

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR SIKHUMBUZO ERIC BONGINKOSI KHOLWANE, MPL, DURING THE DEBATE ON STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS 2016 AT ACORNHOEK DURING THE *TAKING THE LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE BUSHBUCKRIDGE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY*

Tuesday, 01 March 2016

Salutations

- Madam Speaker, Honourable Thandi Shongwe;
- The Premier of Mpumalanga, Honourable D.D Mabuza;
- Deputy Speaker, Honourable David Dube;
- Colleagues in the Executive Council;
- Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature;
- The people of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and gentlemen;

San'bonani

Introduction

Honourable Speaker;

Like the Honourable Premier indicated in the **State of the Province Address** last week, and I quote:

*“We have worked tirelessly for 22 years to eradicate **poverty, inequality and unemployment** and whilst we have facilitated the creation of many **job opportunities** and extended the **social safety net** through our grants system – we are once again made aware that in life, there are no guarantees – we need a bolder, more resilient, more robust economy”*

[Unquote]

Yes, I agree with the Honourable Premier, that there are **no guarantees** because we live in a global world, and thus we are vulnerable, and equally affected by the **global economic downturn**.

Despite this, we remain committed, as the governing ANC-led government, to strive to shield our people from the effects of such unfortunate occurrences.

We remain committed to expedite the delivery of quality services to the people of Mpumalanga, and Bohlabela in particular, remains high on our radar screen.

We will continue to strive for improved ***economic growth and employment*** to ensure that we grow the economy and create much needed jobs, as per the commitment made in the **2014 Election Manifesto of the governing ANC**.

In this regard, we commit to **strengthen our efforts in partnering with the private sector**, to create the much needed job opportunities.

Although we are aware that some of the economic sectors, such as mining are shedding jobs, ours continues to be a quest to create a **conducive environment for job creation** through incentive schemes and other enabling policies.

To this end, the implementation of our provincial economic growth blueprint – **the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (MEGDP)** continues to be our guiding document.

Honourable Speaker;

Despite the hush economic downturn, we are delighted that working with the private sector, we were able to create **53 000 jobs** between the fourth quarter of 2014 and the fourth quarter of 2015. This is according to the latest **Quarterly Labour Force Survey** results released by Statistics South Africa last week.

In this regard, a total of **39 000 jobs** were created in the **community and social services** sector; **13 000** in **construction**; **12 000** in the **utilities** sector; **7000** in **transport**; **4000** in the **manufacturing** sector; **3000 jobs** in the **agriculture** sector; **2000** in **private households**; and **1000** in the **finance** sector during the indicated period.

This is a **4,7% growth in a period of one-year**, and we believe more jobs will be created moving forward.

This now bring the provincial employment figure **to 1 million, 191 thousand** compared to 1 million, 138 thousand in the 4th quarter of 2014.

Working together with the private sector, we are indeed ***Moving Mpumalanga forward.***

We are however not satisfied with the number of those who remain unemployed. We will therefore continue to prioritise these sectors.

In this regard, the latest **SERO (Socio-Economic Review and Outlook)** Report particularly lists **tourism and agriculture**, as the sectors predominant in this area of our Province.

Honourable Speaker; Honourable Members;

Our commitment as the government of Mpumalanga, is to **decrease the number of the unemployed**. We are mindful that the majority of those unemployed are the **youth**.

To this end, through the selfless visionary leadership of the Honourable Premier, we have since **increased funding for small businesses and co-operatives** in order to encourage our youth to do things for themselves.

As indicated by the Honourable Premier last week, we have substantially **increased financial support to SMMEs, co-operatives and agricultural enterprises** to the tune of **R500 million** over the next five years.

This amount will be disbursed by **MEGA** as loan advances.

Our intention is to create entrepreneurs who will employ others, instead of waiting for a job from government or the private sector.

We will not rest until we have dealt with the triple challenges of **poverty, unemployment and inequality.**

Honourable Speaker;

The Provincial Government expenditure in Bushbuckridge was amongst the highest during the implementation of the **Comprehensive Rural Development Programme**, and this area will continue to be prioritised as one of the poverty nodes in our Province.

Accordingly, in collaboration with the national Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, we will **establish an Agri-Park in this Municipality.**

The planned Agri-Park will promote the growth of small-holder farmers by contributing to **30 000 new small scale producers**, with the possible creation of at least **145 000 new jobs in agro-processing** over the next five (5) years.

We will also resuscitate the **Bushbuckridge Abattoir** project in the coming financial year. The project will further unlock value chain opportunities in **hatchery, chicken feed production, broilers and meat processing**.

Honourable Speaker;

The Bushbuckridge area has registered the **largest share of expenditure on infrastructure** in the 2012/2013 financial year.

Consequently, the **rehabilitation of tourism infrastructure at the Bushbuckridge, Manyeleti and Andover Nature Reserves** has benefitted the locals through the creation of **536 work opportunities** over a period of 24 months.

To this end, the Provincial Government will **continue to invest in social and economic infrastructure** targeting many parts of the Province.

We will continue to **upgrade our roads to enable mobility and economic activities in Bushbuckridge** and other parts of the Province.

In this regard, we will during the 2016/2017 financial-year:

- Upgrade the road between Ximhungwe and Lisbon passing through Kildare, Lillydale, Justicia, Huntington, Metsi, Rhulani and Mabharule;
- Upgrade the bridge over the Sand River near Rolle Village;
- Construct an access road to the new Traffic College;
- Reconstruct the Kumani bridge near Thulamahashe;
- Upgrade the rural access road between the R40-Junction (near Bushbuckridge) and Merry Pebble;
- Design for rehabilitation of a road through Newforest A to Dwarsloop towards Thulamahashe.

We are indeed, a government at service, to improve the lives of the more than 4 million residents of this beautiful Province, **Mpumalanga – *the Place of the Rising Sun.***

As the Honourable Premier has committed last week, and I quote:

“Ours is a collective commitment towards the attainment of a National *Democratic Society* founded on the core values of equality, respect, human dignity and the progressive realization of socio-economic rights.

[Unquote]

Together We Move Mpumalanga Forward!

Inkomu!