Through this strategy, we will also be in a position to ensure that we address the strategic challenges facing our young people in a coordinated and integrated manner.

In aligning ourselves to the President's commitment of moving the youth to the centre of our economic agenda in his address to the nation, the province has committed through partnerships with SETAs to secure work placement opportunities for 1000 learners and graduates from Universities, TVET Colleges, Community Colleges and private institutions for the new financial year.

This commitment was sealed through the signing of a pledge by skills development stakeholders during a skills development roundtable held in October last year.

The outcome of this commitment culminated into a partnership between the Department of Health and the Health and Welfare (HWSETA) which has committed funding for the implementation of much needed skills in the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) aimed at improving capacity of the EMS services as well as the training of basic and advanced pharmacist learnerships and internship programmes in the province. Another Memorandum of Understanding was entered into between the Office of the Premier and the Construction Seta, which will see the implementation of learnership programmes.

The province continues to make financial resources available to the students in need through the provision of bursaries. In the last financial year a total of 9 736 bursaries were awarded in the province by the state, SETA's and the Premier's Trust Fund, to the youth in the Province. Through our partnership with the Mine Managers Forum, we have received funding in excess of one million rand for learners at universities for this current financial year.

We are pleased to announce that 1540 students have been registered at the Sol Plaatje University for the new academic year; of these 700 are new first year students. And we expect around 600 of these students will be covered by the new free higher education for poor and working class families programme.

We are currently finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Sol Plaatje University. This MOU will assist us to commence the process of undertaking a comprehensive provincial skills audit to establish the extent of our Provincial skills deficit in relation to the skills required by our Provincial economy. The outcome of this skills audit will assist the process of the finalization of our Provincial Human Resource Development strategy that does not only speak to the public sector but to the cross sectoral skills challenges. We would like to invite all key stakeholders from the private sector, academia and labour to come to the fore and assist the Provincial Government with undertaking such a skills audit for the Province.

As part of the National Youth Brigade Programme, over 100 youth have been provided with accredited training programmes in partnership with the National Home Builders Regulatory Council (NHBR) and National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) in Grootdrink. The objective of the

training programmes was to expose and provide learners with skills in the human settlements delivery environment such as plumbing, plastering and bricklaying and to impart critical life skills through the NYDA programme. In the next financial year, over 100 youth in the Pixley ka Seme district will benefit from this programme. A total of 717 youth are also receiving both theoretical and in-service training under the war on leaks programme – several water agents and artisans are placed at municipalities and mines.

Honourable Speaker

This year we will be hosting a Social Cohesion Summit in the Province to achieve a social compact to build on our developmental path to achieve our Vision 2040. The Provincial Social Cohesion Summit will serve as a consultative platform for all key stakeholders within the Province to collectively deliberate on programmes required for social cohesion. It is our hope that this summit will revive our Moral Regeneration Crusade and awaken positive values in our communities.

Honourable Speaker

Sport in its many codes and disciplines has proven it to be a strong foundation to social cohesion. The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture will grow the Department's footprint in the province to reach more people.

Honourable Speaker

We will double our efforts in empowering the vulnerable and marginalized groups who are part and parcel of the creation of the Northern Cape we want. We will continue with our programmes in collaboration with the rest of society in fighting women and child abuse.

The Province has developed a **Provincial Plan of Action for Children**. At the heart of the plan, is the creation of an enabling and supportive environment to ensure that we all respond appropriately to the needs of our children. We now have **Child Ambassadors** in all our District Municipalities whose primary responsibility is to take up children specific matters and escalate them to government for interventions. The Province also hosted the national event of the **Nelson Mandela Children' Parliament (National Parliament)** in October last year.

As a Provincial Government we will continue to ensure that the policy space is created to engage on, find solutions and address the plight of persons living with disabilities. I'm pleased to announce that we have procured an **Embossing machine** which will help in generating documents in Braille. Partnerships have been forged with several strategic partners such as Petra Diamond Mine, NHBRC, SEFA, NYDA, amongst others, to drive the transformation agenda in the province.

In June last year, the Province launched the Call-To-Action Campaign. The primary call to action campaign is to respond to the scourge of abuse and senseless killing of women and children. We will continue this year as a Province to have a number of calls to action campaigns aimed at the promotion and protection of women, children and differently abled persons.

The Department of Transport, Safety and Liaison, in heeding Government's call, for a safe and secure South Africa, continues to work closely with the South African Police Services, as well as communities through the various community structures, namely: Community Police Forums and Community Safety Forums, to address the levels of crime in the Province.

The province also hosted the National Women's Day event last year, where we paid tribute to women's contributions to the liberation struggle whilst also observing the centenary of struggle icon OR Tambo and his contributions to the struggle to end gender inequalities.

Honourable Speaker

Education constitutes the ultimate basis for the wealth of a nation, and it is therefore vital that as a Province we recognise its value through our interventions in the education of our children. The importance of early childhood development cannot be overemphasized. It is at this stage where the emotional, social and physical development of young children is moulded and developed and this development directly impacts on the grown person they will become. It is for this reason we identified Early Childhood Development (ECD) as a key catalyst for the development of our children and as one of the five key priorities for the Department of Social Development.

We are in the process to finalise our Provincial Integrated ECD Strategy that will ensure cohesion and integration across all spheres of Government, inclusive of private sector.

Honorable Speaker

Let me highlight once again that the Northern Cape recorded an overall pass rate of 75.6% for the class of 2017. The Namakwa district achieved the highest pass rate of 82.9% and nine schools have recorded a 100% pass rate. We commend the teachers, learners and parents for their commitment and dedication and pledge to support the class of 2018 in their endeavor to reach or surpass the 80% pass rate. Through partnerships with SIOC-cdt we saw improvement in the pass rate of the John Taolo Gaetsewe region.

Through the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign, we have secured the commitment of our various education stakeholders, including teacher unions representing teachers, school governing body associations representing parents, and learner organisations to working together to turn our education fortunes for the better in the Northern Cape. We have also encouraged the private sector to grow its efforts to support education development in the Northern Cape.

Last year marked an important milestone for the Sol Plaatjie University with the graduation of its first B Education degree students. The Provincial Department of Education in partnership with the University offered thirty four Bed degree graduates peramnet teaching posts nearest to their residential areas. This is testimony to the fact that working together we can more.

Ladies and gentlemen

As we celebrate the life and times of our former late President, Nelson Mandela, we draw strength from our diversity because it is our diversity that unites us. It is our diversity that connects us to one another and it is this diversity that shapes the character and resilience of all our people. With 11 official languages, we need to ensure that we communicate with our people in the language of their choice. Therefore, we have undertaken a process to ensure that we translate all essential government information at least in the languages spoken in the province to improve service delivery and to inculcate a culture of belonging.

Honourable Speaker

The Department of Education has introduced Nama, an indigenous language as an extramural programme in the Province.

The strengthening of the indigenous languages of our province has been an area in which the department has played an active role in and has striven to empower communities in the Northern Cape. In line with this principle, Nama is being introduced at two schools in the Northern Cape this year. These schools are in Riemvasmaak and Kuboes. These are the towns where Nama is mostly spoken. The department of Education is also currently engaged in the Incremental Introduction of African Languages in our schools. This initiative is aimed at creating a multi-lingual society.

The Provincial government will through an incremental approach equip the front line staff of our administration with sign language. The Office of the Premier and the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture will be the torch bearers of this noble and societal empowering initiative.

Honourable Speaker

The provision of quality healthcare services to our people remains high on our developmental agenda. To this end the following interventions and improvements have been recorded. Twenty-one (21) Northern Cape Cuban trained final year medical students will finalise their medical training and plans are underway to receive and integrate these students in Kimberley Hospital. Forty-three (43) Nursing bursary holders graduated and will be absorbed into permanent vacant funded posts.

Ladies and gentlemen

As a Provincial Government we are pleased with the relationship we have developed with the business sector especially the mining sector in strengthening our health delivery mandates. In the ZF Mgcawu district, we have concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the farming sector, to ensure that the farm workers do not only have access to healthcare services but receive quality healthcare services. These services are to be quality assured by the department of Health. The MOU stipulates that the sector shall provide a Professional nurse, equipment and physical infrastructure, whilst the department provides consumables; oversight and quality assure the services provided on those sites. The many achievements will be outlined in the MEC's budget speech.

Honourable Speaker

For the past few years we have piloted the implementation of National Health Insurance (NHI) in the Pixley Ka Seme district. I am pleased to announce that our government is gearing up to expand most of the NHI initiatives to districts across the province. The lessons from the pilot projects across the country put us in good stead as a province to learn and pick up the good lessons worth learning going forward.

The Department of Health will work closely with NGOs and Community Health Workers to reduce TB fatalities. TB Tracer teams will also be appointed to heighten our efforts in combating death amongst TB&HIV patients.

The province also launched the new short regimen for the management of MDR TB in June 2017 to improve treatment adherence and reduce side effects of MDR TB treatment. A cumulative total of 106 patients were initiated on this regimen. This will improve adherence and completion as well as contribute to the overall cure rate achieved. The province has forged strategic partnership with key stakeholders in strengthening HIV Counseling and Testing services in terms of access and quality.

There has been a decline in maternal deaths in the Province, over the past years from 151 per 100 000 live births (2012/13) to 96 per 100 000 live births (2016/17), and with the Sustainable Development Goals target for 2030 being 70 per 100 000, every effort is being made to achieve the set targets and standards. This is a major achievement in the provision of healthcare services to mothers, unborn and newborn babies.

Honourable Speaker

The NDP requires that **“South Africa creates the framework for implementing the transition to an environmentally sustainable, low-carbon economy as a core element of its strategy for sustainable development as proposed in the plan as a whole”**.

Climate change is currently among the greatest threats to sustainable development. The impacts and vulnerabilities to climate change vary across the Province, within districts and specific sectors. Extreme weather conditions such as increases in temperatures and changes in rain patterns associated with climate change is already leaving its mark on the Northern Cape. Despite the recent good rains, our Province is one of three provinces still facing extreme drought conditions. President Ramaphosa also proclaimed the drought in the Northern Cape as a national disaster.

Due to the persistent severe drought conditions that are still prevalent in the western regions of the province, fodder has been donated to the province by various stakeholders as well as the intervention from the Department of Agriculture's fodder bank and provision of transport for the fodder, which mitigated the impact of drought on both commercial and smallholder farmers.

The areas mostly affected in the Northern Cape and Pixley ka Seme districts and water supply to towns experiencing water shortages remains a key priority. In the Hantam local municipality worst hit by the persistent drought, the Loeriesfontein bulk water supply project at a cost of R128 million is making good progress and should be completed by June this year.

The Northern Cape's allocation under the water services infrastructure grant for 2018/19 amounts R453 million and will be used to address water supply and sanitation challenges including drought interventions. A further R762 million through the regional bulk infrastructure grant is to be used for interventions to eradicate the water supply and sanitation backlogs, contribute to economic development and will further build our resilience to drought and the impacts of climate change. Key projects implemented include amongst others phase 1 of the Vaal Gamagara bulk water supply, (key to growing the mining economy in the Province and the Namakwa bulk water supply (key to sustaining and opening up new opportunities for growth in this district).

To shape the Northern Cape's path toward economic, social, and environmental development regarding climate change, the Province has developed the Northern Cape Climate Change Adaptation Response Strategy. This strategy creates an enabling framework through which significant new and emerging response options and opportunities relating to drought and other severe climate changes can be addressed.

Ladies and gentlemen

President Ramaphosa has charted a new trajectory for the economic emancipation of our people, which includes the **acceleration of radical socio-economic transformation**, with the prioritisation of **youth empowerment initiatives**, specifically focused on 'youth entrepreneurship' and a 'skills revolution' to produce black industrialists and a skilled and well equipped workforce for the fourth industrial revolution.

Transforming the economy of the Northern Cape will entail the calculated mobilisation of all social partners, in particular the three spheres of government, as well as labour and business behind an economic growth plan. The Province is planning to host an Economic colloquium as a pre-cursor to an Investment Conference. The idea is to aggressively promote our mega projects for attraction of credible investment.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is concerning that despite an increase in mining activity and productivity, an increase in the number of renewable energy operators in the Province, as well as warding off the commodity shake down of 2016 that the Province can't seem to shake off the tag of being the least contributor to the National GDP, averaging around 2.2%. However, the Province expects its performance to improve over the long-term, with an increasing capacity in terms of the renewable energy sector and mining.

Fellow citizens, the youth form the largest cohort of the population and thus it would be a disservice for the Provincial Government not to place the youth at the top of the Provincial Agenda. I must emphasise once more that the youth are at the epicenter of the economic agenda of our beautiful Province. We need therefore to tap into our South African consciousness above our ideological differences to intervene in what confronts all of us. Poverty and unemployment is a South African challenge that requires all of us to put our hands on deck to find solutions thereto. Already Government has put measures in place to stimulate and create a conducive environment for youth employment.

Given the above recognition and reality we are going to establish a Provincial Growth and Development Advisory Council with a view of engaging all our social partners on how best we need to collectively grow the Northern Cape economy. A critical outcome of the Provincial Growth and Development Advisory Council should be our stance and attitude towards the continued de-industrialisation of the Northern Cape. We need to consolidate our provincial position and refuse to participate in the continued narrative that perpetuates the de-industrialisation of our province.

As a result we will have to, in a more vigorous manner articulate our concern with national government regarding this matter as our immediate and current urgent task.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The mining sector continues to be the bedrock of our provincial economy and notably in recent times has been able to create much needed employment for our people. However, the sector requires a transformative agenda to ensure the participation and inclusion of the Historically Disadvantaged Individuals (HDI). In this regard, we appreciate and note the cordial engagements we have had with our mining sector and their contributions to the Province. One of the key stumbling blocks is the integration of the Artisanal Miners in the mainstream.

Thus, pursuant to our objective to legitimize the unlawful operations of the Artisanal Mine Workers, the Office of the Premier, together with the Department of Mineral Resources conducted a successful workshop aimed at guiding the Artisanal Mine Workers through the regulatory process in conducting lawful mining operations.

Arising from this workshop, in addition to two prospective rights already existing, the Artisanal Mine workers applied for two mining rights which are currently being processed. With the assistance of the Department of Mineral Resources and the Swedish International Housing Company we are currently inspecting several sites with the express aim of assisting the Artisanal Mine Workers in identifying viable mineral-rich land in order for them to start their lawful mining operations.

Honourable Speaker

The Province will continue to ensure the delivery of infrastructure investment through the building of schools, libraries, clinics and other health facilities. We will continue to deliver housing units to the most vulnerable and destitute people of our province. For the coming year; an additional 2 411 households will be provided with free basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation and 1599 houses will be constructed. The transfer of property has made excellent progress notwithstanding the challenges for the province like any other; we have recorded an accumulative output of 10 681 transfers from 2014/15 to 2017/18. We plan to transfer 9 192 properties to beneficiaries in the 2018/19 financial year. The province welcomes the transfer of all Northern Cape title deeds from Cape Town deeds office to Kimberley deeds office as this will reduce the lead time to effect registrations.

In our commitment to restoring dignity to our military veterans through human settlements, in the Province we have built eight houses in Emthanjeni Municipality during the 2017/18 financial year and envisage to construct a further 56 military veteran houses throughout the province during the 2018/19 financial year. This will continue unabated throughout ensuing financial years.

The department will continue to prioritize the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme in the next financial year by ensuring that at least thirty percent (30%) of the Human Settlement Development Grant is allocated for the implementation of this programme.

Honourable Speaker

I am pleased to announce that the Mental Health Hospital has reached 98% completion and the department in collaboration with the department of Public Works is working towards handing over the facility. It is envisaged that the facility will be handed over by June this year. The department has appointed the Provincial Mental Health Board and is in the process of appointing Mental Health Review Boards in all five districts.

These District Mental Health Board Members are volunteers and we want to thank them for their commitment and dedication. We value their contribution in improving the lives of the people of our Province. The Mental Health Hospital will be operationalised in a phased in approach as soon as the facility is handed over to the department.

Honourable Speaker

I am also happy to announce that the first ever in-patient substance abuse rehabilitation centre has been completed and handed over to the Department of Social Development. The recruitment process for the staff of the treatment centres will be unfolding during the coming financial year and it is envisaged that the centre will be fully operational from July this year. The timely completion of this treatment centre within the agreed upon budget demonstrates our commitment to ensure efficiencies in terms of the utilisation of public resources.

Ladies and gentlemen

In our attempt to foster a reading nation, we have opened public libraries in Logaganeng and Churchill in the John Taolo Gaetsewe District, Petrusville in the Pixley ka Seme District and Ritchie in the Frances Baard District.

As part of the Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIP 8), the Province is part of a national initiative which ensures that green energy initiatives are included in the designs of all major new buildings and into the physical construction of major buildings. The Province is currently participating in the Shared Water Efficiency Programme set up by National Public Works and thirty (30) properties have been identified for inclusion in this project.

The Northern Cape Government has applied and requested to partner with the Central Energy Fund to roll out solar energy solutions to public schools in the Northern Cape. The solution will be for schools with poor electricity infrastructure and it will promote the changeover to solar energy as a less expensive and environmentally friendly alternative.

The Northern Cape is a regional solar hub of energy in Southern Africa. The spin offs both in terms of the manufacturing sector and the creation of the much needed employment are immense. Should this bid be successful, the Province will form part of a national pilot by the Department of Energy for the installation of solar energy solutions in our schools.

Together with the Department of Energy, we will also be introducing the second phase of the rollout of solar water heaters in the Sol Plaatjie municipal area. Part of the programme will entail the training of young people to maintain and repair the geysers.

Honourable Speaker

The Contractor Development Programme of the Department of Roads and Public Works is in its implementation phase and the Department has completed the 1st phase of the theoretical training, with the oversight of mentors and commences at the beginning of this month. Projects will be ring-fenced for the contractors participating in this programme, while structured training programmes and mentorship will also be provided.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Northern Cape is making huge strides in addressing infrastructure investment demands in especially underdeveloped areas by constructing quality road infrastructure.

These efforts were achieved irrespective of the mounting challenges especially in the John Taolo Gaetsewe (JTG) district where community protests contributed to the delay in completion of certain projects. Despite these challenges we can successfully report the completion of phase 2 which is between Heiso and Dithakong and the 3rd phase will continue in 2018/2019 financial year. The road between Laxey and Rustfontein is currently under construction, and phase 5, which is the road from Hotazel to Tsineng faced challenges but commenced in February this year.

Honourable Speaker

Roads in poor condition restrict social and economic development therefore, as part of safeguarding the province's road infrastructure, during the 2017/18 financial year, resealing was completed in Victoria West towards the N1, from Carnavon to Williston, Frazerburg to Western Cape Border, Danielskuil to Kuruman and all the roads in Vaalharts area. We will conduct an Infrastructure audit and develop a Provincial Infrastructure Strategy with specific reference to the implementation of the Infrastructure Development Act.

Honourable Speaker

It is worth noting that the Agricultural sector plays a major role in contributing to the economy of the Northern Cape as well as job creation. This sector has ensured a reduction in the unemployment rate in the Province whilst simultaneously cushioning our country's economy from a possible recession.

We are on track for the full-speed implementation of Agri-parks across the five Districts. All identified sites in the five districts have been profiled and business plans were drawn up and circulated to Municipalities for approval and endorsement. The agricultural production improvement of the smallholder farmers is further bolstered through the Fetsa Tlala Food Production programme. Progress is also underway in the implementation of the five mega-investment projects namely the Namakwa Irrigation Development with Onseepkans as the anchor, the Rooibos development and extract/aroma as a key value addition project, the Vanderkloof Fisheries and Cape trout farming, the Vaalharts Revitalisation with Ganspan as the anchor and the Vineyards development scheme. An additional project on the development of the Ostrich industry in Pixley ka Seme is being added to make these six.

Honourable Speaker

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) continues to be one of government's highest employment creation programmes and a catalyst for poverty alleviation. It is worth noting that the Social Sector has always been the highest job creators, making them the best performers amongst other sectors. During the third quarter of the 2017/18 financial year, the Province reported a total of fifteen thousand three hundred and eighty (15 380) work opportunities on the EPWP reporting system, inclusive of the Municipal and Provincial spheres. The province has a job creation target of 29 315 for the new financial year, which is the final year of the EPWP Phase 3 and will have to make monumental efforts to achieve the overall target.

Honourable Speaker

The Province is moving ahead with the implementation of the nine point plan, which amongst others include the following major projects such as the Special Economic Zone, Boegoebaai Port, SKA and Agri-parks to name a few. The development of these sectors will address economic challenges in our Province and the reduction in the unemployment rate especially amongst the youth. This should therefore put the Province in good stead to enhance economic growth and create employment.

The Province will coordinate high impact projects such as the Renewable energy projects, and facilitate the forging of partnerships to ensure that these key sectors reach their full potential but more specifically that the people of the Northern Cape people benefit from these.

Ladies and gentlemen

I am proud to mention that we are a government at work, every day, 24 hours a day in order to bring about a better quality of life for all our people, especially the marginalized and vulnerable sectors of the Northern Cape. Having said this, and being wholly mindful of our developmental mandate, we are as a governing collective, always on the look-out for innovative ideas that make a positive and tangible difference in the lives of our communities.

Therefore, in our quest in seeking to usher in positive change, I together with my colleagues in the Exco are engaged in constant discussion and debate. We continue to prioritize seeking the best

developmental solutions. To this end, **Honourable Speaker**, we have over the last two days, just emerged from extended Lekgotlas of the ruling party and government respectively, and some of the decisions adopted at the Exco Lekgotla are as follows:

- Intensification of the Provincial Treasury's interventions in the departments of Health and Education,
- Increase the capacity of Provincial Treasury to provide more hands on support to municipalities including more political involvement by MEC's and other elected public officials.
- Cost containment measures will be implemented across all departments.
- Operation clean audit will be revived in both the provincial and local spheres of government.
- There will be integrated planning at all levels in order to reduce duplication and ensure optimal use of limited resources.

As I am about to conclude, I just wish to mention **Ladies and gentlemen**, that we had the distinct pleasure of hosting our Armed Forces for a week which culminated in the commemoration of Armed Forces day on the 21st of February, a commemoration that takes place every year to honour the brave men who lost their lives when the SS Mendi was sunk in the English Channel. We also had the privilege of hosting the Commander in Chief – President Cyril Ramaphosa on his first official engagement as president of the Republic.

The Armed Forces gave us a glimpse into their capabilities and not only occupied our airspace and landspace for the week-but they also brought along opportunities for young people and excitement for all. I wish to convey my profound appreciation on behalf of the people of the Northern Cape to the Minister of Defence and all the men and women wearing their respective uniforms with pride and distinction for the the various activities over the week. The military might on display, re-affirmed our confidence that we can stand our own against any threat, either foreign or domestic. I urge young our young people to take up the opportunities that Armed Forces presents and become part of a force that this nation is proud of.

I also wish to thank all officials, volunteers and the media who each played a role in the resounding success of the events. The people of the Northern Cape cooperated and displayed utmost patience

and appreciation for the events. We were shown a different world and we say again thank you to all involved.

In conclusion

Honourable Speaker and Honourable members a great deal of dialogue needs to emerge from all corners of the province regarding the socio-economic paths aimed at transforming our province for the benefit of all. We wish to thank all our partners in the private sector such as the banks, mines, Independent Power Producers and all others who are starting to buy in and support our developmental agenda. We count on your continued commitment and support.

As we pay tribute to the 100 years of the legend of Nelson Mandela, the vision I hold for a prosperous Northern Cape is perfectly mirrored by our late great statesmen when he proclaimed that, “Our human compassion binds us one to the other – not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learned how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.”

This is the path we have to take so that together with our people, we make the Northern Cape a better place and move it forward.

I thank you

Kealoboga

Baie dankie

Enkosi