

GAUTENG STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY PREMIER DAVID MAKHURA: “FROM THE PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY TO THE ECONOMIC AND SERVICE DELIVERY EMERGENCY”

21 FEBRUARY 2022

Madame Speaker Honourable Ntombi Mekgwe;
Deputy Speaker, Honourable Nomvuyo Mhlakaza-Manamela;
Chief Whip of the Governing Party, Honourable Mzikayifane Khumalo;
Members of the Executive Council;
Executive Mayors;
Leaders of Political Parties and Members of the Provincial Legislature;
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Distinguished Guests;
Members of the Media;
The People of Gauteng:

Madame Speaker, thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to deliver the Tenth State of the Province Address as the Sixth Premier of the Province of Gauteng.

This address is a landmark as it takes place eight years since I took office and shortly after the mid-term review of the sixth administration.

Accordingly, we will give some highlights of the democratic gains and socioeconomic progress made in the pre-pandemic period and illustrate how these gains been eroded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to remember that for almost two years, humanity has been battling the public health emergency caused by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Winning the battle against this pandemic and containing the spread of coronavirus became the number one priority of government and society in general.

As we meet here today, the COVID-19 pandemic is under control and the massive vaccination programme has broken the chain between infections, hospital admissions and death. In other words, although many people continue to get infected with SARS-CoV-2, the evidence shows that most of those who are vaccinated are more protected from progressing to severe disease or death.

We have also worked together as the public and the private sector, to vaccinate 5.3 million individuals and administer more than 8.6 million vaccine doses in Gauteng.

Honourable members, please join me in conveying our heartfelt gratitude to our healthcare professionals in both the public and private sector, for the outstanding service to the people of our province during this most difficult time in the life of our democratic nation.

We know that SARS-CoV-2 is still out there infecting and re-infecting people. We also know that armed with vaccines, masks, hand sanitisers, better ventilation, physical

distancing and vigilance, we are winning the battle and this pandemic is getting contained and it could soon become only endemic.

In this context, we are boldly shifting our main focus and energies to tackle unemployment through economic recovery and reconstruction.

The economy has been devastated and the democratic gains in the quality of lives of the people have substantially been eroded.

After so much death and destruction of lives and livelihoods, it is time to rebuild and do so with the greatest sense of urgency, single-mindedness and coordination demonstrated during our emergency response to COVID-19.

Madam Speaker;

In a different period in this House, I have quoted from Ben Okri's 'A Time for New Dreams'. Today I cannot resist to draw your attention to the powerful written words of this great African scholar because he captures a sense of where we are and the kind of spirit we need to rebuild a country and province of our dreams:

The Aeneid reminds us that great civilisations can be built on great failures. It also reminds us that adversity is not the end of a story but where there is courage and vision, the beginning of a new one, a greater one than before. Difficult times do one of two things to us: they either break us or they force us to go back to the primal ground of our being. Adversity wakes us up. It reminds us not of who we think we are in our vanity, but of who we are in our simplicity..... it is in difficult times that the great times ahead are dreamt and built, brick by brick, with maturity and the hope that comes from wise action.

People of Gauteng;

We have lost many lives and livelihoods have been destroyed.

Even with this scale of adversity and some of our own failures, we swear and vow that these difficult times shall not break us. We shall rebuild and renew and move forward.

As we steadily work our way out of the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, we should show urgency and act with the same speed and agility to tackle the crisis of unemployment, rebuild and protect our infrastructure for basic services, fight crime and corruption in an emergency mode.

Madame Speaker, the call we are making in this address is that all hands must be on deck as we move 'From the public health emergency to the economic and service delivery emergency'.

We have learnt many lessons in our battle with the COVID-19 pandemic. These lessons include mobilisation of social compacting, promptly and decisively acting against crime and corruption in government and society as well as inter-departmental and inter-governmental cooperation to avoid government working in silos.

As we make the economy and jobs our number one priority over the next two years, we will also work closely with municipalities and the national government to urgently accelerate service delivery and improve access to housing, electricity, water, sanitation, road maintenance, visible policing, quality education and health.

The collapse of infrastructure for basic services also requires an emergency response akin to the way we dealt with the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Madam Speaker, we will give more details on what we are going to do in each of these priority areas as we go along.

Honourable Members;

We have come a long way in putting Gauteng on a positive trajectory. All the surveys done by the Gauteng City Region Observatory (GCRO) since 2011 show that there was continuous investment and real improvements in the quality of life, infrastructure, basic services and governance in the pre-pandemic years.

Between 2015 and 2020, the economic output of Africa was dominated by 3 countries, Nigeria, Egypt, and South Africa. Gauteng was the seventh-largest economy on the continent in that period and its contribution to South Africa's GDP was more than 35%.

Even after the COVID-19 pandemic, Gauteng still contributes 35% to the GDP. Gauteng remains a leading player in the national economy and a critical contributor to the continental economy.

The GGT2030, our current provincial plan of action, was introduced to cement our position nationally and in the continent by doubling the size of the Gauteng economy and the number of people employed. It also seeks to increase exports to the continent, to drastically reduce poverty and promote economic empowerment of those who continue to be excluded from the mainstream of the economy.

The GGT2030 prioritises the transformation, modernisation and re-industrialisation of the 10 high-growth sectors, which are linked to the roll-out of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the five corridors and the township economic revitalisation.

People of Gauteng;

Learning from our COVID-19 response and appreciating that the current unemployment crisis represents an emergency, all hands are on deck to reclaim the development trajectory.

We have established a Provincial War Room in which government and industry leaders have joined forces to drive economic recovery, unlock growth in every sector and create sustainable jobs as well to support SMME development.

Through the war room, we are working with the captains of industry on programmes that will unleash growth by matching public policy support and government action with consolidated commitments by sector leaders on investments and jobs.

We are doing so with a strong and deliberate emphasis on creating jobs and economic opportunities for the people of Gauteng, especially the youth and women.

We are opening up value chains, building competitive local content production, promoting commercially meaningful enterprises, supplier development, SMMEs and township enterprises.

The war room has now initiated a programme of quarterly sector action labs with industry representatives focusing on problem-solving and social compacting platforms. In partnership with the Public-Private Growth Initiative (PPGI), we will work with businesses, organised labour, SOEs and relevant national government department to re-ignite the Gauteng economy.

Such is both the nature and the scale of the economic and other challenges confronting our province that it is imperative for all stakeholders and partners to find ways to entrench the practice of partnerships as our modus operandi.

During the State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa announced that,

We have given ourselves 100 days to finalise a comprehensive social compact to grow our economy, create jobs and combat hunger.

The commitment to social compact is therefore the approach which Gauteng will instrumentalise to unlock economic growth through leveraging the strength of the diverse talents, capacities and experiences of the people of our province.

We believe this is the most effective mechanism to catalyse transformation, change and prosperity as we work the Gauteng of our dreams.

Honourable Members;

I would like to share with you some of the concrete results that have emerged from these sectoral engagements and war room sessions.

There is work being done with the ICT and digital services sector. This work draws in experts, policymakers, and businesspeople from across the digital economy landscape to support the implementation of the Gauteng 4IR strategy. Our Ekasi Labs, Township Cloud Zones and Hot-Desking Hubs will be optimal sites for new data centres and big investments in communication technologies.

The provincial government has partnered with the University of Johannesburg (UJ) to turn the province's mounting e-Waste (disposal of electrical appliances and electronic devices) problem into an economic opportunity and protect the environment. Through this partnership, the youth will be inspired and trained to recycle and create something meaningful from discarded devices and appliances.

Together with the Aviation Industry and the **Tourism and Hospitality** sector, we are building a Gauteng Air Access partnership to attract more passenger and cargo airlines to operate from OR Tambo International and Lanseria Airports. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on the hotel and restaurant sub-sector of the tourism industry,

much work is being done to ensure the recovery of this important sector that has huge potential for employment and promote Gauteng's unique tourism offerings.

In the **Food, Beverage, agro-processing and agribusiness** sectors, we are working with industry players and organised farmers in partnership with the Agricultural Development Agency to ensure food security and promote urban agriculture as a key sector for employment and business.

In the past twelve months, we have been interacting extensively with the **Cannabis Industry** role players and have identified the unique economic opportunities of the industry in Gauteng. This year we will establish a dedicated unit within the provincial government to work with the industry and national government to address regulatory and licensing issues, attract investment, and facilitate black participation in this new sector that has enormous medicinal and industrial potential.

We will give further feedback on the work being done in other sectors, such as the creative and cultural industries, freight and logistics, finance, and construction and infrastructure once this work is concluded by the relevant MECs and industry leaders and is ready to be turned into sectoral and localised social compacts.

Honourable Speaker;

Since 2014, we have been championing the need to change the economic geography of this economic and industrial heartland of our country and continent so that big business, black businesses SMMEs grow.

Between 2014 and 2019, we provided extensive support to township businesses through transformative public procurement policy that enabled the provincial government to spend more than R20 billion procuring goods and services from township-based enterprises.

A total of R5.6 billion was spent on women-owned enterprises; R5.3 billion was spent on youth-owned enterprises and R470 million was spent on enterprises of people living with disabilities.

We have embarked on supplier development training for 3,198 township suppliers, and 2,881 suppliers were trained on how to tender/access government business opportunities.

We know that many township businesses collapsed under the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this will not shake our determination to fundamentally change the township economic landscape.

One of the most enduring policy interventions of this sixth administration is the introduction of the Township Economic Development Bill. We reported in the last State of the Province Address that the Bill would be tabled in the Legislature in 2021.

The Legislature public hearings are still underway and as the Executive Council, we keenly await this Legislature to pass the Bill into law.

People of Gauteng;

I would like to reiterate that this ground-breaking piece of legislation seeks to address the following:

- Create new developmental regulations and by-laws that will make it simpler, easier and cheaper to formalise more than 90% of informal businesses, thus enabling these businesses to access financial and non-financial support from the government and the private sector.
- Set up an institutional and legal mandate for the creation of the Township Economy Partnership Fund which will pull both public and private sector resources to fund township-based businesses, especially small businesses and start-ups that find it difficult to access funding from financial institutions.
- Create a legal framework for provincial government and municipalities to support the development of township real estate, turning taxi ranks into business hubs and providing infrastructure in township high streets or commercial nodes.

We are encouraged by the widespread support for this Bill echoed across the five corridors of our province. In the public hearings, it is a matter of great interest that the primary beneficiaries of this transformative piece of legislation should be the local entrepreneurs.

In response to the immediate challenges faced by businesses, the Gauteng Provincial Government and partners set up a fund which already raised R500 million, R100 million of which is earmarked for supporting the recovery and rebuilding of township businesses affected by both COVID-19 and the July unrest.

Madam Speaker;

Our ongoing work of supporting township businesses is borne out by the inspiring stories of township entrepreneurs that have triumphed over the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the past year alone, 56 township businesses were incubated successfully at the provincial government eKasiLabs.

Thembisa eKasiLab incubated Ms Phumzile Mthembu who had been unemployed for years. She is a proud owner of Ingcweti (Pty) Ltd, the first baby skincare brand in Thembisa, Ekurhuleni, trading as PureB Baby Care.

Honourable Members;

In last year's address, we reported comprehensively on the roll-out of the SEZ programme across the Gauteng City Region.

The construction of the Tshwane Automotive SEZ amid the pandemic demonstrates our sense of urgency and the kind of emergency response required to deal with the economic challenges.

I am happy to give an update that there are 12 component manufacturers which are already operating in the Tshwane SEZ while construction work is continuing.

I am pleased to announce that in line with the commitment we made in the last SOPA, 3440 permanent jobs have been created, exceeding the target of 3288 jobs.

Thus far R1 billion has already been spent through the construction phase on SMMEs from Mamelodi township using what is now recognised as a benchmark local contractor development system nationally.

It's all-systems-go hopefully we will soon witness the manufacturing of the first new Ford Ranger at the Tshwane Automotive SEZ.

Honourable Speaker;

A major new development regarding the Vaal River SEZ is the R45 Billion commitment by local investors at the October 2021 Sedibeng Investment Conference.

The Vaal River SEZ will host the following critical sectors: the new Vaal River Smart City, Green Hydrogen Innovation Hub, the cannabis hub, agro-logistics, aerotropolis, aerodrome, air freight and the revitalised steel manufacturing sector.

All the four municipalities in the district have collectively made land available for this SEZ development. Notwithstanding some delays in the finalisation of the master plan, we are firmly on track to kickstart the revitalisation of the Sedibeng economy this year.

The construction of the next phase of OR Tambo SEZ, remains on track, albeit with challenges. We are engaging our anchor tenants, such as the De Beers Diamonds and In2Food Factory, to consider expanding their portfolio of investment to grow the economy and create more job opportunities.

A new major development to report towards the realisation of the West Rand Agri-SEZ is the commitment by Maximum Group to invest R20 billion in an agri-processing hub and industrial park.

Work is continuing on the N12 Corridor development with the mining houses and other private sector partners to facilitate and speed up investments on solar farms, urban agriculture, green hydrogen as well as the expansion of the Busmark manufacturing facility.

Madam Speaker;

The provincial government, working in conjunction with the Presidency has established the project management office (PMO) for the Lanseria Smart City development.

The main focus of the PMO is to drive the implementation of the master plan by focusing on two critical areas, namely; securing sufficient land and ensuring acceleration of bulk infrastructure investment which will unlock R85 Billion worth of

private sector investment. Lanseria will be a hub of the digital technology and services corridor, anchored by the new Hi-Tech SEZ in Lanseria.

We are laying the ground for the Global Business Services SEZ at Nasrec by deploying, through our action lab partnership with the sector, a plug and play global business services hub.

Honourable Members;

Infrastructure investment has been a key catalyst for the growth of our economy and improvement in QoL and the global competitiveness of Gauteng. Investing in infrastructure will result in creating efficiencies in the economy and ensuring economic growth and employment creation.

Since 1994, the democratic government has invested hugely in the building of new houses, schools, clinics, hospitalisation, roads and streets, electricity and water connection.

Between 2014 and 2019, we invested R53 billion in social and economic infrastructure, which contributed to the creation of almost 120 thousand jobs.

Prior to COVID-19, the social sector created 15 152 jobs, while the infrastructure sector yielded 6 909 job opportunities, giving a total of 22 000 jobs that managed to put bread on the table and enhanced the employability of those who participated. Gauteng municipalities created 10 581 work opportunities through social, infrastructure and environment programmes in the midst of COVID-19.

However, our track record on maintenance has been dismal, delays and costing projects are areas of big concern.

Investing in infrastructure includes improving efficiencies, value for money and effecting the modernisation of the delivery of government services.

We will continue to roll the GBN infrastructure and the maintenance of the network to improve access to free internet connectivity.

Since last year we have upgraded 6 core network nodes, provided Wide Area Network (WAN) connectivity to 1224 sites; Local Area Network (LAN) connectivity at 652 sites; enabled Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) at 287 sites and provided 37 Wi-Fi breakout points.

We have implemented a total of 45 online applications to allow citizens to access government services at their convenience.

Through the Gauteng Centre of Excellence and in response to the ICT skills shortage, we have facilitated training for 6976 GPG staff.

We are also working with TVET colleges to provide ICT training. Through the partnership with Tshimologong and Wits, we are providing support for SMME digital database and SMME clearing house.

Madam Speaker;

Construction, as well as transport and telecommunications, have also been hard hit and are estimated to have contracted by 10.4% and 11.7% respectively in 2020.

Our investment in social infrastructure amid COVID-19 has seen some encouraging progress. We have completed infrastructure projects, including 3 new community libraries, in Boipatong, Atteridgeville, and Kokosi, and a new sport complex in Operation Mabaleng.

We have also completed the Devon Impumelelo Early Childhood Development Centre and Ga-Rankuwa Child Youth Care Centre.

Madam Speaker;

In last SOPA, we committed to construct and rehabilitate 18 arterial roads to integrate and improve the movement of goods and services. Work has been done not just in terms of rehabilitation but also, the reconstruction of road networks.

The following are some of the road infrastructure and network projects which have been completed and/or rehabilitated to date:

Road infrastructure and network projects:

- P158/2 (N14) Phase 2: Rehabilitation of P158 (N14) from Brakfontein to Diepsloot completed;
- Snake Road (R23) - road rehabilitation completed;
- (M57) P122/1, north of Olifantsfontein, old Pretoria/Kempton Park - road rehabilitation completed;
- Evaton and Sebokeng Road infrastructure upgrade completed;
- R114 road rehabilitation project in Muldersdrift completed.

Furthermore, work is still underway on the following roads:

- Rehabilitation of roads P241/1 (R554) and D405 (R554), in Lenasia;
- P39/1 heavy rehabilitation from Diepsloot to Muldersdrift;
- P156/3(R42) from P155/1 to D2563 in Vanderbijlpark;
- Rehabilitation of road D483 between P6/1 (Bapsfontein) and D713;
- Rehabilitation of P122/1 from P36/1 (R10) Solomon Mahlangu Drive Olifantsfontein;
- Rehabilitation of road P73/1 (R553) Golden Highway between Ennerdale (km 41.0) and Eldorado Park (km 62.24);

Honourable Members;

Having outlined infrastructure delivery over the last two years, I would like to confirm that there have been challenges in the delivery of infrastructure.

The work on infrastructure projects has not only been affected by COVID-19 lockdowns but there has also been a variety of issues these include the continuous stoppages by people claiming to be business forums demanding 30%, which is impeding good work of and progress on these projects.

The other challenge has been the capacity of the department of infrastructure as the implementing agent for most social infrastructure projects.

This has been compounded by the allegations of corruption levelled against senior managers in the departments of infrastructure and health.

The disruption by the so-called business forums is nothing short of economic sabotage. We will continue to support and empower genuine black businesses.

We are working with the police led by general Mawela and his team of detectives, for the arrest and conviction of all perpetrators.

Honourable Members;

Over the next two years, a greater sense of urgency will underly our determination to build the economy and infrastructure will be the central and driving tenet of this sixth administration.

The focus will entail the completion of incomplete projects and the acceleration of the completion of new infrastructure projects across all regions.

We will ensure that Departments take full responsibility for the maintenance. All our infrastructure projects must be delivered on time and at cost.

The delivery of infrastructure requires a war room approach which will bring critical role players in one room to deal with efficiencies, delivery and create partnerships.

Should any of the implementing agents fail to deliver on time and on budget, I will not hesitate to replace them with agencies that will deliver on time and on budget.

Madam Speaker;

The future is the youth! Between 1994 and 2014, the Gauteng Provincial Government has taken various youth development initiatives in response to the crisis of youth unemployment to confront the emergency social conditions that young people continue to be faced with.

Since 2019, GPG departments: 48,177 total youth work opportunities created against a target of 80,337 to date (60% of target achieved), of which 45.6% were in the infrastructure sector.

Gauteng Province municipalities: 30,192 total youth work opportunities created against of target of 85,733 to date (35% of target achieved), of which 34.2% were in the infrastructure sector.

Through our education, we continue to support almost 2 million young people. We also support the youth through the bursary fund that is dedicated to young people.

We also support young people working with the LGBTQ community through various initiatives. We now have now established the LGBTQI directorate, which coordinates the work of the sector across government and society.

It is also gratifying to note that a total of 19,771 work opportunities were created through the National Youth Service.

The Innovation Hub Management Company skills development programmes, CoachLab and Code Tribe: 286 youth trained to date. This training resulted in 114 youth finding employment (45 permanent and 69 temporary jobs). Since its inception, more than 773 youth have benefited from the programme.

We have also trained a total of 3,339 unemployed youth in automotive skills, including 1,217 female youth and 2,122 male youth and 348 people have also been trained at the Gauteng Automotive Learning Centre (GALC).

Honourable Members

Engaging with the deep and complex set of challenges that underpin this crisis, the Gauteng Provincial Government has built the Tshepo flagship programme to bridge the gap between young people and the opportunities for them to earn a livelihood.

The first iteration of this Programme, Tshepo 500,000 ran from 2014 to 2016 and reached 211, 642 young people. But the programme was too fragmented, and it became clear that a much more systematic, integrated approach was needed.

Between 2017 and 2021 the GPG then partnered with Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator to upscale the flagship programme to Tshepo 1 Million and this created demand-driven learning, earning and entrepreneurship opportunities to 718,636 young people in Gauteng in the past five years.

Since 2017, 102,047 of those who have been through the Tshepo pathway system have been placed into earning opportunities of various kinds, with numbers going up and costs per youth assisted going down every year. More than 60% of the beneficiaries have been young women.

The Tshepo youth employment flagship programme has been the core inspiration for the Presidential Youth Employment intervention launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2018.

An Independent review recently conducted by the Mapungubwe Institute of Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) has confirmed that without Tshepo 1Million the situation could be worse. MISTRA has also recommended that the Tshepo youth initiative should be taken through a compacting process across the war rooms, especially the jobs and economics war room.

We are repackaging the Tshepo flagship programme into a bigger and wider integrated youth development intervention that bring all youth civil initiatives into one youth development focal point.

In preparation for this new phase of a rebooted Tshepo programme and integrated initiatives, I will soon appoint a civil-society led Youth Advisory Panel which will be supported by the Youth Directorate in the Office of the Premier. Young people must be at the centre of helping government to respond to the current youth unemployment emergency.

Honourable Members;

Over the years the Public Expanded Employment new proposed scheme helped promote employment and provided much needed economic relief to many people who cannot find jobs.

Since 2014 we have created EPWP work opportunities in different sectors. In terms of the GPG departments, 93,314 total EPWP work opportunities were created. At the municipality level, 55,559 total EPWP work opportunities were created.

Honourable Members;

GPG has a policy of leveraging Public Procurement. This means that goods and services are procured from township businesses; women, youth and PWD-led SMMEs and entrepreneurs.

Gauteng's total government preferential spending on procurement over the past three years was R37 billion, of which R11 billion was spent on designated groups.

In the first half of the financial year (April – September), 2021/22, Gauteng procured a total of R23.35 billion worth of items. A total of R2.04 billion was paid to enterprises with female ownership.

Madam Speaker;

Since 1994 Educational outcomes have been a key area of pride. In 2014 we will continue to invest in the modernisation and quality delivery of education especially improving educational outcomes in township schools.

Our 2014 decision to invest in the modernisation of our education system has proven fruitful over the last eight years.

This progress has been the result of incremental interventions, which included ICT, investment in infrastructure, and inputs in teacher training, adequate provision of classroom resources.

Early Childhood Development provides a critical stage in the cognitive development of a child with last implications for their future learning capabilities.

This work included investing in producing practitioners who would help us make an impact on the early stage of a child's development.

We are pleased to report that 2 467 ECD Practitioners have achieved a qualification at NQF Level 6. We were also able to increase the percentage of public schools offering grade R to 95,1% in 2021. This is an increase of 24 new Grade R sites, from the 1 386 sites that offered grade R in 2020.

We are further introducing dedicated funding for the introduction of Coding and Robotics to meet the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). We have identified 33 primary schools Grades R to 3 and 90 Grade 7 schools to participate in the pilot Coding and Robotics Programme.

Between the years 2014 and 2019, the national senior certificate results have improved by an average of 85%.

For the class of 2021 forty-four per cent (50%) of bachelor passes in South Africa were in Gauteng.

We have moved from 79% to 84% in terms of throughput rate largely because the focus was put on township schools to make learning conditions conducive.

Since 2009, about R2.2 billion has been invested towards bursaries from which 30 000 students have benefited through the GCR financial assistance.

For the academic year 2021, the GCR has set aside R420 million for Gauteng students who have done exceptionally well in matric results.

We have harnessed ICT to provide smart schools and classrooms of the future. This is across all schooling levels from Grade R to Grade 12. This includes supplying and delivering tablets and robotics coding kits to 62 primary schools.

Grade 1-3 learners in 62 Primary schools have received mathematics manipulatives, including the abacus. We are also teaching maths and natural science technology to Grade 4-6.

Equally, we have expanded the post-matric bursary scheme, enhanced schools of specialisation and provided schools for children with special needs in townships. We have ensured that the performance gap between learners from fee-paying and no-fee paying schools is narrowed.

Despite being one of the areas severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020, education has continued to record some great achievements.

In the 2021 matric results, Gauteng was the second-best performing province with an 82.8% pass rate, which was a slight drop of 1% from 2020. A total of 130 schools in the province achieved a 100% pass rate, while 462 had a pass rate that was above 90%. Four of the top 10 districts in the country were from Gauteng.

Since the year 2020, we have seen unprecedented disruptions to the schooling system due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this negative impact, our education system

has shown resilience as evidenced by remarkable progress, especially the matric results.

Madam Speaker;

Building safer communities is our top priority. Our focus has always been the trio priority crimes of violence against women and children, murder and house robberies.

Last year, we committed to employing 400 additional traffic police officers, over the next three years, to increase visibility and enhance road safety in the province. To date, a total of 264 officers have been appointed.

We have procured and branded 45 high powered vehicles and 3 mobile police stations have been assembled and are currently being branded.

In addition, we have trained 221 CPF members, patrollers included, and 10 of these patrollers have been deployed per ward level.

We are working on the patrollers' database to enable the determination of deployment per ward. To date, 5 355 in 141 wards in 89 precincts.

Honourable Members;

The heinous crimes meted against women and children in our communities. As part of fighting this pandemic, we have deployed GBV brigades in all wards and 30 dedicated GBVF social workers were appointed. The Department of Community Safety has also managed to rope in 610 safety volunteers participating as GBV Brigades.

The brigades play a critical role in enhancing community awareness on the Green Doors, Ikhaya-le-Themba, and the victim's empowerment centres (VECs) at police stations, shelters, to support survivors of GBV.

We have increased the number of "Green Doors" to 36 across the wards in the province. Since 2019, a total of 1,151 GBV and crime victims have accessed and received support in our shelters.

We launched the Floor Management Programme within police stations to limit secondary victimisation and waiting times for those reporting GBVF crimes.

As a result of our efforts, we have reached a total of 437 895 beneficiaries through a programme of no violence against women & children, including 16 days of activism.

Our footprint has extended to institutions of higher learning, with a total number of 122 382 having been reached through the awareness programme.

In protecting children in schools all new staff members are subjected to vetting.

In improving safety in communities, we have added 5355 patrollers. We have also trained 221 CPF members, going forward a total of 1000 CPF members will be trained.

Learning from the work we did during the hard lockdown; we have established the war room on fighting crime as part of building safer communities.

The war room on crime brings together all spheres of government, civil society, the private sector and critical stakeholders ensuring that we build a safer Gauteng.

We have seen positive results from operation O kae Molao. Going forward the operations will be intensified and strengthened in collaboration with private law enforcement agencies through the Eyes & Ears Programme.

We call upon all the people of the province to join hands with the government in the fight against crime.

Honourable Members;

In keeping with the policy of a caring government, together with civil society formations and the private sector, we intervened to alleviate conditions of poverty and hunger during the hard lockdown.

The provincial government is implementing a range of targeted urban interventions and hunger, with a focus on enhancing the sustainability of livelihoods, encouraging, and supporting urban agriculture, increasing access to food programmes, and strengthening social protection.

In the period 2009 to 2019, Gauteng made some strides in poverty reduction when comparing the ten-year and twenty-year averages. However, there was an upward trend in the poverty rate between 2015 and 2019, coinciding with the period of stagnant economic growth

Community and school food gardens and urban agriculture interventions remain critical, as food security and ensuring that residents have sufficient food intake on a day-to-day basis is a fundamental human right entrenched in the Constitution.

We are implementing a 'single window' urban poverty and hunger elimination strategy with improved targeting via a multidimensional, integrated approach.

For example, Umnotho for Empowerment an NPO accredited to provide youth development programmes and was funded by the Gauteng Department of Social Development. It is based at the Video Informal Settlement, Muldersdrift in the West Rand.

During an interview, Florence Sibeko, the Centre Manager explained how the NPO makes a difference in society,

"Only this year we have placed more than 300 beneficiaries in the tourism sector following completion of training offered to them here. We offer life skills training, business skills, technical training, social change and entrepreneurship. Almost all the waiters and bartenders in the lodges and restaurants around Muldersdrift were trained

by us. And the entrepreneurs dealing with welding and plumbing around here are the beneficiaries of the Centre”

Umnotho has operated successfully for 12 years and has survived the COVID-19 pandemic due to government support.

The War on Poverty Profiling Programme has been leveraged as a central repository where information is collected on targeted communities in the province.

In 2020 during the early stages of the nationwide lockdown, a total of 2,889,695 people deserving benefitted from our food security programmes, and our food relief efforts were boosted by generous donations by many organisations across society, companies, Community based organisations (CBOs), Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and ordinary South Africans.

In addition, 235,931 school uniform packs and 2,338,368 dignity packs were distributed. A total of 39,522 young women have participated in the Welfare-to-Work Programme.

Going forward we aim to upscale the welfare-to-work programme to reach 100 000 young women, by transitioning them from welfare into decent employment and providing them with skills or further education opportunities.

The Department of Agriculture distributed production tools to 3,876 homestead and 339 community food gardens – in Mamelodi, Ga-Rankuwa and Soshanguve.

A total of 701 smallholder farmers were supported with production inputs while 3,786 seedlings donated by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce were distributed across all corridors.

In fighting poverty, over the next two years we will:

- Expand food security programmes to reach 2 million food-insecure people;
- Expand the school uniform programme to reach 1 million learners from poor households;
- Distribute 7 million dignity packs to girl learners;
- Provide financial support to 1700 Early Childhood Development centres to reach 200 000 more children over the next five years;
- Launch an Urban Agriculture and Food Movement for township people to grow their food;

We are also moving beyond the promotion of community food gardens, this will entail pushing for the supply of agriculture products to township supermarkets and government social programmes;

- Strengthen partnerships with the social cluster departments and private sector;
- Expansion of co-operatives in the sanitary dignity value chain;
- Finalise GCR Strategy to deal with Street Adult Homelessness, 2021-2024;
- Support 9,761 community food gardens.

Madam Speaker;

We have learned from the COVID period to develop systems and better mechanisms to respond to the challenges of poverty and food security and going forward we have established a war room of poverty and food security.

Going forward having understood poverty and food security as an emergency we have established a war room on poverty and food security.

The war room will bring closer civil society organisations, the private sector and government to ensure that we win the war on poverty and ensure food security in the province.

Honourable Members;

The Gauteng public health system remains the largest public health system in Southern Africa. The province continues to promote improved health outcomes across the population, including reducing non-communicable diseases.

We had set ourselves the target of constructing 11 primary health centres by 2024. We are pleased that 334 clinics have achieved ideal status between April and December 2021/22 financial year, which represent 91% of the ideal clinic status realization rate.

Ideal clinics are facilities that are open on time, are patient-friendly and safe and are supported by adequate medical supplies and clean equipment.

In a total of 10 priority hospitals, 8 hospitals obtained 60% ideal status, namely, Dr George Mukhari, Mamelodi, Bheki Mlangeni, Thelle Mogoerane, Sebokeng and Edenvale Hospitals.

However, Kopanong Hospital did not obtain the status, while Jubilee and Tembisa will be assessed between January and March this year.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 32 hospitals were re-purposed to address the shortfall of beds against the 1 June 2020 baseline figure.

We have delivered 4265 functional beds, of which 1600 had been delivered as permanent additional capacity to the provincial health system.

The investment in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic prevented our health system from collapsing while providing an opportunity to bring about efficiency in the delivery of our public health care system.

In achieving this objective, we have been investing in good governance and leadership of health institutions.

In 2019 we committed to bringing stability in the health facilities and this included the appointment of CEOs and senior managers. We are pleased that we filled 33 of the 37 CEO posts in our hospitals. In terms of employment equity, 44.6% of senior management positions in health are occupied by women.

Gauteng runs one of the largest HIV treatment programmes in the country. By the end of mid-term, we had over 1,1 million (1,115,574) adults and over 21,000 (21,088) children remaining on ARV treatment. However, the challenge in retention in care remains exacerbated by the follow-up of patients.

Honourable Members;

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the burden placed on the health system, the women and men in our facilities were able to ensure that our health system does not collapse.

We remain forever grateful to the dedicated teams in our health facilities who continue to contribute to the delivery of high-quality healthcare.

Our public health system has enrolled 1,3 million patients on the Centralised Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution Programme.

Madam Speaker;

In recent times, we have seen a growing number of mental health care cases. We have been working with all our health facilities to invest capacity to respond to this growing challenge.

As such a percentage of beds in the district and regional hospitals offering acute ill mental health care users for 72 hours is showing signs of improvement.

For example, there are 222 beds in a total of 3196 beds, which is 7% beds of the total beds are available in District Hospitals to offer acute ill mental health care to users admitted for assessment within 72 hours.

Maternal mortality in facility ratio has been reduced to 84 per 100,000 live births. Neonatal death in facility rate has been reduced to 11 per 1,000 live births. Live birth under 2,500g in facility rate reduced to 11.5.

With regards to COVID-19, we had 90% COVID-19 testing coverage among symptomatic contacts of confirmed cases and a success rate of 95% of all DS-TB client treatments.

In terms of the quality of our services, we are proud to say that 95% of complaints were resolved within 25 working days and there was a 47% reduction in patient complaints that were received by the facilities.

We remain resolute in reducing the burden of TB, implementing the 90-90-90 strategy to reduce the burden of HIV/AIDS.

We have also invested in stabilising the department to achieve its intended outcomes. This includes the work we have been doing together with the national department of health and the Provincial Strategic Support Team (PSST), constituted by a team of experts across various critical skill sets.

Honourable Members;

I have signed a proclamation to transfer all functions relating to the refurbishments at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH) from the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development (GDID) to the Department of Health.

My decision was made to fast-track the implementation of all remedial work to restore full services at the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital following the fire outbreak at the hospital on 16 April 2021, which caused extensive structural damage.

The Office of the Premier intervened early after concerns regarding the slow pace of implementation by the implementing agent. The intervention included the Office of the Premier seconding a project manager to work with the two departments on a full-time basis. Through this intervention, the Radiation Oncology building was opened much earlier than had been anticipated.

Sections of the hospital unaffected by the fire were reopened, including over 400 hospital beds to address the rising numbers of COVID-19 infections in Gauteng, relieving pressure from the other facilities.

In the past few weeks, I have had to decide to take a decision to remove the Department of Infrastructure Development as the implementing agent for the remedial work at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital.

The decision to remove DID as the implementing agent is the outcome of the failure to deliver on time and huge concerns on over-pricing for the refurbishment and construction work. Both the Provincial Health Department and the National Department of Health are now working with the Development Bank of Southern Africa as the implementing agent. We will make sure that work is done and done professionally, on time and at cost.

Madam Speaker;

Our agenda of reversing apartheid spatial transformation remains on track. We will continue to provide security of tenure through the issuance of title deeds and releasing unused government buildings and land for development, delivering inclusive mega-housing development, fast-tracking delivery of urban renewal projects, completing incomplete housing projects and providing service sites for people to house themselves.

Between 1994 and 2019, we more than 1.2 million public government-subsidised houses have been built in Gauteng alone, benefitting close to 4 million people. We

also committed that during this decade, we will ensure that there are no incomplete housing projects or completed houses that are not allocated.

In 2015, working with the private sector and the municipalities, we introduced mega-housing projects to address the ever-growing housing need as well as effecting spatial transformation.

Mega housing projects are integrated mixed housing developments inclusive of social amenities, open spaces and economic opportunities. Construction of mega housing projects is underway in Dan Tloome in Carletonville and Elijah Barayi in the Westonaria, Riversand in Johannesburg, John Dube and Clayville in Ekurhuleni.

The rapid land release programme is one of the critical interventions in addressing the housing backlog. We are making progress in providing serviced stands that beneficiaries are using to build houses for themselves. In addition to the 1610 sites that we have allocated, we have also acquired an additional 12 000 stands to be allocated to beneficiaries.

As part of support, the government provides five different housing plans, conveyancers, to ensure that they build houses of their dreams within five years after receiving their stands.

Our work with the private sector and municipalities to respond to the housing backlog continues apace.

Together with municipalities, we will also continue to respond decisively to the problem of illegal land invasions, which has become worse in the past few years.

We are committed to clearing the title deeds backlog by 2024, including issuing 44,339 new title deeds to beneficiaries of current housing projects.

We have since last year acquired 28 properties for service delivery. Five properties have been released for socio-economic development and 40 properties have been sold through auction and are in the process of being transferred to the buyers.

The upgrading and formalisation of informal settlements is another important programme of this government. Since 2019, a total of 181 informal settlements have been upgraded.

We are equally pleased to report that access to basic services has improved across the province. Municipalities have done well to maintain high levels of access to basic services— 93% average for access to electricity, sanitation and water in 2020, slightly up from 2017.

Work is being done to

Honourable Members;

We remain more ever convinced that we must build a socially cohesive and inclusive province.

Gauteng is the melting pot of the country; we are the microcosm of the world. We have a bigger responsibility in contributing towards building an inclusive society, wherein children are safe, can play, and residents can continue to call our country and Gauteng their home.

Even though we are two years into three decades of democracy, our country is still bedevilled by divisions and social fragmentation. The fault lines of race, class, space and gender are the defining attributes of our society.

This is the reality that makes promoting social cohesion and enhances nation-building.

Madam Speaker;

In the light of the urgency of the task, in realising social cohesion and nation-building we must continue to work together towards recovering from the current socio-economic, political and moral crises.

This includes introducing drastic and far-reaching interventions in all sectors. These interventions are meant to contribute towards creating a better life for all, such that unemployment, poverty and crime are reduced drastically.

Over time we have taken concrete steps to support change agents contributing to social cohesion.

We have hosted and supported 37 dialogues to foster social interaction across space, race, and class. Nine events were held to build a socially cohesive Gauteng, focused on shifting attitudes and strengthening relations with other African countries. We also hosted 22 dialogues about GEYODI and LGBTIQA+ over the period.

We have had to postpone the hosting of social cohesion games which were an important contributor towards appreciating each other's cultural diversity. However, over the period, the COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the hosting of physical engagements.

Since 2020, we have provided COVID-19 relief funding to 2,984 artists and sports practitioners. We have implemented 58 programmes, benefitting 37,284 community members across Gauteng.

Gauteng accounts for 44% of the national count towards the relief of the artists and athletics, followed by KZN and Western Cape accounting for 11% each.

We know that this is not enough, but we are of the view that this has gone a long way in ensuring that the creative industries can get back to functionality as we open the economy.

We are also going to be embarking on the cultural exchange programme in the continent and across the world as part of people-to-people relations, and to entrench our cultural experiences.

We are also working with the artists to create market access as part of opening opportunities beyond the country.

Now that we are opening the economy after the devastating effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will return to the hosting of major festivals and events that create a platform for our local creative entrepreneurs to showcase their talent.

These include – Moretele tribute to Jazz Legends, Moshito International Music conference, DSTV Delicious Festival, Standard Bank Joy of Jazz and Afro-Punk Festival, the revival of the gig economy, and the South African Music week during Heritage Month this year among others.

We will now return to the hosting of social cohesion games in the province.

Madam Speaker;

We need a healthy productive population. Through the Hanyani Health and Wellness programme, we have provided 8 hubs with product development programmes.

The Hanyani wellness Programme in collaboration with health is aimed at reducing the health bill by reducing the number of people that visits our health facilities for lifestyle diseases.

We have supported 179 clubs, 27 hubs, and 430 schools with equipment and attire. In addition to existing initiatives, we have supported 5 eKasi gyms with fitness equipment.

In 2020 we committed to working with the Football Fraternity on the establishment of a museum of football in South Africa, like the ones in Brazil (Sao Paolo) and Spain (Barcelona and Madrid), two other football-loving nations.

This has been disrupted by the events of COVID, however, we are bringing this back into the agenda of government working with the nation and football fraternity.

We have also committed to the people of Mamelodi to reconstruct HM Pitje stadium. We are pleased to report that the demolition process will be starting and engagements with clubs and other interested parties to partner with the government on the construction and use of the facility are well underway.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the contribution of Don Laka to popular culture in our country. Throughout the dark days of apartheid, he has held his head high, entertaining and uplifting the spirit of the oppressed through his pulsating music.

His music has been varied and spanned the spectrum of all genres, from Afro-beat, to Bubblegum, to jazz, to Kwai-Jazz, to supporting emerging Kwaito artists, among others.

He has also shaped popular imagination, contributing to the cultural texture as well as the popular exuberance of the post-1994 moment. Bra Don has inspired different generations over the years. He is a cultural icon and one of the illustrious sons of our

province. We are proud to recognise him and appreciate his cultural contribution while he is still alive. Here is to your excellence, Bra Don!

Madam Speaker;

We also have the amaPiano artists are in the House! The amaPiano is a contemporary musical style which is all the rage among the young people of our country and further afield on our continent.

During the dark times of the COVID-19 Alert Level 5, amaPiano proved their staying power and that they are the force to be reckoned with on the contemporary musical scene. The amaPiano artists we have in the House are, DJ Jaivane and the musical duo MFR Souls.

Today we also wish to recognise and acknowledge the amazing talents of Kgothatso Montjane, who is with us in the House today. Through her unbelievable sporting prowess in the field of tennis, Kgothatso has defied the odds to emerge as one of South Africa's topmost athletes. Congratulations Kgothatso!

We also wish to congratulate the Gauteng Under 14 Girls and Boys Chess Team, who are also with us in the House. They have won gold in the South African chess championship in a game considered one of the most cerebrally demanding. We wish them well in their future endeavours and remain confident that they will go on to represent our nation internationally.

Honourable Members;

Gauteng receives the highest proportion of international migrants seeking better economic opportunities, jobs and the promise of a better life.

We welcome the recent announcements by the national cabinet to strengthen border security and controls and enforce our country's immigration laws.

As the provincial government, we will continue to engage with all sectors of society and organisations that represent migrants and refugees to deal with all matters of concern to South African citizens and foreign nations. Everything should be dealt with within the framework of the law.

We don't not want violence and lawlessness.

Madam Speaker;

One of our key priorities is building a capable, ethical and developmental state. A strong ethical culture is the foundation of clean governance, and this is created through institutionalising ethics and ethical leadership in government and society.

The Gauteng Provincial Government in 2016 adopted the Gauteng City-Region Integrity Management Policy Framework - underpinned by the Gauteng Anti-Corruption Strategy.

The tenant of the strategy is to build a culture of integrity among public officials, public servants, businesspeople, and civil society. The core pillars of the Integrity Management Policy Framework are prevention, detection, investigation and resolution.

In line with our commitment to institutionalise integrity and fight corruption, in 2017 I appointed a civil society-led Gauteng Ethics Advisory Council (GEAC) to help in building an ethical culture in the Gauteng City Region. The Council is made up of highly respected persons with collective experience and expertise in the fields of finance, auditing, law, ethics and integrity.

Since their appointment, they have guided us as the Executive in handling difficult and complex matters of integrity and corruption.

Honourable Members;

I would like to give some of the highlights of the work we have been doing to institutionalise integrity, as well as prevent, detect, investigate, and resolve criminal acts within the civil service.

This work I am reporting on has been a collaborative effort with the following independent institutions: The Gauteng Ethics Advisory Council, a Civil society-led formation; the Special Investigation Unit; The Public Service Commission; The Public Protector; The Auditor General's Office and the South African Human Rights Commission.

To prevent and combat endemic corruption practices within the tendering processes, the Gauteng Provincial Government championed procurement reform by introducing an open tender system. After introducing the Open Tender System in 2014 we have institutionalised it through an Act of the Legislature.

There were further reforms that we introduced at the prompting of the Gauteng Ethics Council; these include the fraud detection reviews for all tenders above 10 million rands; the signing of an integrity pact with all service providers who do business with the government; and the introduction of an e-procurement system.

Honourable Members;

We have been cooperating with the Public Service Commission (PSC) to ensure that allegations related to human resource management within the Gauteng Provincial Government departments are investigated.

The PSC is tasked and empowered to, amongst others, investigate, monitor, and evaluate the organisation and administration of Public Service.

There are currently 70 allegations that are related to the GPG departments being investigated by the PSC.

The nature of cases that are investigated involves human resource irregularities, SCM irregularities, misconduct by officials, maladministration and fraud.

Forty-three (43) cases have been resolved and closed. Twenty-seven matters are still under investigation. We are concerned by the high number of the Gauteng Department of Health cases under investigation and will be acting with speed to avoid recurrence.

Honourable Member;

The Public Protector has been investigating 53 allegations related to the departments of Health (13), Education (11) and Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (19). Of these 8 have been resolved and 45 are still under investigation.

The cases investigated involve misconduct by officials relating to fraud, governance issues, unlawful demolition of RDP house, bribery, human resource irregularities, SCM irregularities, and maladministration.

Madam Speaker;

The work by the Special Investigating Unit on allegations of corruption in our province is well under the way.

Thus far, we have referred fourteen (14) matters to the SIU for investigation. Of these, seven (7) complaints are from the Gauteng Provincial Government. Four (4) matters are on flagship projects that were implemented by the GPG, and three (3) additional complaints were submitted by whistle-blowers directly to the SIU.

We welcome the SIU's public acknowledgement of the GPG's swift implementation of its referrals regarding the Health and Infrastructure Development Departments investigations.

The recommendations for disciplinary action related to the uncovered irregularities by the SIU's investigation into the awarding of contracts for the refurbishment of the Anglo Gold Ashanti Hospital.

The swift action we took included placing 9 officials on a precautionary suspension following the SIU recommendations.

We would like to drive the point home that we mean when we say that we are building an ethical and capable state.

It fills us with pride to announce that the Gauteng Province is among the provinces commended for swift implementation of the SIU recommendations.

This assumes special importance when we consider that the SIU laments the tardiness with which provinces attend to their recommendations.

We continue to focus on promoting a responsive, accountable, effective, and efficient public service, building ethical governance, and eliminating corruption.

Madam Speaker;

At the level of the prevention of corruption and with the object of strengthening fraud detection on our contracts, we have asked the Treasury to review its efficacy lest loopholes exist which may go undetected.

This is not so much because of any detected weaknesses in the internal systems of the Treasury, but because we believe to defeat crime we must stay ahead of the game. After the hard lessons of the COVID-19 PPE corruption practices, we have resolved to strengthen our prevention, detection, investigation and resolution of procedures to maintain clean governance.

Following the PPE saga, we instituted fraud detection reviews on all contracts above R10 million, where we pick up irregularities, we will terminate such contracts with immediate effect.

Honourable Members;

Conducting forensic investigation for alleged cases of corruption is meaningless if action is not taken by departments to resolve these allegations.

We are determined to take appropriate actions based on the outcomes of the investigations of corruption cases.

Another vital consideration is that the resolution of cases brings credibility to the anti-corruption process.

We are driven by our responsibility to the people of our province. Citizens can only trust the call to fight corruption when they have evidence that some effort is made to not only investigate their complaints but to institute disciplinary action against the implicated officials.

Consequence management is a key component of improving the culture of the organisation and ensuring that there are no cases of unethical behaviour. Our management team comprises disciplinary action, improvement of internal controls, civil recovery and criminal prosecution.

Honourable Members;

Regarding updates on lifestyle audits, the Premier and all MECs have undergone rigorous interviews by the SSA and we are going through the final phase of this new process that is important for all public servants and public officials in the Republic.

It is worth noting, for the records, that the Gauteng Executive Council is the first to have undergone a lifestyle audit using the new framework developed by President Cyril Ramaphosa in line with the commitment he made in his first SONA.

Honourable Members;

Audit outcomes is yet another yardstick for accountable, transparent and improved governance. But they are also good for another reason. With each passing year, we can refer to see whether cumulative we are making progress or not.

Between 2014 and 2019, Gauteng made the greatest progress on audit outcomes, managing to achieve 65% clean audits and 100% unqualified audits in two successive years.

We continue to work to improve audit outcomes, with Office of the Premier and Gauteng Treasury leading by example in achieving clean audits in nine successive years.

In the past financial year, we have also gained new clean audits in entities such as the Liquor Board, the Cradle of Humankind as well as the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Department.

It pleases us to report that once again in the year under review the auditor general has affirmed that there has been improvement in Gauteng Provincial Government.

This attests to the effectiveness of our approach to governance and we hope to build on this progress going forward.

The Office of the Premier has engaged the Department of Public Service and Administration, in this regard.

Honourable Speaker;

We have since 2004 decided to become a city-region, constituted by the three Metropolitans and two district municipalities because of the size of our economy and population.

Over the years we have been working as a seamlessly integrated city-region undermining political affiliations and municipal boundaries by focusing on providing basic services to the people.

Equally, through the processes of intergovernmental relations (IGR), municipalities have always been critical contributors to the strategic agenda of the province.

This makes the local government sphere an integral part of our vision of an ethical government. We are therefore seized with the provision of support to municipalities.

As such we have been aligning plans, delivering together to the people of Gauteng.

For example, the intergovernmental structures performed well in coordinating the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These structures have effectively enhanced the role of district war rooms, including strengthening the regional role that the district government has.

The coordination of the COVID-19 structures also facilitated stronger participation and engagement for the fast-tracking of the implementation of the District Development Model within the Gauteng City Region.

We have agreed with Mayors that learning from the COVID-19 response, we must strengthen this approach as we tackle together the challenges and failures of service delivery.

This work is important and must not be undermined by political party affiliation, ours is to serve the people of Gauteng across the City Region, regardless of a political party or coalition is running the government.

Together with all Municipalities, we will pay special attention to resolving service delivery challenges. I will lead MECS, together with councillors every Thursday and Friday, to work in communities to find lasting solutions to service delivery challenges.

We have also strengthened ethics and integrity governance at departments and municipalities by establishing ethics committees and the designation of ethics champions and ethics officers.

Our support for municipalities continues to emphasise ethical leadership in our effort of institutionalising ethics and integrity.

We are alive to the fact that turning ethics into second nature in institutional practice is a long haul, but with each step, we are getting there. The role-players in this exercise include the Office of the Premier, the Ethics Institute, Gauteng COGTA, Moral Regeneration Movement and the South African Local Government Association.

Through cooperation, these players are conducting strategic conversations among municipal leaders and broader societal role-players to systematically identify the ethical challenges of local government leadership.

This Local Government Ethical Leadership Initiative has also focused on identifying structural factors that occasion ethical challenges.

Madame Speaker;

The success of our Municipalities also relies on the payment of services. The revenue generated is meant to respond to the service delivery challenges.

Together with the Municipalities, we have established the Debt Management Committee (DMC), led by the Treasury in conjunction with the Gauteng Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (GCoGTA). The Debt Management Committee facilitates the settlement process of government debt as an intervention in trying to reduce and manage outstanding debt. The Committee also meets with departments and municipalities where there are queries or disputes that need to be resolved.

Between 2019/20 and the 2020/21 financial year, the Gauteng Provincial Government made total payments to the sum of just over R6,3 billion. This is an average of R2 billion per annum which also increased at an average of over R200 million year on year.

All Provincial Government departments and entities are working with municipalities through this Debt Management Committee established in 2017 to resolve all billing disputes, ensure that cleared rates and taxes are paid and debts are settled in line with agreed arrangements.

Madam Speaker;

Improved governance, oversight, accountability, and institutional stability across Gauteng municipalities is a key indicator of advancement towards a transformed and capable state.

In the past year, 80% of the Municipal Systems Act (MSA) 32 of 2000, Section 106 findings and recommendations were implemented within 6 months of the report being completed in affected municipalities.

We appreciate the reality that a fully capacitated state is the sine qua none for delivery. We have therefore filled 90% of Section 54A and 56 and other critical technical positions within 6 months of being vacant in Municipalities across Gauteng.

Madam Speaker;

Paying service providers on time remains our key commitment to service sustainability of SMMEs and township support.

In the past year, the following eight departments have achieved 100% compliance of 30-day payment led by the Office of the Premier: Public Transport and Roads, Agriculture, Economic Development, COGTA, Treasury, Human Settlements and E-Government.

The following three departments have achieved between 95% and 99%: Education, Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation and Community Safety.

Three Departments - **Infrastructure Development, Social Development and Health** have contributed to the non-payment of service providers and there is some regression. The team led by the Office of the Premier and Provincial Treasury is intervening to resolve outstanding payments and make sure that all departments stick to the e-payment system as a proven effective method.

Madam Speaker;

We have emerged from the worst of times as one, a united province which has worked together to defeat an unprecedented, common enemy and reclaim our lives. To paraphrase the poet, we remain bloodied but unbowed!

As did state and societal institutions, systems and processes, nationally, continentally and globally, our developmental vision, GGT2030, suffered stresses and strains from this destructive natural force.

Yet, brick by brick we are putting together a capable, ethical and developmental state as our strategic orientation. We are moving from the pandemic to an economic emergency mode.

We have heeded the wisdom of Ben Okri that 'it is in difficult times that the great times ahead are dreamt and built, brick by brick, with maturity and the hope that comes from wise action'.

We do so fully conscious that to a large extent the best defence and advancement of our constitutional democracy and our democratic gains is predicated on socio-economic justice and rule of law.

I wish to re-assure the people of Gauteng will focus on all the re-ordered priorities outlined in this State of the Province Address, with the economy and jobs on top of our agenda over the next two years.

I would like to reiterate that Gauteng will bounce back and move forward in a way that lives no one behind.

Let me conclude by thanking the people of Gauteng for the trust and responsibility bestowed on us over the past eight years.

We are not perfect. But we are honest, sincere and absolutely committed to service our people with utmost integrity.

I thank you.

God Bless You!