

**STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF GAUTENG,
HONORABLE PANYAZA LESUFI, 19TH FEBRUARY 2023, NASREC COMPLEX,
GAUTENG**

Madame Speaker, Lentheng Ntombi Mekgwe

Deputy Speaker

Former Premiers, David Makhura, Nomvula Paula Mokonyane, Paul Mashatile,
Mbazima Shilowa, Mathole Motshekga and Gabriel Tokyo Sexwale

Members of the Executive Council

Leaders of Political Parties in the Legislature

Executive Mayors and Members of the Mayoral Committees

Members of the Provincial Legislature

Leadership of the African National Congress and other political parties

Leadership of Labour Formations

Representatives of various Business Formations

Acting Provincial Commissioner: Maj Gen Mthombeni and former GPG PC Mawela

Representatives of Youth, Women and People with Disabilities

Leadership of LGTBQTI communities

Ladies and Gentlemen

Fellow Citizens of Gauteng

INTRODUCTION

It is my honour and privilege to deliver the 2024 State of the Province Address today. This SOPA is taking place during an intersection of seminal moments which define the history of our province and, indeed, our country.

Almost 30 years ago the first SOPA was delivered in this very venue by the first Premier of Gauteng Province, Mr Gabriel Mosime Tokyo Sexwale.

At the time, as Honourable Jack Bloom can confirm, there was no Gauteng Legislature, or Gauteng Departments to speak of.

At the time, there was no Gautrain or the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system to speak of.

At the time, the Mandela Bridge was not even a figment of the imagination; nor was the Blue IQ multi-billion investment in economic infrastructure development.

At the time, there was no soccer stadium called 'soccer city' – the host venue for the historic 2010 FIFA world cup show piece.

At the time, there were no low-cost housing, or what is known as RDP houses, to speak of.

TODAY 30 YEARS later, I am proud to stand before you to report back to this august House and the people of our province on all the milestones which have transfigured the face of our province over the last three decades due to the interventions of this government.

The Province of Gauteng has changed beyond recognition from the racialised spatial nightmare of our past

The political vision of the society, that this ANC-led government seeks to build, is driven by the strategic goal of creating a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and just society. It is a long journey for sure, but the ancient Chinese tell us that a journey of 1000 miles begins with the first step.

Our vision have been translated by successive ANC-led administrations through the Gauteng Trade and Investment Strategy, the Blue IQ Mega Infrastructure projects, the Ten-pillar Programme of Transformation, Modernisation and Re-industrialisation (TMR), the Growing Gauteng Together (GGT2030) Plan, and now our elevated priorities anchored on Township, Informal Settlements and Hosital (TISH) as we conclude the sixth administration.

When we addressed this house exactly 12 months ago we committed ourselves to:

- **Fighting crime, lawlessness and corruption;**
- **Accelerating our economic position;**
- **Improving our Townships, Informal Settlements and Hostels;**
- **Building the capacity of the State;**
- **Fine-tuning our communication capabilities.**

FIGHTING CRIME

Honourable Members;

During the 6th Administration, we framed our response to crime within the Growing Gauteng Together (GGT2030) Provincial Strategy, supported by a coherent and integrated 5-year Gauteng Policing Plan with an increase in resource allocation.

In the past year, our overall investment in the fight against crime and the promotion of safety, especially within Townships, Informal Settlements and Hostels (TISH) has increased substantially. That is why when we came into office in 2022, we committed to increasing the total budget of the Department of Community Safety from over R750 million to R2.7 billion over a year. We intend to further increase this budget in the next MTEF cycle to strengthen our capacity to fight crime.

Our support for SAPS in this Province, of ensuring they improve police visibility in communities and access to police services, is unwavering. To this end, the Gauteng Provincial Government donated 250 high-powered vehicles to the SAPS to enhance crime fighting within the communities. We have also handed over 12 mobile police stations to SAPS to enable people in precincts without police stations to report crimes.

Illegal mining

We are continuously breaking the back of Zama Zamas (illegal miners) in Gauteng. Since the decisive response by the President to our request to address the challenges of illegal mining in derelict mines, there has been a marked decrease in this abhorrent activity in the province.

Our weekly high-intensity joint “***Okae Molao***” and “***Shanela***” operations on illegal mining conducted across the province by SAPS, SANDF, GTP, Wardens (CPWs) and Private Security companies are producing results. Between April and December 2023, 439 persons were arrested for illicit mining activities in Boksburg, Dobsonville, Kagiso, Khutsong, Krugersdorp, Primrose, Randfontein, Tarlton, Westonaria, Benoni and Springs.

We are dealing decisively with notorious crime syndicates, especially those involving bank robberies, illegal mining, drug and child trafficking and cash-in-transit heists. To date, 79,749 joint operations have been conducted at provincial and district levels in the TISH areas. These operations resulted in 9,244 arrests and the recovery of 1,532 stolen/hijacked vehicles.

It is for this reason that I want to pay tribute to the former Gauteng police commissioner, Lieutenant-General Elias Mawela who led the battle against crime in our province from the front, unfortunately, we couldn't persuade him to stay on when his contract expired. We look forward to working with the Acting Commissioner, Major General Mthombeni who is holding the fort diligently.

Madam Speaker;

Crime Prevention Wardens flagship project:

When we addressed this house exactly 12 months ago, almost 7 000 of our people were unemployed and desponded. While others insulted them as drunkards in shebeens clothed in Pep Store uniforms, we saw them as patriotic young South Africans who were yearning for opportunities and committed to serving their communities. Today, we are proud to announce that we have exceeded our initial target and that there are over 7000 young people who are fully and permanently employed by this government as wardens and have joined us in the house today.

In keeping with the ethos of an inclusive society, we ensured that coloured and Indian communities were included through special recruitment that saw over 2000 young people from these communities becoming wardens.

On 12 December 2023, the Crime Prevention Wardens were granted Peace Officer status by the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services.

As Kahil Gilbran once said ***“No sunrise will find us where sunset left us. Days are never counted backwards!”***

Our wardens have received extensive basic training. As I am speaking to you, CPWS are being trained by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) at its military base. The CPWs are deployed on a 24/7 shift basis in different wards and crime hotspots under the supervision of SAPS, Gauteng Traffic and Metro Police Departments. Some of the CPWs are undergoing specialised training.

Thus far, they are receiving advanced training on fire-arm competence, as drone pilots, training in crowd-control, advanced driving, and training on anti-land invasion and infrastructure vandalism, while others will be on monitoring cameras in our three interim command centres.

We are increasing the number of Crime Prevention Wardens to over 12000. The current recruits who will be military veterans will remain on a two-year contract.

Less talk, More work!

Honourable Members;

Asijiki! No corner of our townships, informal settlements, CBDs or hostels will go unpoliced. Our war on crime knows no bounds; it is real and it is uncompromising.

Our comprehensive integrated crime prevention plan is anchored on improved access to policing service, improved partnership policing, reduction in identified priority crimes, implementation of E-policing, increasing the human resource capacity and professionalism of law enforcement, deployment of intelligence capacity, improved support and strengthening our fight against GBV.

CCTV Cameras

When we addressed this house exactly 12 months ago, this province did not have sufficient CCTV camera coverage to monitor crime. Today as we address this house, we are proud to report back to you that we have over 7 000 cameras working in an integrated collaboratively manner to make our province safer. These cameras were

made possible by our partnership with Business Against Crime, SANRAL, VumaCam, and Tinstwalo (a partner from Ekurhuleni Municipality).

As part of our programme to revitalise our CBDs and rid them of crime, lawlessness and vandalism, we have identified Small Street in Johannesburg, as the first of many that require our immediate intervention. From now on, Small Street will be under 24-hour surveillance with CCTV strategically deployed along the area. We are putting up a permanent deployment of 350 law enforcement officers. When we get it right in Small Street we will surely succeed in other CBDs in the province.

Cameras are also being used to monitor crime hotspots, including in the 6 provincial hostels (Goerge Goch, Jeppe, Denver, MBA hostel, Murray and Roberts, and Rethabile LTA hostels), as well as selected high-risk schools identified by the Department of Education.

We are serious about the safety of our communities. We, therefore, want **'Less talk, more work'!**

e-Panic buttons

We have successfully piloted the deployment of e-panic buttons, which operate through a cellphone app, among staff in Gauteng departments. During the pilot phase, over 7,900 users, including 1000 Safety Ambassadors, have downloaded the app. Since its launch between 1 April 2023, and 31 December 2023, there have been 1,379 armed response activations to emergency calls and 1,086 ER24 calls that were promptly responded to.

We have learnt many lessons from our pilot through the project on how to leverage existing technologies in the private sector as an alternative to duplicating products and services.

From the 1st of April 2024, we will now allow the people of Gauteng to use the e-Panic button to seek help in terms of crime or medical challenges.

Number plate recognition

Stolen and hijacked cars are central to crimes that are committed in our province. The majority of these vehicles use fake and duplicate number plates. The current number plates system is running out of the numeric and letters and we need to introduce new numbers.

The National Department of Transport has developed a draft legislative proposal for the harmonisation of national plates which includes the security features we want on Gauteng's new number plates. As Gauteng, we fully support this direction which will allow us as of the 1st of April 2024, to pilot our new numbers that include a track and trace system. This pilot project will be rolled out on government cars and later with the general public when the Minister of Transport finalises the bill

Helicopters and drones

When we addressed this house 12 months ago and committed to adding helicopters to the police fleet, we were ridiculed by some in this very house such as Member Bosch of the Democratic Alliance who said, and I quote “..how dare Premier Lesufi make promises that are impractical and unachievable”.

Despite the doomsayers, we are proud to report that we have acquired two new helicopters and drones that have allowed us to establish the Gauteng Air Wing unit that did not exist before our last SOPA.

“No sunrise will find us where sunset left us. Days are never counted backwards!”

These helicopters have been instrumental in our various crime-fighting operations across the province, such as the operation to combat illegal mining in Roodepoort, where 85 suspects were arrested, and a variety of illegal mining tools were seized.

Many cash-in-transit attempts, hijacking and vehicle theft attempts have been foiled through joint efforts between our Air Wing and ground forces. In one operation three suspects were arrested after a high-speed chase of a vehicle hijacked in Soweto

crashed into a bridge. Ground forces were called, suspects apprehended, firearms confiscated and recovered, and a hijacked victim was rescued.

All in all, the helicopters have conducted 101 operations between May 2023 and January 2024. During these operations 255 suspects were arrested, 63 vehicles recovered and 51 firearms recovered. Based on these successes, we are adding 2 helicopters to our Air Wing fleet.

To complement our helicopter and ground fleets, we deployed drones in crime hotspots and inaccessible areas such as informal settlements and derelict mining areas. The drones have been involved in various operations such as High-Density Operations in Diepsloot, Carltonville, Kliptown, Evaton, Zama Zama operations in Fochville, Randfontein, Kagiso, Khutsong and Okae Molao operations in Honeydew, Eldorado Park, Kagiso, DeDeur.

This pilot project was so successful that we are acquiring an additional 30 drones in partnership with SANDF. Again, the potential for capacity building in this space is limitless, especially for previously disadvantaged groups. This also ties in with our 4th Industrial Revolution ideals.

Madam Speaker;

Whether the criminal world likes it or not, a safer Gauteng shall rise! We are all about **'Less talk and more work!'**

State-of-the-Art Provincial Integrated Command Centre (PICC)

We have made strides in the establishment of the PICC. Interim command centres have been set up to monitor high-crime areas. We are also partnering with SANRAL to utilise its existing infrastructure to monitor crime on provincial roads. This will feed into the main PICC upon completion. This integrated Command Centre will also assist us as we institutionalise disaster management in the province. 900 of our wardens will also be taken to training in disaster management to ensure our province is prepared.

Gender-based violence and femicide response

Honourable Members

The scourge of gender-based violence remains an area of concern for Gauteng residents. The most typical crimes in this regard are child abuse, adult trauma resulting from assault, rape, intimate partner violence in the form of physical and sexual abuse, as well as femicide (GCRO, 2022). These realities are also confirmed by SAPS crime statistics, which show that Gauteng contributes approximately 20.6% of sexual assault cases and 20.4% of rape cases respectively to the national cases.

We have made concerted efforts to implement the Provincial Gender-Based Violence Plan, which is aligned with the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in partnership with various stakeholders. It is for this reason that when we assumed office we committed to unleashing resources at our disposal to tackle the scourges of crime, corruption, lawlessness, and vandalism. This heightened focus on crime meant incorporating the creation of an e-policing network and ICT infrastructure to bolster our GBV, school safety and visible policing efforts amongst others.

We rolled out 23 Green Doors, the victim's empowerment centres (VECs) at police stations, and shelters, to support survivors of GBV to just under 500 000 households. We unleashed 34 sexual offence unit cars to respond to gendered-based cases speedily.

The President, in the SONA, encouraged men to take a pledge against Gender-based violence. In addition to this, we are calling for our learners to make a pledge against GBV at schools every Wednesday.

Through our GBVF (Gender Based Violence and Femicide) brigades programme, we conducted door-to-door awareness campaigns, reaching just under 500 000 households. The Minister of Police hailed our GBV brigades programme as a best-practice model that should be implemented across South Africa.

ECONOMY

Honourable Speaker,

According to Stats SA, the economy of Gauteng is now bigger than the economy of the Western Cape, KZN and Limpopo combined. Compared to other provinces, Gauteng has the largest number of employed people at around 5 million. Despite the job losses during the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, our economy remained resilient, and we rebounded with over 449,000 jobs.

During this past year, Gauteng as the country's economic hub, experienced an increase of 96,300 jobs, with 31,300 jobs in the last 90 days. We are proud to declare that since the COVID-19 pandemic, our economy is now firmly back on track and we are ready to pump our economy further.

Our Province has attracted more than R68 Billion in investments from 261 foreign companies and created about 23,000 direct jobs in our economy. These investments cut across the ten high-growth sectors of our economy.

Our Province proudly hosted the 5th South African Investment Conference in April last year, bringing together leading minds in business and government to unlock new opportunities for growth and development in South Africa. In total, this conference realised R1.14 trillion worth of investment commitments across a range of economic sectors, of which R22 Billion are destined for Gauteng.

Economic development corridors (SEZs)

Residents of our Province;

During the 6th administration, we committed to corridor-focused economic development through the rollout of Special Economic Zones and the revitalisation of industrial parks, amongst other catalytic projects.

The **Tshwane Automotive Special Economic Zone (TASEZ)** operations are in full swing, with the completion of phase 1 of its development seeing the production of the

first next-generation Ford Ranger and the VW Amarok getting into gear in November 2022.

This was the result of a capital investment of R15.8 billion by Ford Motor Company of South Africa (FMCSA). Ford was looking to increase its capacity to produce 200,000 vehicles annually and export vehicles to more than 100 global markets.

Investment into TASEZ by the Ford suppliers stands at R5,6 billion, with an initial government investment of R3,9 billion.

This investment enabled the creation of 3,291 jobs within the zone, with more than 65% of these jobs sourced from the surrounding townships. Of these jobs, 39% were filled by women and 59% by youth.

Further, we have secured investment in partnership with BMW and YFPO to the tune of R2 Billion, with R 300 million earmarked to construct the facility. The investment creates 200 jobs during construction and 180 permanent jobs. This facility is advancing our industrialisation programme and increasing our localisation project.

We welcome the announcement by the Minister of Trade and Industry on the promulgation of the **Vaal Special Economic Zone**. This SEZ will build on the competitive strength of the region and support our efforts to transition onto a low-carbon sustainable path. Investments of over R8 billion in the green economy, agro-processing, and manufacturing sectors are expected to break ground in the 2024/25 financial year.

There is a further R40 billion of investments, in various stages of development, that have been committed by local and foreign investors. The economy of the Vaal will never be the same again.

GIDZ (ORTIA SEZ)

Madame Speaker, our forebearers had a vision for the creation of a jewellery manufacturing precinct in the Gauteng province, a first of its kind in the country.

The work that has been undertaken in the zone as part of our endeavour to reindustrialise our Province as articulated in the GGT2030.

We are working with amongst other *De Beers* , which has operationalized the diamond sorting facility and the investment is to the tune of R81 Million and created 89 permanent jobs. In addition, *Metcon Gold Refinery* has set up a gold refinery facility, which is an investment of not less than R102 Million and created 100 permanent jobs. *In2Food* has set up a fruit and vegetable processing facility, a first of its kind in the Continent, with the largest refrigeration plant in the world. They have invested R257 Million and created 2500 permanent jobs.

Furthermore, the jewellery precinct has enabled us to open opportunities for SMMEs who are in the jewellery beneficiation space. There are 14 SMMEs warehoused in the precinct with active business.

The township economy is our new gold! (TEDA)

Madam Speaker

We are prioritising the economic landscape of our townships through increased financial and non-financial support to township enterprises. We are starting to see significant indicators of the birth of new economies in our townships.

Our commitment to buying goods and services from the township enterprises is starting to bear fruits. Over the past five years, the GPG has spent R15 billion on businesses from the townships. In the last year alone, we spent R2.2 billion on township businesses which demonstrates our substantial investment to empowering township communities, leading to increased economic activities, job creation, and a positive impact on the unemployment rate.

As we continue to increase government's spending in townships, we are equally strengthening the capacity and infrastructure of the township enterprises. In the past year, over 4 000 township retailers have been trained in enterprise development and are now capacitated to operate successful businesses.

Madam Speaker;

I now wish to share the story of successful township entrepreneur to illustrate this point.

Splash Coating Africa, owned by **Bonga Masoka**, is a 100% youth-owned township paint manufacturer that empowers women. To date the company has opened 6 retail facilities at Protea Glen, Ebony Park, Soshanguve, Ga-Rankuwa, Midrand, where they have a manufacturing plant and a retail store.

The paint can be used for road marking, domestic as well as industrial use. Notably, the company has recently been onboarded into the Takealot market place. This is one of many success stories from the township.

Honourable Members;

As part of reclaiming our spaza shops, we have refurbished over 3000 spaza shops across the Gauteng townships; and established a digital township business register database with over 20,000 township businesses already captured.

The demand for rental stock in our townships continues to grow. Over 4 million people rent backrooms which provide much-needed additional income to township households, and our government is on the ground to support the growth of this economic sector. To date, 126 landlords have been supported with building loans resulting in 847 backyard units and the completion of 60 commercial units.

Tourism and Hospitality

The Tourism and Hospitality sector recorded close to 8 million international arrivals. This generated more than R98 billion in total foreign spending in the local economy. In the previous year, we supported events that generated R7 billion, and more than 17,000 job opportunities were created.

This is a sector in whose development we need to harness and invest. We will soon run a campaign called “ ***Visit Gauteng: Zwakala***”

To confirm Gauteng as a preferred destination for both travel and investment, nine (9) new airline routes have been (re)introduced into our province in 2023 alone.

Visit Gauteng Campaign

Honourable Speaker, Gauteng has many opportunities for untapped markets for the tourism sector. The government has identified areas like Magaliesburg; Vaal River City and Suikersbosrand as potential areas for expanding our tourism attraction destinations.

During the current term of the 6th administration, we commissioned a study to assess the tourism and economic spin-offs that can be derived from repositioning Suikersbosrand as one of the best tourism attraction destinations in our province. We will expedite the commercialisation and soon announce a public-private partnerships.

We will soon be launching the ***VISIT GAUTENG CAMPAIGN:ZWAKALA*** to showcase our tourism attraction destinations in this regard.

TOWNSHIP INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND HOSTELS (TISH)

Improve the look and feel of the townships

Honourable Members;

Our townships represent who we are and where we come from. They remain special places but they are in a very bad state. Last year we committed to changing the face of Townships, Informal Settlements and Hostels. We are now taking this work to another level with our ambitious programme that will see the undeveloped four rooms in our townships being changed. Starting with indigent families, through this ANC government that I have the honour to lead, we will improve the conditions of these homes.

We will undertake this unprecedented program by recruiting more than 40,000 unemployed township people who will be trained to be artisans, bricklayers, electricians, and plumbers in a programme called **“iCrush le Lova”** a date with the unemployed. All these unemployed will be taken to TVET colleges and SETA programs to be trained and supported and upon conclusion directed to employment opportunities.

To realise this, we will also expand our township database of South African architects, hardware stores, building suppliers and contractors to assist in the design and construction of upgrades to houses in the townships. Unemployed people in the townships will be trained and upskilled to be part of this initiative.

Wi-Fi Infrastructure

Honourable Speaker;

The ever-evolving landscape of technology is no longer just a luxury. It is a fundamental right, which connects communities and fosters inclusivity. We previously announced that we would provide reliable internet and access to free Wi-Fi in the townships.

We are pleased to report back that through private sector partnerships (Telkom, Herotel, Broadband Infracore), more than 50 townships are now covered with broadband, enabling residents and enterprises alike to access high-speed internet services at reasonable rates. In the current financial year, more than 42 township areas have been covered with broadband.

During this term of office, we made investments intended to modernise infrastructure for the rollout of the Gauteng Provincial Network. This network is being maintained, ensuring its resilience as a backbone for connectivity. We extended Wide Area Network (WAN) capabilities to 1,249 sites, Local Area Network (LAN) coverage reached 719 sites, and 344 sites were equipped with voice capabilities.

Beyond 2024, we will roll out connectivity across all townships. All public institutions, schools, healthcare facilities and state offices will have dependable WiFi.

Honourable Speaker;

Tarring dusty streets in our townships is a priority. We have noted the state of deterioration of some of our municipal roads. We identified 40 roads which need urgent attention in Sedibeng, and we will upgrade these.

We will also upgrade an additional 40 roads in Ekurhuleni, West Rand and 40 more across informal settlements in Gauteng. That will take us to a total of 120 roads that will be upgraded in TISH areas.

Our townships and CBDs are dirty and the state of service delivery in many of our municipalities is on the verge of collapse. As a provincial government, we cannot sit idle and watch this continued degradation. We will continue to provide environmental management support to TISH communities through the Bontle ke Botho (BKB) sustainable clean-ups and greening initiatives to enhance human dignity and instil pride in communities. We will soon announce the appointment of an implementing agent to assist with the collection of refuse.

We will get this right if our communities also do their part in ensuring the cleanliness of this province thereby averting littering and dumping.

Where municipalities fall short, we will appoint an implementing agent to resolve the water and sanitation challenges in our townships to avert the loss of water due to burst pipes.

We continue to be concerned with the proliferation of informal settlements in Gauteng. There are approximately 700 recorded informal settlements in our province, and still growing. In the immediate, provincial plans are underway to upgrade 68 Informal Settlements. We are accelerating our plans to decongest and relocate people from informal settlements to more habitable land. This includes the placement of people in the completed Mega Projects or other new housing developments.

During the current term, we provided more than 2,000 households from 20 informal settlements, with the security of tenure through relocation into the completed mega projects. An additional 64 informal settlements were provided with rudimentary services, and sixteen (16) informal settlements were provided with bulk services.

The formalisation and upgrading of Informal Settlements into “townships of the future” remains a key priority for the province to ensure that they are better places to live in.

CAPACITY OF THE STATE

Honourable Members

While we were in the process of establishing our provincial developmental State Bank. We noted the President’s proclamation of the South African Post Bank Amendment Act, which will allow for the creation of a State bank. Gauteng is in an ideal position to be one of the first provinces to transact with this bank.

Our commitment to a clean and accountable government is manifested by enhancing compliance with legal requirements to prevent unnecessary, irregular, and wasteful spending. In the 2022/23 financial year, the province obtained 6 clean audits from the Departments of Office of the Premier, Education, Economic Development, E-Government, Finance and COGTA and a further 11 clean audits from various

provincial entities. 8 departments achieved an unqualified opinion demonstrating that where this ANC governs, we govern better, unlike other political parties in our local sphere in this province.

This is a significant milestone as there were zero departments with qualified audit opinions, marking a 100% improvement from the previous year. This achievement is noteworthy as it reflects the commitment to financial transparency and accountability in the province.

This evening, we are proud to report that eleven (11) of our 14 departments achieved 100% compliance on 30-day payments to suppliers, two achieved 99% and we are witnessing steady improvement by the Department of Health.

To date we have empowered women, youth, and persons with disabilities we spent approximately R14.5 billion on enterprises owned by women, youth, and persons with disabilities during the MTSF 2019–2024 period. We are further proud that as this government, we have bought goods and services from Township-enterprises amounting to R2.2 billion.

We want to reiterate to the people of our province that the Gauteng Provincial Government remain seized with the task of eradicating the evil of corruption as a matter of principle. We will continue to partner with state agencies such as the SIU, Public Protector and the PSC.

Revenue enhancement strategy

To date, our revenue enhancement strategies have netted us R32 billion. To further bolster our revenue collection, we have introduced new and innovative initiatives, including the direct deposit of vehicle license revenue and the expansion of DLTCs to enhance service delivery in TISH areas.

INTERVENTIONS

Energy response

The protracted electricity crisis has caused significant hardship for people in our province and has had a detrimental effect on the growth of Gauteng's economy. Power shortages have a negative impact on the availability of healthcare services, food and water, the level of crime, and unemployment rates, amongst others.

Although energy is not a competency of the province, load shedding's crippling effect on the functionality of the state and its impact on broader society compelled us to intervene.

After extensive consultation with the energy sector, we developed an energy crisis response plan in collaboration with the national energy committee, local government, and energy experts. This was followed by the announcement of R1.2bn in funding that we made during the SOPA.

A five-point strategy was adopted to respond to this crisis: eliminating all illegal power connections, installing smart meters in every home and business, improving revenue collection, cleaning the indigent register, and replacing all damaged transformers.

Honourable Members;

As part of our energy plan, we are adding 100 megawatts of electricity to the grid to mitigate the impact of loadshedding. This is an initiative of the GPG implemented by City Power on our behalf using the Open Cycle Gas Turbine technology facilities in Johnware and Durban Street. This will be available from the 1st of April 2024. We will continue to expand to 300 megawatts in the new financial year. This investment combined with smart metres can generate the megawatts needed to cushion our residents against two stages of load shedding, a critical step toward energy stability for the nation's economic hub.

“No sunrise will find us where sunset left us. Days are never counted backwards!”

In our relentless pursuit of energy resilience, we are spearheading a transformative initiative. Solar photovoltaic (PV) and battery storage systems are being integrated into 21 government healthcare facilities. This past Friday, we unveiled the first of such facilities at the Diepkloof clinic in Soweto. We are removing health facilities and schools from being impacted by loadshedding.

This is testament to our unwavering dedication of shaping a resilient energy landscape for the province!

Solar Farm

We are also pleased to announce that the long-term plan with Sibanye-Stillwater Board, has approved the land leases of the appointed 6 independent power producers who will develop a photovoltaic power station, also known as a solar farm cluster, in Merafong Local Municipality. This is designed to harvest at least 800 megawatts of solar power and supply it to the electricity grid, which will be a game changer for our province.

Microgrid

As part of the MOU with City Power, we are rolling out a pilot Microgrid in the community of Alexandra Township which will provide a stand alone solution to meet basic power needs for low-income households within townships and informal settlements.

We will expand into at least 13 more communities across the province in Emfuleni (Cape Gate, Sebokeng Unit 20 Tshepiso Ext 3 and Ramaphosa), Mogale (Portion 80 Nooitgedacht, Soul City and Portion 11 Honningklip 178 IQ), Merafong (Wedela, Kokosi Ext 99 and Khutsong South Transit Area), Midvaal (Mamelo) and Rand West local municipalities (Siyahlala and Jabulane).

Having identified the hardship of many of our communities languishing in the dark, some for up to 3 years due to illegal connections, cable theft, vandalism, and chronic non-payment, we intervened to address the situation.

Transformer

Through the Energy Crisis Response Plan, we partnered with Eskom and our implementing agent City Power to deliver 429 transformers. To date, 333 have already been installed and switched on, benefitting no less than 32,000 township households. We have impacted the communities of Kagiso, Boiphelong, Doornkop, Orange Farm and others. We will intensify this programme until every township and household has been legally switched on, especially Evaton, Ivory Park, Winterveld and many other communities.

For Us to Continue, We Need Your Support!

The energy crisis has also had a negative impact on water reticulation and water treatment. Part of our energy response includes prioritising the provision of uninterrupted quality water supply and treatment.

We have commenced a programme to mitigate the water supply interruptions brought about by power outages and loadshedding through the creation of an additional point from a separate substation to ensure firm electricity supply to the booster stations at both Eikenhof Pumpstation and Robertsville Rand Water Booster Stations. This intervention is designed to exclude these stations from the loadshedding schedule and enhance the reliability of power supply in the main.

As part of preparing for future skills needed in the energy sector, we are proud to announce that on the 15th of February this year, we launched the Thuto-Tiro Engineering School of Specialisation in Sebokeng.

NASI ISPANI: BUILDING THE REQUIRED SKILLS FOR THE PROVINCE

Residents of Gauteng;

In our efforts to address youth unemployment, we launched the ***Nasi iSpani*** mass recruitment programme on 16 June 2023. A first of its kind, the programme is a strategic recruitment drive aimed at addressing unemployment and promoting access to job opportunities available within the provincial government and its agencies, whilst enhancing service delivery.

When we addressed this house 12 months ago, words such as ***Nasi iSpani*** did not exist. To date, just on TikTok alone, videos on how to apply for Nasi iSpani have attracted over 36 million views. The provincial government that I have the honour to lead can confidently assert, that close to 90,000 young people, the same number it takes to fill FNB Stadium, are no longer unemployed, hopeless and without the ability to contribute to their families. If we consider that in South Africa, on average every employed South African supports 2.8 people, that indicates the impact of the Nasi iSpani job opportunities and the number of families we continue to touch daily.

Since its inception, the programme has seen various job opportunities through:

- Solar technicians – to address the occupational shortage in the sector;
- Green Army- cleaning and greening our townships;
- Crime Prevention Wardens- a force multiplier for law enforcement agencies;
- Early Childhood Development (ECD) Practitioners;
- Building Inspectors.
- Etc.

Our Province will forever defend the interest of young people. When information reached us that the 32,000 young people contracted in the Education Assistants programme were going to join the list of the unemployed, this government that I have the honour to lead convened all 32,000 on 11th of February 2024 at Dobsonville Stadium so that we could hand over their them appointment letters. This extension of

their contracts by 6 months will bring much-needed cushioning until the National Government determines how to intervene.

No sunrise will find us where sunset left us. Days are never counted backwards!

Going forward, we are taking ***Nasi' Ispani*** to the next level!

In partnership with the National Departments of Higher Education (DHET) and Employment and Labour (DEL) we will massify employment opportunities and targeted skills development and training. We are targeting 40, 000 young people on the Nasi Ispani database to take advantage of the 333 opportunities in the labour activation programmes to be launched in April 2024 by the Department of Employment and Labour.

In addition, we will ensure that they receive the requisite skills transfer and training from TVET colleges working with the Departments of Higher Education (DHET). This opportunity will also be availed to final-year students in the province who could not complete their studies due to financial constraints.

During Transport Month, we partnered with Diageo to provide 40,000 learners' license opportunities to young people. 10,000 of those will be reserved for motorbike licenses to support the Last-Mile project. The Last-Mile project is a ground-breaking collaboration between the GPG, Transport Education and Training Authority (TETA), Radah Skills Academy, UberSA, BoltSA as well as Takealot.

To expand our integrated school health programme, we will appoint two thousand (2000) unemployed social workers and retired nurses across Gauteng schools. This forms part of our special support programme for girl children as well as our fight against drugs.

Our commitment remains to expand opportunities to young people. But the government cannot do this alone. We call on the private sector to continue to partner with us.

SOCIAL COHESION/SPORTS AND ARTS/HERITAGE

The People of Gauteng;

Creative industry

Our performance as government in this sector requires attention and improvement. The government that I have the honour to lead will meet with this sector next month and find a consensus.

Since the delivery of the last SOPA, we have lost a number of giants in the creative industry. One such is the late Mbongeni Ngema. Mr Ngema was one of the icons of the South African creative industry. We applaud the manner in which he understood the relationship of art and its social context.

In recognition of his remarkable contribution to the performing arts, we will launch the annual Mbongeni Ngema Lecture in partnership with the Market Theatre, and the National Department of Sports, Arts, Culture.

Following consultation with his family, the sector and the community, we will name the soon-to-be-built Daveyton Hospital after this icon.

To see the house of our founding President Mandela in that state was not only embarrassing, but it was hurtful. We have resolved, notwithstanding the family differences, to intervene and restore this house to its original beauty, we owe it to Tata Mandela.

When days were dark and friends were few, this provincial government stood with Bafana Bafana and backed them financially. We were the proud host of two key matches of Bafana Bafana, an AFCON Qualifier and an international friendly before they departed for Cote d'Ivoire. The province of champions can boldly claim to have actively participated in the journey of Bafana Bafana in attaining the Bronze medal. We congratulate Bafana on a job well done and wish them more success going forward.

I am proud to also announce that this year, for the first time in 8 years, the City2City Ultra Marathon will take place in Gauteng on 31 March 2024.

HOMELESSNESS

Madam Speaker;

I am passionate about the plight of street children and homeless people sleeping in our CBDS. No one chooses to be a street kid. No one chooses to sleep in the streets. We are intervening to assist them in reconnecting with their families, empower them with skills and most importantly will be offering them warm meals daily and mobile showers.

We are proud to announce that since our interventions, 3000 beneficiaries have received skills and exited our homeless program to stand on their own. To be homeless must be permanent

Over the term, we provided a safety net to over 340 000 homeless beneficiaries who were admitted to homeless shelters, and those reached through homeless outreach campaigns. We provided 2,782 shelters including 19 Park homes. Furthermore, through these shelters, we provide daycare services to over 21 000 homeless, where the homeless received meals, counselling, and referrals to relevant services. About 8097 beneficiaries received life skills training.

We are pleased that over 3000 beneficiaries successfully exited the homeless programme, some of which were reunited with their families and others placed in job opportunities.

To strengthen our basket of services to the homeless, we have acquired 5 wash mobile trailers, trucks, and mobile offices to operate as mobile drop-in centres.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Madam Speakers;

In an article published by Sunday World on 18 February 2024, the former president of Azapo and Minister, Mosibudi Mangena captures the challenges of drugs in our

country when he states that *“There is no way our country would be able to deal with widespread crimes of murder, rape, assault, gender-based violence and others without having a firm handle on drugs and alcohol availability and excessive consumption in the country”*

To date, the Ke Moja Without Drugs programme has reached over 6 million substance abusers. We assisted 155 616 service users to access substance use disorder (SUD) treatment services.

During the administration, 205 071 individuals addicted to drugs were rehabilitated, including being taken into aftercare facilities. Our substance abuse prevention programmes reached 15 832 764 beneficiaries. I am happy to announce that we have entered into a Private Public Partnership with Clinix Health Group of hospitals for the provision of inpatient treatment services which include 119 Inpatient treatment beds, 200 Outpatient treatment programmes, and 160 Halfway house beds.

After the pronouncement of the massification of substance abuse in October 2022, we launched the Anti-Substance Abuse Helpline. The campaign increased the demand for treatment services and by the end of December 2023, a total of 25 402 service requests were registered with the highest usage being crystal meth, followed by nyaope.

We have provided various treatment interventions, and 4 851 users received in-patient treatment services from Government and NPO treatment centres. We provided over 8 000 outpatient services and 8 304 community-based services. Service users in recovery are linked to aftercare support services to enhance their success in leading a sober lifestyle. We are pleased that over 700 recovering service users have been provided with skills development opportunities.

As promised in the 2023 SOPA, we are expanding our drug facilities and bed capacity to accommodate the growing need for the rehabilitation of drug and substance abusers in Gauteng. Through a partnership with SANDF on treatment facilities and training programmes, we are expanding the Dr. F&F facility that will be operational by the end of June 2024. We will also host a drug open day wherein we will allow all those who struggling with substance abuse will be given assistance.

Gauteng province aims to reduce the supply of drugs, we are pleased with our concerted effort with SAPS and other law enforcement agencies. During this financial year, we arrested over 26 000 suspects for possession of drugs, and made 43 arrests for those dealing in drugs.

In this period, R800 million worth of drugs were destroyed in Gauteng. Our concerted efforts to reduce the vast drug supply need a multifaced approach that includes targeted police operations. We are pleased that 15 clandestine drug laboratories were shut down with 21 suspects arrested.

ERADICATING HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY

Honourable Speaker;

As Gauteng, we have declared hunger and food insecurity as enemies of our people. I am happy to announce that we will launch an ***e-indigent register***, which centres the child in our poverty alleviation strategy. The e-indigent register will fast-track our swift response and our consolidated efforts to eradicate urban hunger. All poor people in our province will register to access the pro-poor basket. We are also resuscitating the pro-poor basket for all our children.

Ending Urban Hunger through a Child: our new strategy in fighting urban hunger will see us consolidating our support under one roof of beneficiaries of our school nutrition program. From the beginning of April, these children will receive:

- free school uniform and books
- toiletries like soap,
- Dignity packs and preventative pills
- Free Data
- Seeds to plant vegetables
- Monthly Food parcel
- And free unlimited data at their households

As part of accelerating food security, we have also handed over 12 tractors to farmers in the province to the value of R11 million as part of our response to urban farming and dealing with hunger

No sunrise will find us where sunset left us. Days are never counted backwards!

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Honourable Members

Notwithstanding the challenges in our healthcare system in Gauteng, we have proven to be resilient in the face of pandemics and outbreaks. We are continuing to restore the public trust in our health system, and we beginning to see significant improvement in the provision of healthcare services in a number of our healthcare facilities.

The challenge of surgical backlogs has been a long-standing one and was compounded by COVID-19 global pandemic with cancellation of electives with huge impact on society and healthcare in general. True to our commitment of elevating the needs of the impoverished communities, we commenced with this war on surgical backlogs in July 2023 during Mandela Day. Through the intervention programme the backlog has been reduced from 37 000 to 11 747. Our Health practitioners are hard at work to clear the backlog

This could not have been achieved without the tireless and selfless work of the surgical teams across public and private facilities within our province. The people of Gauteng thank you!

The Gauteng Government's effort to expand screening for priority non-communicable diseases has seen fruition as indicated by the reduced HIV rate from 12.3 % in 2014 to 3% in 2023.

Significant progress was made in reducing queues and waiting times at our healthcare facilities through the Centralised Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution (CCMDD) programme. To date, approximately 1.2 million clients are enrolled in this programme.

Working together with great South Africans like **Mme Daphne Nkosi**, Gauteng prides itself that in this term, we opened the Zakithi Nkosi Oncology Clinic at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital. This is the only public centre in the country which continues to be a haven for more than 700 children with cancer and life-threatening blood disorders across South Africa.

We are also proud of the completion of the Nuclear Medicine Research Institution (NuMeRI) at Steve Biko Academic Hospital, in collaboration with the University of Pretoria, with R500 million in funding from the Department of Science and Innovation. This is the first of its kind on the continent which pioneers a one-stop-shop medical nuclear imaging and theragnostic facility which will be revolutionary in nuclear medicine.

In preparation for the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI), we are increasing the capacity of our healthcare system in the province by acquiring 18 existing hospitals through a private-public partnership.

We are moving with speed to implement a Health Information System (HIS) that will allow for one patient-one file. We are proud to announce that since last November Mamelodi Regional Hospital went live on this system. We will use the lesson learnt in Mamelodi as a basis for other hospitals to follow.

With the view to establish a State-owned Pharmaceutical Company, we are concluding the legal processes to convert our Gauteng Medical Supply Depot into a stand-alone Schedule 3C public entity, which will operate in the healthcare industry and allow us to buy bulk medicine directly. This will go a long way in strengthening our supply chain and distribution processes to ensure that sourcing and delivery of medicines to our healthcare facilities is done securely, efficiently, and on time.

EDUCATION

Honourable Speaker;

Education is one of our many good stories to tell and remains our number one priority in Gauteng. Our continued investment lays the foundation for young people to meet their future aspirations and take Gauteng to its full potential.

Join me in congratulating the class of 2023 on their performance. We further celebrate the Johannesburg West District who retained the top position nationally for the second consecutive year, achieving the highest matric pass rate at 92.5%.

I want to acknowledge three learners from our province who managed to score 100% on some of their final papers in the 2023 exams:

- **Ntokozo Coka** who obtained 100% in Business Studies;
- **Sibonelo Mkhali** who obtained 100% for both Accounting and Business Studies;
- Lastly, **Lebogang Usher Selepe** who obtained 100% in both Mathematics and Physical Sciences

One of our most consistent, top-performing township schools is Raymond Mhlaba High School in Tshepiso, Mogale City. Since 2012, the school has never scored less than 96% and in 2023 achieved a 100% pass rate, with 85% bachelor's passes. After transitioning into a School of Specialisation, the school has emerged as a model of excellence in the fields of Maths, Science and ICT with a curriculum geared specifically to the needs of the mining industry.

Allow me to single out the excellence of the township schools such as:

- 1st Position: **Morgan Lethabo Mahlangu**: Rakgotso Secondary School: Tshwane North District who achieved distinctions in all of his subjects, including 100% in Mathematics
- 2nd Position: **Ofentse Blessing Matabane**: Pamelopele Oracle Secondary School: Johannesburg East District

- 3rd Position: **Sanele Diutlwileng**: Daliwonga Secondary School:
Johannesburg Central District

Our homegrown solution to increase access to higher education is through awarding bursaries to the top 3 learners in all–no-fee-paying. From 2019 to date, we have awarded 18,046 bursaries. Last month we expanded this programme by unveiling a R560 million bursary war chest to fund more than 4 000 high-achieving matriculants from no-fee schools and institutions catering for Learners with Special Educational Needs in the province.

Many of these learners are from disadvantaged communities in the Townships, Informal Settlements and Hostels (TISH). I would like to acknowledge Ithembelihle School for Learners with Special Needs Education which achieved 60% Bachelor Passes.

18 new schools will be built as part of the R1.5 Billion investment.

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Provincial Government remains committed to strengthening the role that traditional leadership plays in nation-building. We are on the verge of concluding the work of the commission on traditional leadership, led by Professor Mziwoxolo Sirayi, which will resolve rightful leadership in our province.

LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

Madam Speaker;

Noting the sentiments made by the President in his State of the Nation Address about local government in the country, we are concerned about the state of our municipalities, especially in matters related to financial management. As we speak, three (3) of our Metropolitan municipalities and some of the local municipalities have been given letters by the National Treasury on their inability to spend their capital infrastructure grants.

We are ready to intervene where municipalities cannot render services to our communities. We are on in the advanced stage of signing an agreement with Pickup so that wherever there is uncollected refuse and dumping our province will step in and collect. This also goes to flowing sewerage and water where we will ask Rand Water and Rand West Municipality to assist us.

Usindiso Commission of Enquiry

Following the tragic fire at the Usindiso Building in Johannesburg that claimed the lives of 77 people, we established the Commission of Enquiry to investigate the circumstances surrounding the fire, led by Justice Sisi Khampepe. The commission is making good progress and is expected to complete its work and release a first report on its findings at the end of March 2024.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Madam Speaker;

We are deeply concerned about the water lettuce situation in the Vaal River. Having visited the area on the 15 February 2024, we are undertaking the following interventions:

- The province will support Rand Water on its initiative to use biological control. The weevil feeds on the leaves of the plant and population rapidly within 4 weeks. This programme will be led by scientists from Rhodes University.
- In order to suppress the rapid spread, the use of approved and registered herbicides will be implemented in a controlled environment.
- Rand Water will monitor the infestation weekly.
- The province will consider use of *Nas'ispani* in partnership with Rand Water to eradicate the floating water lettuce from the Vaal River. Experts are currently investigating the viability of this control option.

TRANSPORT

Honourable Members;

Seven of the eighteen arterial roads have been completed and handed over. The K73 Allandale Road we completed and handed over last November. We also completed and unveiled the Henrick Potgieter Road. We will further catalyse the development and expansion of the areas around Waterfall City and Kyalami. Great progress has been made with the Winnie Mandela Drive which connects communities such as Diepsloot to the Western and Northern corridors. Once completed, the Vaal interchange will trigger economic development in the Vaal region.

We are proud to report that the Gautrain Rapid Rail link is set to bring an additional 148km of rail network to conclude Phase 1, extending from Sandton to Cosmo City, featuring stops in Randburg and Little Falls in the West Rand.

Working with PRASA, we are actively engaging in initiatives to reinstate rail services across the Gauteng Province to reduce commuting expenses for people travelling to work and school. Presently, services have been successfully reinstated on four out of the eight identified lines.

We welcome the Cabinet approval for a high-speed rail link on the Johannesburg to Durban corridor. This will reduce our carbon footprint, reduce the cost of doing business, facilitate ease of movement of people and goods and reduce road fatalities on the N3 motorway.

We have made strides in establishing the strategic link to the Limpopo Province to facilitate a modal shift from road to rail along the N1 motorway. This initiative has multifaceted objectives, including alleviating traffic congestion and fostering economic growth by facilitating the seamless mobility of commodities for regional and domestic markets, as well as commuters. Given the magnitude and complexity of the project, we have planned its execution in multiple phases.

Etolls

People of Gauteng

Last year, we assured the people of Gauteng that e-tolls would be a thing of the past. I am happy to report that on the 26th of January 2024 a final meeting was held between the Gauteng Provincial Government and the Ministers of Finance and Transport respectively.

We have been able to find common ground on issues related to user pay principle quantum of GFIP Debt, quantum of sunken CAPEX costs ,CAPEX obligation of the province, yearly maintenance Costs of GFIP 1, repurposing of Gantries, repayment of SANRAL GFIP 1 Debt and the Future Funding of GFIP 2 & 3. From where we sit as the province, we remain confident that we should be able end E-toll by the March 2024.

CONCLUSION

A CALL TO ACTION !

People of Gauteng, Our walk towards a Gauteng of our dreams is on course! We have made good progress since 1994 to change the socio-economic landscape of our province. Gauteng of today is not the same as Gauteng of 1994.

We are on course towards a Gauteng of seamless, integrated public transport system; advanced railway and high-speed rail system; smart mobility solutions, electric vehicles (EVs) and efficient road systems that connects people with economic nodes, tourism centres and other provinces.

A Gauteng characterized by inclusive social services and infrastructure with integrated human settlements; education and health facilities of the future; culture and transformed public spaces; social cohesion and secure community life.

A Gauteng governed by a capable State that is connected to its citizens through digital services and smart solutions; green spaces, renewable energy installations, eco-friendly practices; a society that celebrates diversity and inclusion; and a fairer and more just society.

In the Gauteng of our future, there should be no informal settlements! Our Townships would be clean; green; economic productive sites; social and dynamic public spaces.

All our schools will be paperless and supported by advanced Artificial Intelligence solutions.

Our CBDS will be revamped and transformed into vibrant business and community centres

Vaal river City, Magaliesburg and Suikerbosrand will be new centres of tourism attracting millions of people to visit our province.

All our health facilities will offer 24 hours services supported by advanced Artificial Intelligence solutions.

Honourable Members, we are now putting this vision of Gauteng of the future into a pictorial form, using 3D simulation and other ICT solutions. This will make it possible for people of Gauteng to see, feel and experience the future in the present moment with the aid of ICT solutions.

We are calling on the people of Gauteng to participate in the design of these models of the Gauteng of our future! Let us visualize and showcase a vision of a transformed and prosperous Gauteng, highlighting its economic activities, social services, and infrastructure.

I am aware that some of our residents are already designing their future spaces and places using ICT and Artificial Intelligence solutions. Lets work together towards a common vision of the province of our dreams. We will soon announce the details on how all the people of province can get involved, especially the youth in the ICT and AI space.

Ladies and gentlemen join us, as we become a generation that will eliminate informal settlements rather than increase them;

A generation that will finally destroy the shackles of poverty;

A generation that will end unemployment;

A generation that will ensure hospitals are hospitals, schools are schools;

A generation that will build new cities and end loadshedding;

A generation of building speed trains;

A generation that will build new superhighways;

A generation that will finally end HIV AIDS and TB;

A generation that will espouse the mantra '**Less Talk, More work!**

Please join this generation, in doing so we will be ridiculed and jokes made out of these commitments but the Peoples Poet, Mzwakhe Mbuli captures doomsayers' sentiments beautifully in his poem, entitled "**Love them anyway**'

"Love them anyway;

Great ideas are blocked by jealous people, love them anyway;

Honesty and kindness may make you vulnerable, love them anyway;

If you are generous and selfless, people will suspect you of alteria motives, love them anyway;

If you are prosperous and successful you will win false friends and make true enemies, love them anyway;

People are often greedy and self-centred, love them anyway;

People forget the good you do, love them anyway;

People forget what they should remember and remember what the should forget, love them anyway;

Love them anyway"

Less talk, more work!!