

STATEMENT BY MEC LEOGANG MAILE ON BUDGET VOTE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

25 May 2023,
Gauteng Provincial Legislature,
City of Johannesburg

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you all to this important media briefing, ahead of the Budget Vote Speech for 2023/24, to be tabled in the Housing Sitting later this morning. During the House Sitting, we will detail progress, achievements and plans for the financial year 2023/24, focusing on the two portfolios, Human Settlements, and Infrastructure Development and Property Management.

Before we proceed with the business of this media briefing, we extend our sincere and deepest condolences to the families of the 17 citizens who died because of the cholera outbreak in the citadel of power – the City of Tshwane. Our thoughts and prayers are with the grieving families. We also wish a speedy recovery for the 67 hospitalized individuals. We further appreciate the work being done by the national Government, working with the province and affected municipality, in finding a lasting solution to the water crisis besieging the communities of Hammanskraal. We all know very well that water is life – all communities deserve access to quality and drinkable water in line with our shared goal of a **“Better Life for All”**.

Water infrastructure needs to be maintained and upgraded to ensure accessible and reliable supply as a guarantor for water security, and as a service delivery provision to the vast majority of Gauteng’s populace. The **“right to water”** is enshrined in the Constitution, as promulgated by our nascent democratic dispensation.

The tragic cholera outbreak in Hammanskraal calls on the national Government to work with the other two spheres of government to initiate an audit process on the state of water infrastructure in the province. This will afford three spheres of Government an opportunity to develop a systematic and comprehensive approach for a short and long-term intervention approach. In the immediate, we will kick-start a process of working with the national Government and the City of Tshwane to resolve the water crisis in Hammanskraal and other affected areas, such as Bronkhorstspuit.

The provincial Government, together with the Ministry of Water and Sanitation, we will assemble a Technical Team, inclusive of the City of Tshwane, to start working on the modalities and solutions for the immediate provision of reliable and drinkable water for Hammanskraal's households, and such will be extended to Bronkhorstspuit.

In lieu of tough economic climate, City of Tshwane, should consider reprioritizing their USDG grant to attend to the water crisis before more lives could be lost. This demands the necessary urgency to solve the water crisis and we require all stakeholders to embrace the initiative we are starting. This should unite all the parties, act in the best interest of the affected communities, and should not be used as a political tool to settle scores or undermine the intervention through gate-keeping or narrow politicking. Ours will be to make sure that the crisis is resolved in the best interest of our people.

Today, marks Africa Day, it was exactly on this day, 25 May 1963, 60 years ago, where post-independence governments and Liberation Movements, converged at our sister country of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, to form the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU) to draw a roadmap for all African countries to gain full independence from their colonial masters and oppressors. Our Freedom and Democracy has its roots from this Pan-Africanist continental body through support and solidarity. We take this opportunity to salute the people of Africa for their unconditional support during our times of struggle for a free and democratic South Africa, which we achieved in 1994.

During our State of the Province Address (SoPA), Premier Panyaza Andrek Lesufi, made bold statements to renew hope and earn trust amongst our communities, as an ANC-led provincial government, to deliver on their electoral mandate and expectations. Although we are making significant strides to improve the general life of the people of Gauteng, we still face several service deliveries challenges, in lieu of the fact that Gauteng carries the title of being South Africa's economic powerhouse and a destination of choice for social, educational and economic opportunities, owing to its strategic location.

The overall strategic work we have been doing since assuming Office, has been guided by the following key priorities, in line with ANC electoral promises and commitments;

- To accelerate Gauteng’s economic recovery and reconstruction;
- To declare crime, corruption, lawlessness and vandalism as the enemy that must be mercilessly defeated;
- To drastically change the living conditions of our people in all townships of our province, over 700 informal settlements and six provincially owned hostels;
- To strengthen the capacity of the State to deliver quality services to our people (or communities); and
- Improve health and wellness of communities.

Human Settlements:

The Department has witnessed much-needed improvement in its Constitutional mandate and service delivery obligations, in line with Gauteng’s populace expectations. We have introduced a new culture underpinned by “**Batho Pele**” principles to be an institution of service excellence and quality service delivery. We are facing a daunting task to deliver houses in the province. This task continues to be riddled with a plethora of challenges which manifest itself through scrupulous individuals, illegally selling government-built houses and corruption. We are ready to nip this in the bud.

- We have delivered more than 15625 housing opportunities to deserving beneficiaries, under difficult conditions of turning the department around to be a center of service delivery excellence. Accompanying this reality, illegal occupation of houses, land invasions and mushrooming of new shacks, sought to undermine the advances we are making in providing shelter to beneficiaries.
- Our beneficiary management system has significantly improved, so that housing units are given to deserving beneficiaries on a speedily basis. Furthermore, we have taken a deliberate decision to prioritize the Elderly on our beneficiary list.
- The reprioritization of Hostels remains our critical area of work and focus. We are pleased to announce that the Gauteng Hostel Redevelopment Strategy has been approved and adopted by the Executive Council (Exco). This will enable us to decisively intervene and resolve challenges faced by hostel dwellers in the province. A broad and extensive consultation with stakeholders such as Izinduna and municipalities was successfully concluded.

- We have since undertaken the following, assessment of bulk requirements of all sixty-five hostels and proposed interventions, conducted surveys to determine the extent of the housing problem in each hostel and surrounds, and identified land within a specified radius of each hostel in response to the problem as well as conducting of feasibility studies.
- Service delivery provision to formerly Indian and Coloureds areas, through acceleration of housing units to deserving beneficiaries, issuance of Title Deeds, and working with client departments for roll-out of much-needed education, health, sport, road rehabilitation and maintenance will be fast-tracked. This will also yield much-needed economic opportunities and job creation, thus contributing significantly towards denting poverty, hunger, inequalities, and underdevelopment.
- We have been working tirelessly to turn around the negative audit outcomes and some have been resolved with the Auditor General's Office (AGSA). A formal dispute has been lodged with AGSA on the audit process, specific findings, and auditor conclusions, amongst others, in respect of two (2) qualifying matters, namely Capital Works in Progress and Expenditure on Capital Assets. It should be noted that 80% of the prior year's material misstatements have been reduced towards achieving an Unqualified Audit Opinion for the 2022/3 financial year. Furthermore, 100% of the prior year's material misstatements will be addressed towards achieving an Unqualified Audit Opinion for the 2023/4 financial year.
- The department has commenced with monitoring controls by adapting and implementing a new system of key controls provided by the Auditor-General of South Africa and relevant process owners.

Infrastructure Development and Property Management:

The Department is the primary service provider for infrastructure projects within the Gauteng City Region. In recent past, the Department has been constrained by several challenges to meet its mandate. We are currently busy repositioning the Department to deliver smart public infrastructure in an accelerated manner. We are currently putting in place service level agreements which are going to enable us to deliver infrastructure projects effectively and efficiently.

An assessment and categorization of our project portfolio for all projects and readiness for completion has been undertaken. These projects will crystallize private sector investment to drive transformation and yield much-needed job opportunities and skills transfer, mostly benefiting the unemployed, specifically youth and women.

- We have appointed a new Head of Department (HoD), Ms. Masabata Mutlaneng. She's a consummate public servant with distinguished record of two decades of service and has occupied various positions of responsibility within Gauteng Provincial Government. She once served as City of Tshwane's Municipal Manager when it was placed under Section 139 and managed to stabilize its finances. Through her leadership and guidance, we are adamant that the Department will be on a steadfast trajectory to meet its service delivery goals and be a service provider of choice for all client Departments within the Gauteng City Region.
- We are currently revising our organizational structure to improve capacity and deliver on our mandate. Currently, the department is not optimally capacitated, although we have one hundred and thirty-eight registered engineering professionals and one thousand five hundred and eighty technical personnel.
- We have developed a new infrastructure standard operating procedures to improve accountability and service delivery between the department and its sister departments, our main clients. We have identified projects through Project Readiness Matrix, to be ring-fenced and completed by 2024, with an intervention plan outlined for each specific project.
- The Department intends to complete new construction projects in the 2023/24 financial year. Furthermore, we also intend to rehabilitate, renovate and refurbish fourteen health facilities, ten education facilities.
- The department has R45bn worth of immovable assets. We have since developed a Property Optimization Strategy, with leasing, land management and asset management. This will enable us to address the problem of underutilization of provincial government-owned immovable assets in addressing the socio-economic challenges that confront the province. We are currently busy finalizing the Commercialization Strategy to be adopted by the Executive Council (Exco) in the 2023/4 financial year.

- We have identified eighty-nine properties for disposal, nine hundred and sixty-three to be transferred to DoT, two hundred and forty-six to be transferred to DoHS, and nine hundred and eighty-two have been identified as strategic assets for future use.
- Through the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP), we have undertaken a vigorous recruitment drive and absorbed more than 4385 unemployed youth, drawn from historically underprivileged communities, namely townships, informal settlements, and hostels. These recruited unemployed youth are reflective of our racial demographics, with a special bias to formerly Indian and Coloureds areas. This programme provides the youth with income opportunities and the transfer of new skills, to be absorbed in future market opportunities. Their areas of work and focus are administrative, technical, maintenance, cleaning, landscaping, scaping and low-level work.

In conclusion, we are making serious strides in restoring and improving the lives of our people by providing decent housing units and much-needed economic opportunities. We remain humble by the privilege entrusted on us, as guided by ANC's progressive policy positions, to make an impactful contribution in building a better, transformed, and prosperous Gauteng and South Africa.

We thank you!!

Ends.

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