

**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE
PREMIER OF LIMPOPO PROVINCE HONOURABLE CHUPU
MATHABATHA TO THE FIFTH LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL LEGI
SLATURE AT THE JACK BOTES HALL.**

23 February 2018

Honourable Speaker;

Deputy Speaker of the Legislature;

Honourable members of the legislature;

Members of the Executive Council;

Executive Mayors and Mayors of our municipalities;

The leadership of the ruling party, the African National Congress;

Leaders of opposition parties;

Chairperson of Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders;

Our esteemed Majesties, Kings and Royal Highnesses;

Former MPs and MPLs;

Stalwarts and veterans of our struggle;

Provincial Commissioner of Police;

Heads of our Chapter Nine and Chapter Ten institutions;

Leadership of religious community;

His Grace, the Right Reverend, Dr. Bishop BE Lekganyane;

Leadership of organised business and labour;

Youth, women, community leaders;

Director General and Heads of Departments;

Members of the media;

Distinguished guests;

Comrades, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning, Goeie more, Thobela, Avuxeni, Lotshani, Ndaa,

I am honoured and most privileged to report on what we are doing as government, the challenges we are encountering and the plans we have put in place to improve the conditions of living of our people.

We are doing this during the year that marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of one of the greatest leaders this country, the continent and the world have ever known, President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

In his own words, President Nelson Mandela directed us that for as long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our w

orld, none of us should rest.

We must indeed never rest until our people are free from poverty, inequality, and are enjoying equal access to opportunities.

In his honour and memory we must continue our relentless fight against corruption because Nelson Mandela hated corruption.

We must continue promoting unity, peace and social cohesion because Nelson Mandela was himself an embodiment of unity, peace and cohesion.

The year 2018 also marks the centenary of the birth of Mama Albertina Sisulu. Mama Sisulu was a prominent leader of the ANC, the ANC Women's League, Federation of South African Women and the United Democratic Front. She was an epitome of selfless service to the people.

In defence of her legacy, we must use this year to redouble our efforts to advance the total socio-economic emancipation of the women of our country.

Madam Speaker;

Last Saturday, we laid to rest the mortal remains of one the finest literary giants this province and the country have ever seen. **Mme Aletta Matshidiso Motimele** left us after a short illness.

A teacher by profession, Mme Matshidiso Motimele wrote 23 books and countless radio dramas for the SABC in her lifetime.

In 2016 during the Annual Mapungubwe Arts Festival, our government bestowed on her a Lifetime Achievement Award. The following year in 2017, she was bestowed with a similar award by the South African Literary Awards for her contribution to the Sepedi literature and culture.

The dark cloud has indeed befallen us. On Sunday we woke up to the sad news of the passing on of Comrade Teenage Monama. As a soldier of uMkhonto we Sizwe, Monama played a major role in the fight for freedom and democracy in our country. He passes on at a time when people of his calibre are needed to help reconstruct and develop our country.

We extend heartfelt condolences to the Monama family, MKMV A, SACP and the entire mass democratic movement for the loss of this outstanding revolutionary.

May we please rise and observe a moment of silence in honour and memory of these giants.

May their souls rest in peace!

Madam Speaker;

Today, I am particularly pleased to welcome two of my special guests to this auspicious occasion of the opening of our Provincial Legislature.

I am welcoming great Limpopians who continue to fly the flag of our beautiful province high.

My first guest is a recipient of the Limpopo Premier's Bursary award. She is a young girl who, despite living with disabilities and coming from a very poor family background, has never wavered in her determination to better her life.

Please join me in welcoming **Ms Virginia Kedibone Mokoena** who is seated in the public gallery.

My second guest is a young doctor – not just a doctor but he is the only certified nephrologist in Polokwane Provincial Hospital with one of the biggest renal care units in the country.

Please join me in welcoming **Dr Phetho Mangena** who is also a Lecturer at the University of Limpopo's Medical School.

Madam Speaker and honourable members;

Our fight against the persisting and deep-seated triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality starts with the improvement of the quality and the outcomes of our education system.

Perhaps before we could go any further, we should commend the National Government for the recent announcement of free higher education for poor households.

This announcement demonstrates, yet again, the commitment of the ANC-led government to live-up to the dictate of the Freedom Charter that the doors of learning and culture must be opened to all.

Our children should indeed be able to access education, including higher education, regardless of their family backgrounds. The days of education being an exclusive commodity and preserve for the privileged few.

Madam Speaker;

It is our firm belief that early childhood education plays an important role in the overall and holistic development of a child.

Last year, we reported that the number of children who were enrolled in Grade R in public schools was 123 356. Today the number of children enjoying access to Grade R in public schools has increased to 127 000.

We have also increased the number of our public Grade R classes from the current 2 325 to 2 441 schools. We are also intensifying advocacy to ensure that all 5 year olds are enrolled for Grade R in public Primary Schools.

In the same vein, we are training 26 041 ECD practitioners at NQF level 4. In addition, 200 more Practitioners will be enrolled for NQF level 6 in a three year programme at the University of the North-West.

Madam Speaker;

Our commitment to broaden our teacher development programmes is on course. In the 2017/18 Financial Year we managed to train over 190 educators through the Continuous Professional Teacher Development Programme.

We have also trained 53 Curriculum Advisors in Maths, Science and Technology through the Continuous Professional Development Centre. An additional 1 141 educators were trained in Numeracy and Mathematics teaching strategies and content delivery.

In the 2018/19 Financial Year, we are going to provide special training to 540 Educators in Mathematics, Science and Commercial Subjects. This will be supplemented by the training of 85 Curriculum Advisors in Mathematics, Science and Commercial Subjects.

We will also train 2 175 Educators in content and methodology in Mathematics, Numeracy and languages.

Madam Speaker;

Our commitment to provide scholar transport for those learners whose nearest schools are 5 kilometres or more, away from their homes is unwavering.

In 2017 alone we provided scholar transport to 255 schools across the province. This year we are increasing the number of schools which will benefit from scholar transport to 380.

The School Nutrition Programme also plays an important role in ensuring the improvement of learner attendance and contributing towards effective learning.

This year, almost 3 800 schools will benefit from the provisioning of meals as per the National Schools Nutrition Programme. In this regard, we will contract over 10 500 food handlers that will be supplemented by an additional 145 school-based monitors.

Honourable members;

School infrastructure also plays a significant supportive role to the quality of our education.

To that effect, we will build on the work we have done both last year and in the previous years. Our work will include the building of new classrooms, new schools and the refurbishment and maintenance of existing infrastructure. The MEC for Education will give the details in his Budget Vote next month.

We will also be expanding the connection of potable water and decent sanitation facilities to more schools.

This year, we will:

- Connect 134 schools with drinking water and decent sanitation facilities
- We will build 400 new classrooms, 100 specialist rooms, 9 new schools and 50 Grade R classrooms; and also,

- Renovate 100 schools.

The No-fee-School policy remains one of the most progressive policy interventions by the ANC-led government.

This year in Limpopo alone, 41 459 more learners will benefit from this No-Fee-School policy. This will take the overall number of benefitting children to almost 1.7 million learners.

There is no doubt that we are well on track in realising the ideals of our forebears by opening the doors of learning and culture in our country.

Madam Speaker;

This focussed investment in the education of our children, and the specific attention we are giving to this important sector is beginning to bear fruits.

In the past two years, we came to this august House with heavy hearts to report about the sharp decline in our Grade 12 pass rate. We also made commitments that we would turn the situation around with the view to improve our Grade 12 results.

Our collective efforts have indeed have brought an improvement in our matric results. Early this year we announced an increase in Grade 12 results from 62.6% in 2016 to 65.6% in 2017 – an increase of 3.2%.

I am, therefore, confident that if we can all put our hands on deck, we can build on this improvement towards our main target of an 80% pass rate. We must all, therefore, as educators, learners and parents alike be involved.

Madam Speaker;

It is said that a reading nation is a winning nation. It is for this reason that we have channelled invested our efforts and resources towards providing our communities with access to library services.

During the year under review, we have provided the communities of Eldorado, Rooiberg and Ramokgopa with brand new libraries.

We are currently in a process of finalising the construction of libraries for Phokwane, Maphalle, Zamani and Mahlabathini villages.

The good news is that over 90% of our libraries are well equipped with ICT infrastructure to enhance the reading and learning experience.

In the next financial year we plan to commence with the construction of new libraries at Mavalani, Seleteng, Runnymede and Dumela villages. We will also equip 7 more libraries with ICT connection.

Madam Speaker and honourable members;

Today, a significant number of our people enjoy access to opportunities and basic services such as potable drinking water, decent sanitation, houses and electricity. This is due to the work that is taking place in our various municipalities.

It is against this background that we are paying much attention to strengthening the capacity of our municipalities.

Our work in this regard includes addressing the challenges of financial management, infrastructure delivery, institutional capacity, public participation and good governance in all our municipalities.

Our efforts have indeed begun to bear fruits in that through Municipal Infrastructure Grant alone, we have managed to:

- Provide additional 75 491 households with portable drinking water;
- We have connected 2 167 more households to decent sanitation facilities;
- We have provided an additional 135 559 households with access to refuse removal; and most importantly
- We have electrified an additional 15 620 households;

Madam Speaker;

Our government is continuing with the programme to provide decent housing for the needy and the poor. However, our concern is the slow pace at which we are moving.

In this financial year, we only managed to build just over 700 new housing units. We have managed to rectify over 300 houses which had structural defects.

Nevertheless, we are happy to announce that, during the same year, we delivered over 1 700 sites to those who can afford and are willing to build their own houses. We commit to increase this number to 2 841 by the end of this financial year.

We can no longer afford to return allocated budget whilst our people continue to be homeless.

In this regard, I have directed the MEC of CoGHSTA to develop and implement a turn-around plan to ensure that our capacity to deliver even more houses is enhanced. The MEC will elaborate more on this plan in his budget vote next month.

Madam Speaker;

We need to strengthen the spending of our Municipal Infrastructure Grant. It is worth noting that there has been a quantitative increase in the number of municipalities that have, as expected, spent over the 50% threshold by December 2017.

Our view is that there is a strong relationship between adequate MIG spending and proper planning. By this time last year, only 9 municipalities had spent over the 50% threshold. Today, the number of municipalities that managed to spend more than 50% has increased from 9 to 13.

By December 2017 our top performing municipalities when it comes to MIG spending were as follows:

Ephraim Mogale, Bela-Bela, Blouberg, Fetakgomo, Makhado, Greater Letaba, Elias Motsoaledi, Greater Tzaneen Makhuduthamakga, Maruleng, Thulamela, Greater Giyani and Lephalale.

I commend these municipalities for the job well done.

Madam Speaker;

Last year, I convened several Special Inter-Governmental Forums with the leadership of our municipalities to find ways to improve on the audit outcomes.

Part of the issues we have raised with the leadership of our municipalities relate to the same matters that have been raised by the Auditor General.

These issues include:

- The need for the municipal leadership to create a culture of honesty, ethical business practices and good governance.

- The need for proper record-keeping to ensure that complete, relevant and accurate information is accessible and available to support financial and performance reports; and
- The need to instil basic controls to ensure the processing of transactions in an accurate, complete and timely manner.

Madam Speaker;

The current water challenges experienced in other parts of the country, particularly the dire water situation in the City of Cape Town should open our eyes. The culture of reckless consumption and wastage of water must come to an end.

The fact of the matter is that ours is a water scarce country. If, as Limpopo, we do not review our water consumption patterns, we will wake up tomorrow to find ourselves without water.

Currently, a number of our dams in the province are below the 60% mark. These include Luphephe, Nzhelele, Middle-Letaba, Nsami, Tzaneen, Modjadji, Glen Alphine and Flag Boshielo dam.

Whilst we urge individual users such as our domestic users, to conserve water, the agricultural and the mining sectors should also begin to take practical steps to save water. In this regard,

municipalities should take a lead in providing direction and guidelines.

In October we will convene a Provincial Water and Sanitation Summit. This Summit will review progress made on the implementation of the Resolutions of the last Summit.

Honourable Members;

Allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate our newly elected members of the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders, under the leadership of Kgoshi Malesela Dikgale and Hosi Pheni Cyprian Ngove as the Provincial Chairperson.

We look forward to yet another fruitful working relationship with the House of Traditional Leaders. A number of developmental projects in our province enjoys support of our traditional leaders.

It is because of this cordial relationship that Limpopo continues to deliver incident-free initiation school seasons, year-in and year-out.

We are also excited that, with the support of our traditional leaders, the Limpopo Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Bill (SPLUMA) is nearing its adoption stage. This Bill has been submitted to the legislature and we still call for your final inputs.

I am also happy to report to our traditional leaders and the people of Limpopo in general that the Kgatla Commission which was tasked to deal with traditional leadership disputes has since completed its job. I would like, therefore, to thank Prof Kgatla and her team for the job well done.

We will be working with the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders and all affected leaders to deal with any other outstanding matter, including the findings and recommendations of the Commission.

Madam Speaker and honourable members;

The provincial economy is predominantly driven by the mining and commodity services sectors that contribute 27.6% and 23.8%, respectively. They are followed by Trade and Finance that contribute 15.3% and 14.6%, respectively.

On the other hand, the Agriculture, Manufacturing and Construction sectors have the lowest contribution towards provincial GDP at 2.4%, 3.3% and 3.3%, respectively.

Even in the face of tough international and national economic climate, our provincial economy remains resilient. According to Statistics South Africa's Labour Force Survey, the number of employed persons increased in six of the nine provinces between Quarter 2: 2017 and Quarter 3: 2017. Limpopo recorded the largest employment gains with 62 000 new jobs

created. During this same period, Limpopo reduced unemployment by 1.7%.

Sadly, this upward growth momentum could not be maintained in Quarter 4 of 2017. Five of the nine provinces, including Limpopo, recorded significant job losses in the last Quarter of 2017. According to StatsSA, Limpopo was the second biggest loser, with 35 000 jobs lost.

This is largely attributed to the decline in the mining and trade sectors.

Despite the unfavourable growth outlook, Limpopo and the Western Cape are the provinces with the lowest unemployment rate in the country. According to StatsSA, Limpopo's unemployment rate is at 19.6% whilst the Western Cape is at 19.5%.

We commit ourselves to work harder to recapture the lost jobs and create even more other jobs for our people. We will do this by ensuring that agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and the construction sector contribute optimally to the provincial GDP.

Madam Speaker;

The Provincial Government is a strategic role player in the economy of the Province. Government procurement should therefore assist in addressing the inherited triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

It is in this context that we are finalising the Limpopo Procurement Strategy. The main thrust of the Strategy is to stimulate Local Economic Development.

The Strategy will focus on the need to empower young people, women and people living with disabilities.

Honourable Members;

Last year I announced that the national Cabinet had positively considered our application and approved Musina-Makhado as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

Since then a lot of work has gone into making the idea of an SEZ in Musina-Makhado a living entity which will boost the economy and create jobs.

We are in the process of finalising the appointment of the SEZ Board. This will be followed by the recruitment and appointment of technical staff to support and implement the SEZ projects.

Currently, an amount of R147 million has been set aside to support the roll-out of basic infrastructure in the receiving SEZ

municipalities of Musina and Makhado. We are basically at the tail-end of our planning phase of this mega initiative.

The receiving municipalities are called upon to enhance their capacity around water infrastructure, energy and town planning.

In the light of this development, the two municipalities should start investing in the development of appropriate skills, particularly amongst the local youths.

Madam Speaker;

Mining is an important sector of the Limpopo provincial economy, contributing 28% of the GDP. The sector has improved in its productivity in the second and third quarter of 2017.

Although the sector is a major contributor to the provincial GDP, its impact in terms of job creation is relatively low. This sector is responsible for almost 15 000 of the overall number of jobs lost in the 4th quarter of 2017.

Another area of great concern to this government is the rise in illegal mining activities. Government has subsequently established a Mining Working Group to deal with these challenges.

To date, we have been able to:

- Arrest approximately 60 suspects in Sekhukhune associated with these illegal mining activities; and

- Adopted a developmental package to ensure a comprehensive provision of basic services and skills development in the mining communities.

We also welcome the decision by President Ramaphosa to review the Mining Charter which was already litigated against by various stakeholders. We, therefore, believe that a win-win solution will be found soon.

The resolution of this matter will help us to attract investment into the provincial economy. As the Province, we shall strengthen our partnership with the mining houses and organised labour in advancing a thriving economy.

Driven by the desire for strengthening relations with the People's Republic of China, the Limpopo Province has entered into Memorandums of Understanding with the Province of Henan. The focus of these MOUs is in the fields of mining, agriculture, tourism and human resource development.

I have directed the Director General of the Province to develop an implementation plan that will assist in the realisation of the letter and spirit of these MOUs. I will also personally be visiting the Hubei Province in China later in the year to sign an MOU.

Next week I will also lead a provincial delegation to the Republic of Namibia to conclude an MoU with four Namibian Regions of Ohangwena, Oshana, Oshikoto and Omusati.

This is in line with our commitment to strengthen regional integration within SADC.

Madam Speaker;

Our efforts to grow the economy and provide the much-needed jobs for our people cannot succeed without a targeted support to the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and cooperatives.

Part of our support to small business and cooperatives is to ensure that their invoices to all spheres of government are paid on time and without undue delay. This is also in line with the Minister of Finance's pronouncement in his budget appropriation Bill two days ago.

By December last year, the rate of compliance to pay invoices within 30 days was at 96%. Worth noting is the fact that not even a single Department has been found to be less than 90% of compliance.

Honourable Members;

Through quality and adequate infrastructure rollout, we will be able to grow the economy, create access to markets and create the much needed jobs for our people.

For the year ahead, our delivery of social infrastructure will be focused on constructing new houses, healthcare, education and

bulk-water facilities. We will also continue with the maintenance and renovation of our existing infrastructure.

With regard to school infrastructure, starting from March this year, we will be renovating 62 storm-damaged schools. The combined estimated value for this project is R730 million.

Last year we made a commitment to continue with the programme of improving and expanding our road network infrastructure. We all know the critical role that our road infrastructure plays in sectors of our economy such as tourism, agriculture, trade and commerce.

We are particularly grateful for the partnership with South African National Road Agency Limited (SANRAL) which continues to significantly improve our provincial road infrastructure.

About six months ago, SANRAL completed and officially opened the much anticipated three Botlokwa bridges across the N1 freeway. The completed Botlokwa bridge project will go a long way in saving lives, alleviating traffic congestions on the N1 and revitalising the local economy around Botlokwa.

The two other major road projects by SANRAL around Musina will also go a long way in supporting the development of our Musina-Makhado SEZ. These projects include the re-routing of the N1 at Musina near the northern border with Zimbabwe and a

new single carriageway road on the western side of the Musina CBD.

In the same vein, SANRAL has also invested an amount of R640 million on the new Polokwane Ring Road as a measure to manage traffic congestion and improve safety around the City of Polokwane.

Following the completion of the state-of-the-art bypass into ZCC Moria, we have commenced discussion with SANRAL for another bypass that will alleviate traffic congestion into the St. Egenas church. In the next few weeks I will be meeting with the CEO of SANRAL and the leadership of the church to finalise the matter.

Through the Road Agency Limpopo (RAL), we continue to construct new roads and rehabilitate existing ones.

In this regard, I am happy to report that in this current Financial Year we have commenced with construction of a number of roads. These include:

- Construction of the road from Morebeng to Sekgosese;
- The road from Settlers to Witlaagte which is almost at 40%
- The road from Apel to Ga-Nkwana;
- The road Moletji Moshate to Magodi which is at above 96% of completion;

- The Ga-Phasha, Mampuru, Tukakgomo to Makgabane road which is 90% complete;
- The road from Babangu to Noblehoek to Maphalle is over 70% towards completion.
- The road from Makuya to Masisi which is above 60%
- The road from Matsakale, Altein to Shangoni Kruger National Park which has been completed
- The road from Mmotwaneng/Legolaneng, Mohlalaotoane, Moeding, and Seithing to Ramogwerane which has been completed.

All the road projects from the 2017/18 Financial Year which were not completed will be completed in the next Financial Year.

In addition, we will commence construction of the following road projects:

- The R523 road to Alldays;
- The road from Lemondkop to Olifantshoek;
- The road from Nkowankowa to Deerpark;
- The road from Senwabarwana to Indermark;
- The road from Tompi Seleka to Mogaladi to Phokwane;
- The road from Riba Cross to Ga-Riba village; and
- The road from Marulaneng to Ga-Maila to Mphanama to Ga-Nchabeleng
- The road from Mmamatonya to Mehlareng.

Madam Speaker;

With regard to health infrastructure, we have set aside an amount of almost R250 million to improve our healthcare infrastructure across the province. These projects will include Alternative Backup Systems at 38 clinics, 4 new laundry facilities, a clinic, and EMS facilities.

We will also spend R32 million on the construction of the Molemole Agricultural Offices. Construction on this project is expected to commence by May this year.

As a measure to support early childhood learning, we will be maintaining 211 Early Childhood Development facilities across the Province at a value of R20 million.

Honourable Members;

As part of our programme to ensure food security through our **Fetsa Tlala** initiative, we continue to provide comprehensive agricultural support to smallholder farmers.

In this Financial Year, we have supported about 2 750 households with production inputs in the form of seeds, seedlings and compost for subsistence farming.

As part of our continued efforts to enhance household food security, we have cultivated over 460 000 hectares of land.

For the year ahead, we target to support at least 6 000 households with production inputs to enable them to have food security.

We are also planning to provide support for the cultivation of at least 20 000 hectares on communal and land reform projects.

A total number of 2 843 smallholder farmers, 265 subsistence farmers and 82 Black commercial farmers are targeted to benefit from government support through a conditional grant.

This year we will also be establishing the Farmer Support Units in all the districts in line with the comprehensive business plans developed for each district.

Madam Speaker;

The resurgence of the Fall Army Worm has seen all our five districts being greatly affected. This alien worm poses a serious threat to food security in our Province. In an effort to mitigate the further negative effects of this worm, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has since developed a mitigation strategy.

I, therefore, urge all farmers in the Province to be in touch with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development at first sight of any strange worms on their farms.

Madam Speaker;

The tourism sector continues to play a significant role in the growth and development of our provincial economy.

Limpopo remains a leading province in the country with regard to domestic tourism, increasing from 5.6 million in 2015 to 8.3 million in 2016. This represents a massive increase of 2.7 million.

One of the tourism offerings that add great value to the industry is the Annual Marula Festival. Last year this Festival attracted over 20 000 people and injected well over R45 million into the provincial economy. It is within this context that we invite all of you to be part of this year's Marula Festival which will be taking place on the 3rd of March 2018 in Phalaborwa.

Whilst the situation is pleasing, the challenge for us as a Province is to do more to attract greater number of foreign tourists. The MEC for LEDET is therefore directed to develop a tourism strategy to address this challenge.

Honourable Members;

Last year I announced that Limpopo Connexion, which is a subsidiary of LEDA, was to begin with a rollout of broadband infrastructure across the Province.

Today I am able to report that the first phase of the rollout of the broadband telecommunication network infrastructure has commenced. The construction of the data centre, which is the provincial ICT nerve centre, has already been completed.

The broadband technology will provide a unique opportunity for the people of Limpopo to become active participants in the knowledge economy.

This programme will mostly benefit SMMEs, Cooperatives, the youth, research institutions and the creative industry. It will further enhance productivity, both in the public and the private sector.

Madam Speaker and honourable members;

Our government is committed to providing quality healthcare services that is accessible, comprehensive, integrated, affordable and sustainable.

Limpopo, like the rest of the country is faced with an enormous burden of diseases. Our objective is to continue on the path to reduce communicable diseases such as HIV and Tuberculosis, wage a relentless fight against lifestyle non-communicable diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

We are also focussed on reducing maternal, neonatal and child deaths.

We have, therefore, committed ourselves to increasing the quantity and improving the quality of our healthcare facilities.

This time, last year, we reported that 77 of our healthcare facilities were meeting the Ideal Clinic Status. Today, this number has increased from 77 to 115.

Even more pleasing is the fact that 56 of our Primary Healthcare Facilities operate on 24 hour basis. I am also happy to report that almost 270 of our Public Health Facilities have access to broadband connectivity.

For the year under review, we have completed neo-natal infrastructure projects at Tshilidzini, Pietersburg, Mokopane, Nkhensani and Elim Hospitals.

We are also grateful for the intervention of the National Department of Health which assisted us to deliver 4 clinics at Thengwe, Magwedzha, Mulenzhe and Makonde.

We have also upgraded the electricity system at Ellisras, Philadelphia, Pietersburg, St. Ritas and WF Knobel Hospitals.

We have further completed the rehabilitation of laundries at Witpoort, Ellisras, Mokopane, FH Odendaal MDR, Philadelphia, Letaba, Louis Trichardt, Donald Fraser, Messina and St Ritas Hospitals.

Madam Speaker;

In this Financial Year, we shall complete new clinics at Sekuruwe, Sterspruit, Pienaarsrivier, Schoongezicht and Mamushi.

This year, we are also looking forward to complete the Thabazimbi Hospital Mortuary. We will also complete the Out-

Patient Departments at Matlala, Philadelphia and Dr. CN Phatudi Hospitals.

Honourable Members;

Our fight against HIV and related opportunistic infections is well on course. We have managed to bring down the maternal HIV vertical transmission from 1.2% of last year to 0.96% this year. The good news is that the number of our patients who remain on Anti Retroviral Treatment has increased from **305 421** in 2016/17 to **315 098** in 2017/18.

Going forward, we will be strengthening our HIV testing and TB screening programmes. However, we are calling on our people to continue with the practice of the ABC message of abstaining, being faithful or condomising.

Madam Speaker and honourable members;

Last year we announced our intention to refurbish the Limpopo Traffic College to a state-of-the-art facility. We are happy to announce that construction of this college is expected to commence in August at an estimated value of R53 million.

We are confident that the completion of this facility will go a long way in supporting our efforts to ensure our roads are safe and reliable at all times.

During the 2017 Festive Season, Limpopo managed to record the highest reduction in the number of road fatalities. We have managed this massive reduction, despite the fact that our roads are amongst the busiest in the country during the Festive Seasons.

We salute our road users, Traffic Officers, and all law enforcement officers for this achievement. Let us continue to ensure that Arrive Alive remains our daily responsibility.

The Province is also working very hard when it comes to the fight against crime in general.

Our Province dominated the recently held SAPS National Excellence Award. On this score, I wish to take this opportunity and salute those of our men and women in blue who represented us well in these awards.

We salute those officers who always go beyond the call of duty to make our Province a true home of safety, peace and tranquillity.

As President Ramaphosa reminded us, and I quote '***we should fight corruption, fraud and collusion in the private sector with the same purpose and intensity. We must remember that every time someone receives a bribe there is someone who is prepared to pay it***'.

Provincial departments, the SOEs and municipalities are directed to ensure that all outstanding investigations related to corruption and maladministration are concluded without any further delay. Consequence management should be implemented without fear or favour.

In this regard, we commit ourselves to strengthen the Limpopo Anti-corruption Forum to coordinate our efforts against corruption.

Honourable Members;

The government continues to play a significant role in providing an efficient, reliable and affordable public transport system through subsidies to various bus companies.

As we speak, 925 buses on our roads are subsidised by government. We have installed an Electronic Vehicle Trip Monitoring System on 425 subsidised buses to ensure that government gets value for money. Currently we are in the process of installing this tracking system in the other remaining buses.

Madam Speaker and honourable members;

As President Ramaphosa said, our young people should be at the centre of our economic agenda. It is indeed a matter of great urgency that we draw young people in far greater numbers into productive activity.

Throughout our work, we will be guided by these wise words of guidance from President Ramaphosa. Our role as government is indeed to cultivate a supportive environment for our young people to be educated, trained and to be equipped with necessary skills for their own development.

Last year we committed to the young people of our Province to develop the Limpopo Youth Development Strategy.

Today, I can report that following the months of consultation with various youth formations across the province, we now have the Limpopo Youth Development Strategy.

Departments and municipalities, therefore, are directed to develop clear and workable implementation plans to support the Strategy.

The MEC for Education is further directed to conclude a roll-out plan on the provision of sanitary towels to schools.

Indeed as President Tambo said “...**a country that does not value its youth does not deserve its future**”

Madam Speaker;

During 2017/18 Financial Year, we placed over 2 300 young people on internship and Learnership programmes. This has helped to equip them with the necessary experience required by the job market. A significant number of these young people have

since been absorbed permanently by both the government and the private sector.

Through the support of Construction SETA (CETA), we have used an amount of R17 million to train 420 young people in artisanship.

In partnership with the Manufacturing and Engineering SETA (MerSETA), we are currently recruiting 170 young people. This programme is funded to a tune of R19.9 million.

Last year we offered bursaries to over 1000 young people. This is line with our efforts to make education accessible to education.

Madam Speaker;

We are also doing well on the commitment to avail sporting opportunities to our youth.

Last year over 12 300 learners participated in school sport competitions.

This year we plan to increase the number of learners participating in active school sport to at least 14 900. These learners will participate in School Sport Programme at district, provincial and national levels during winter, autumn and summer school championship games.

In a bid to help support and nurture our young talent, we will provide over 860 schools, clubs and hubs with supporting equipment and the requisite attire.

To complement these efforts, we will also provide the necessary capacity building training for the coaches, technical officials and team managers.

Madam Speaker;

Let me take this opportunity to commend our two teams in the Premier League, Baroka FC and Polokwane City, for making us proud. We are looking forward to securing a spot in the Top 8.

Tomorrow afternoon, the much anticipated Limpopo derby, between these two teams will take place at Peter Mokaba Stadium.

Ke dira boipiletšo go barati le bathekgi ba kgwele ya maoto gore etlang ka makatanamane gotla go thekga dihlopha tše tša rena.

The continued stay of these teams in the PSL is largely dependent on our support as the people of this Province.

We are also impressed with the performance of our teams in the National First Division. We are looking forward to seeing **Black Leopards FC** and **Tshakhuma Tsha Madzivhandila FC** gaining promotion to the PSL in the next season.

Madam Speaker and honourable members;

Our commitment to building a responsive, efficient and effective provincial administration is bearing fruit. Last year we committed that we would move swiftly to appoint HODs for the Provincial Departments.

Today I am happy to report that indeed we have appointed all the HODs in the provincial administration. We have also intensified training on the ethos of good governance and leadership for all our HODs. This training initiative was also extended to all Members of the Executive Council (MECs).

We have equally emphasised the importance of having a harmonious working relationship between the employer and the employees. We could not have achieved our developmental mandate without active participation of the working people.

It is in this context that we will continue our interaction with organised labour.

Madam Speaker;

If the improvement in the audit outcomes is anything to go by, the result of the work we are doing in this regard is becoming visible.

We are proud to report that both the Provincial Treasury and the Limpopo Gambling Board received clean audit opinions in the last audit cycle.

In the same vein, Road Agency Limpopo has improved from qualified to unqualified audit opinion.

Most notable is the improvement from the Department of Education. For the first time in 10 years the Department has improved from disclaimer to qualified audit opinion.

We have now closed the chapter of disclaimer audit opinions in the Provincial Administration.

In his own words, the Auditor General, had this to say about the performance of the provincial administration:

The improvements in Limpopo can be attributed to the political leadership taking accountability and discharging oversight responsibility through robust discussions and interrogation of reports submitted by administrative leadership.

The AG went further to say that:

The level of commitment demonstrated by the political and administrative leadership in improving audit outcomes is commendable.

Notwithstanding these improvements, we urge all Departments and municipalities to strive towards achieving clean audits.

Honourable Members;

The dictates of good governance also require a constant and dynamic relationship between government and the people. It is in this context that we urge municipalities to strengthen public participation avenues such as the Ward Committees, IDP Representative Forums and Mayoral outreach programmes.

Communities are also urged to utilise these forums to voice out their service delivery concerns and to make inputs with regard to issues of development.

In an effort to strengthen the interaction between communities and government, we will be reviewing the impact of the Exco Outreach Programme.

Madam Speaker and honourable members;

The Independent Electoral Commission is on a campaign to ensure an accurate and credible voters' roll. This is in preparation for the forthcoming 2019 General Elections.

We, therefore, call on all our people to go out and confirm their physical addresses at their voting stations. This exercise is scheduled for the weekend of 10th to the 11th of March, 2018.

As I conclude, I want to borrow from Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, Ulysses:

.....Come my friends,

'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.

**Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.**

Lastly, let me borrow from another outstanding son-of-the-soil, the former President of the ANC, Josia Gumede when he said:
“I have seen the new Jerusalem”

I, therefore, implore on you to join us as we march to this New Jerusalem.

I thank you!