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State Of the Province Address by Mme Edna Bomo Molewa, Premier of the North West Province, Mafikeng, 13 February 2009

“THE VISION LIVES ON”

Date: Friday, February 13, 2009

- Honourable Speaker of the Provincial Legislature;
- Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature;
- Judge President and Members of the Judiciary;
- Members of the Executive Council;
- Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners and visiting foreign dignitaries;
- Honourable leaders of political parties and traditional leaders;
- Your Worships Executive Mayors and Mayors of our Municipalities;
- Speakers of our Councils;
- Heads of our Security Agencies;
- Chairpersons of state organs supporting our democracy
- Resident Public Service Commissioner;
- The Director-General and leaders of administration in all spheres of Government;
- Chairpersons and Chief Executive Officers of State-Owned Enterprises;
- Leaders of labour movement, civil society, faith-based organisations and business
- Religious leaders and representatives of civil society;
- Comrades and friends;
- Distinguished guests;
- Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans

Madam Speaker, in the age-old African tradition may I begin by sending salutations to some of our heroes; gratitude and congratulations to some of our partners and exceptional performers; well wishes to the ill; and condolences to the departed.

Salutations to Comrade Duetsang Modise, popularly known as Dudu, who has played a leading role in student struggles, including against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

Salutations to Comrade Simon Senne, too, who was an active member of the ANC underground in the early 60s, both here and in exile, and who continues to serve his people as a social activist.

Salutations to yet another veteran of our struggle, Rre Motshwane, who also served our liberation movement locally and in exile, and continues his commitment to his people.

A special salutation to Dineo Mosime, Malebo Mokaleng, Tshepang Khumalo and Tshepang Masibi, all living with disabilities but not letting them restrict their interests, participation and prowess in Wheelchair Basketball and Netball. Such is Tshepang Khumalo's academic excellence that she won a full UOFS' bursary for degree studies.

Also worth our salutation are our Female Farmers of the Year - Ms Phindi Abdullah, owner of Khupuka Salgap Poultry in Rustenburg, our National Market Category winner; and Ms Maria Seleke - owner of Seleke Vegetables in Madikwe, our Informal Market Category winner, and overall winner.

Join me in saluting, as well, two of our students, Melisa Meyer and Pearl Pheza, who, led by their Tourism teacher Ms Yolande Heymans, from Klerksdorp High School, represented our and South Africa as a whole in the International Schools Tourism Essay Competition in France in November 2008, and emerging first place winners.

Our gratitude and congratulations to the chairpersons of our advisory bodies – Dr Iraj Abedian of the Economic Advisory Council; Ms Cynthia Chishimba of A Re Ageng Forum; and Dr Job Mokgoro and Prof. Amanda Lourens of the North West Research Coordinating Council.

Madam Speaker, some of our compatriots are ill of health. We wish them all well, among them Kgosi Letlhogile wa kwa Ganyesa, and Kgosi Mangope. May they recover fully and swiftly.

Sadly, Madam Speaker, we have also had the misfortune of losing some of our heroes, among them Comrade Boesman Monene Mashamaite, who served our nation as a student leader and a Member of this Legislature before his tragic departure from earth.

Another comrade among the departed is Comrade Kgomotso "Stigo" Mogoere, who served the youth and our country as a student and young people's leader.

Let us also express our regret at the departure of Mr BA Seobi who symbolised commitment to education by starting school at 14, obtained his junior and senior certificates as well as degrees by correspondence, and later teaching and heading schools for more than 60 years.

Finally, last year we sadly lost Kgosi TM Maselwane of Bakwana boo Modimosana ba Baselwane. We also lost 9 Dikgosana in the past year. This has left some of our communities without recognized leadership, and we have requested the Royal Families of the deceased to speed up the processes of filling these vacancies.

Where do we come from?

Madam Speaker, at a time when we close the term of one administration to make room for another, it might be appropriate to retrace our steps to where it all began – to begin at the beginning, so to put it.

Like the rest of our country the North West Province was born in 1994 out of a history of violent oppression and revolutionary resistance to it. Freedom and democracy arrived in an environment of political contestation, racial polarisation and socio-economic inequality. Politically, our challenge was to create a united province out of communities that saw themselves in racial and tribal terms. Socially and economically we had to create conditions of equality, opportunity and prosperity. Institutionally we had to create a State with the capacity to unite our people and materially improve conditions under which they lived.

As everything else, meeting these challenges required the creation of a cadre of public servants proportionally representative of our society and with a service-focused orientation. We had to merge employees from as diverse administrations as the Free State, Northern Cape and the former Transvaal Provinces. Add to that the Bophuthatswana Homeland government.

The structure of government and the conditions of service for public servants having differed from one administration to another, the first three years were mainly spent on the rationalisation of departments and state-owned enterprises; addressing issues of parity; instilling Batho Pele principles; and promoting a common ethos of professional service.

My predecessor, Dr Popo Molefe, ably assisted by exceptional men and women, honoured us over the first decade of democracy by laying the governance and service delivery foundation upon which others could build. In 2004 we were then accorded the privilege and the mandate by the people of our Province to take the structure to another level. With a corps of patriotic men and women, we have done so. And after a contribution spanning five years, we stand here today, as required by democratic accountability, to account to you.

Madam Speaker, the mandate that our people gave us was based on the commitments we had made to them. If one were to summarise the essence of those commitments one would say they centred around five priority areas. Those are the creation of decent work and sustainable livelihoods; education; health; rural development, food security and land reform; and the fight against crime and corruption.

To translate these into a plan of action, we brought together representatives of all sectors of our society to consultatively forge our provincial strategic development path – the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS) – with specific goals and targets.

The PGDS was also influenced by our Province's 10-year vision – Vision 2014 – and the Millennium Development Goals. It committed us all, as one, to pursuing and achieving two broad goals. The first is that of an average economic growth rate of 6.6% per annum in order for us to halve unemployment over a ten-year period. The investment required from both the private and the public sectors if we are to meet this goal is an estimated R6.3 billion per annum. The second goal is to eradicate our backlog in basic needs to ensure future growth and development for the poor. For this we require an estimated R854 million per annum.

In our work over the past five years, to achieve these goals, we have encountered massive challenges. Some of the challenges have slowed us down, but we have largely stayed true to our developmental mandate as enjoined by the PGDS. That is why I stand here today, even as we conclude our term, to say the vision lives on.

Our conviction to remain on course for the attainment of our objectives is based on the findings of our 15-Year Review – an analysis of government service delivery since the advent of freedom in 1994. The Review is available to us all for information in more detail than we can cram into this State of the Province Address.

Macro economic picture and economic development

Madam Speaker, it is common cause that the world is facing what the Minister of Finance calls a storm. There is a drastic global slowdown in economic activity, especially in the mining, manufacturing, technological and industrial sectors. This is bound to affect some of our industries, but we believe that the multi-sectoral nature and diversity of our economy should see us through so that, as R Kelly does in his song, we can say “The storm is over now.”

Such is the significance of the world economic slowdown that this is not the only time I will refer to it in the course of my address here today, so please brace yourselves for more.

Madam Speaker, how can we speak about the economy without invoking Karl Marx? It is he who gave us the fundamental truism that the economy is the base upon which everything else rests. From that perspective it behoves us to begin with a basic analysis of our Province’s economic performance and macro economic picture so as to understand how it has helped us keep our vision of development and poverty eradication alive.

I raise the point about the economy as a determinant of development as early as now so as to echo a key economic lesson from the legendary Greek fabulist, Aesop. Aesop once warned humanity not to expect sources of prosperity such as the economy, to produce too much too fast. He tells the fable of a person whose goose was laying golden eggs and who, wanting as many eggs as possible and as quickly as possible, did something extremely stupid. As Aesop puts it, "Thinking to get at once all the gold the goose could give, he killed it and opened it only to find - nothing."

The point I am making, Madam Speaker, is that our capacity to deliver over the years has been commensurate with the growth of our economy, as our 15-Year Review shows.

Between 2000 and 2006 we registered the fourth highest average growth rate in the country, reaching 4.9% in 2005 – an improvement mirrored by the labour absorption rate in the province having improved from 34.9% in 2004 to 40% in 2008.

We have thus registered a steady rather than earth-shattering growth over the years – not necessarily on line yet to meet our PGDS target of a 6.6% average over the ten-year period to 2014, but quite significantly improving the lives of our people, as key development indicators will show.

The mining sector, currently contributing 25.8% to our GDP, drives the related sector of manufacturing.

Both sectors are targeted by us for agro-processing and mineral beneficiation. We aim to strengthen them to ultimately become strong in manufacturing and therefore be net exporters of manufactured products.

We must find ways and means of adding value to agriculture, mining and tourism within the country and our Province. My message to you is that as government, labour, civil society and business we should jointly take up this challenge and make our resources work for us. Members of the Economic Advisory Council have pledged their commitment to coordinate all our stakeholders to dialogue and develop a common strategy to assist our Province in exploring and exploiting opportunities for manufacturing and industrial development.

In this challenge lies an opportunity for the private sector to fulfil the commitment it made towards contributing to the R6.3 billion investment required if the PGDS target of a 6.6% annual growth rate is to be achieved. It is estimated that we are short of approximately R2.5 billion in investment per annum to achieve our targets of halving poverty and unemployment by 2014. Current experience shows that although the private sector has been actively involved in the planning and policy formulation process of the Province, and is also actively participating in our development forums, this goodwill is yet to fully translate into actual investment, job creation and skills development.

We do have to understand though, that with mining broadly – except for gold mining – currently experiencing a slowdown, we have to strengthen our performance in other key sectors such as agriculture and tourism, to keep our vision alive and mitigate the adverse effects of the fall in the prices of some minerals.

Part of the attraction of agriculture and tourism is also their capacity to absorb all skill levels, and therefore strengthen our job creation capacity. The former shows the best employment ratio in the province. The latter is particularly important in the light of the countdown to 2010. The job creation potential of the agricultural sector is evident from its contribution of 2.8% to the provincial GDP, and accommodating 18% of the labour force in the province.

On the tourism front, we have generally maintained our share at 6.6% in 2007 as a competitive destination. Our international visitor market share, however, went slightly down in 2007. On a positive note, in terms of jobs created there was relative stability between 2005 and 2007, with jobs sustained through international visitor arrivals going up by 4.3%, from 65 160 in 2005 to 67 955 in 2006.

I have already said that during the world economic downturn, tourism is one of the industries we can leverage to confront economic hardships. Part of our strategy to do so and enhance its contribution to our GDP is our partnership with the Tourism Enterprise Programme and the Grading Council of South Africa. The partnership is aimed at ensuring that our tourism establishments offer quality products and services so as to be

more competitive. We are also enhancing our flagship attractions such as our World Heritage Sites, the Vredefort Dome and the Taung Skull.

International relations for economic development

Madam Speaker, international relations are an important part of our economic development endeavours. Accordingly over the years of our governance we have established international contacts whose value to our province is immeasurable.

We enjoy good relations, and signed Memoranda of Understanding, with Kronoberg County of Sweden; the Institute of Technology in Finland; Henan Province of The People's Republic of China; the Province of Kyong-sang-bok-Doo in South Korea; Manitoba Province of Canada; and with Cuba, on health, education, sports and culture. These MOUs relate broadly to trade and sustainable development.

Visits have also been undertaken to Germany, Indonesia, Japan and Dubai. These have focused on business development, jewellery and platinum products beneficiation, infrastructure, agriculture, SMME development, tourism, and aviation.

In New Delhi in India we entered into an agreement with the National Small Industry Corporation (NSIC) on technology development transfers. Also in India we facilitated a partnership agreement between the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) and the North West University on student and lecturer exchange, focusing on bio-technology and rural development.

Overall, Madam Speaker, as all our efforts on the economic development front demonstrate, despite the economic growth challenges we still face, we need not despair – we know how to respond, and our vision lives on. Indeed, as Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali says in one of his poems, Have hope, brother; despair is for the defeated.

Governance and the macro organisation of the state

Madam Speaker, the capacity of the State to deliver upon its mandate is dependent upon its level of organisation. That organisation, in our specific case of a history of oppression, is founded upon the principle of inclusiveness, consultation, and participatory democracy. It is also based on a cooperative and integrative approach, hence our system of Clusters which groups departments of a similar mandate together so that they can be aligned and act cohesively in discharging their functions.

The various Clusters are in turn synergised via three Provincial Planning Makgotla per annum, where we undertake comprehensive government planning. Additional value is added by inputs through other consultative structures like Sector Stakeholders, the Economic Advisory Council, the North West Research Coordinating Council, and social partners in general.

Our commitment to partnerships is evident in various Memoranda of Understanding we have, including with Development Finance Institutions like DBSA, the IDC, banks; agricultural bodies; research institutions; professional bodies; the transport industry;

NGOs; and the various Chambers of Commerce.

Our integrated and consultative approach extends to our cooperative governance model with local government, which is institutionalised through the North West Premier Coordinating Committee (NWPPCC). The NWPPCC is our vehicle for coordination and cooperation on policy and implementation. This body has functioned well since its inception and has assisted greatly, particularly in implementing our PDGS and DGDS.

Among themselves, too, our municipalities operate cooperatively, as illustrated by the Bojanala District Host City Forum, established for the district and local municipalities to act in a coordinated and integrated manner on matters 2010.

We also, Madam Speaker, enjoy a cooperative working relationship with Traditional Leaders, whom we continue to empower, and continue to capacitate, through purpose-built facilities; provision of Information Technology equipment and training; secretariat and administrative support; and ongoing training, including on local government. We are also equipping the Traditional Councils with financial controls and systems to manage their own funds. This is intended to comply with the law but also help reduce the tensions that are emerging lately in those communities around funds.

All the structures I have mentioned are part of our architecture of consultative governance – with the full participation of our people, whose will it is that gives us the right to govern. We are therefore committed to the Batho Pele – People First – principle to a point where it is a key performance area in the performance agreements of all our Heads of Departments. We also recognise it in our staff's Service Excellence Awards. In this regard, I am proud to report that the North West Province has without failure always evaluated all qualifying HODs. Furthermore, all SMS employees have submitted their financial disclosure forms. This will enable us to determine any unexpected gains in wealth by our senior managers.

Our service-orientedness is reflected, as well, in Thusong Centres, which shorten the distance between government and the people. Through these centres we have brought much-needed services closer to where our people live. Consistent with the Presidential directive, we succeeded in establishing one Thusong Service Centre per district municipality by 2004. As the Second Generation strategy unfolds, we are confident that we will meet the Presidential target of one Thusong Service Centre per local municipality.

We have also deployed, after training, more than 300 Community Development Workers (CDW's), and established 365 Ward Committees in our municipalities, to improve service to our people. These contribute to participatory democracy as we develop the Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and engage in participatory budgeting processes.

Our flagship public consultation instrument, Madam Speaker, is Izimbizo – Dipitso – which defines our mass-based participatory democracy. Communities see an Imbizo as a platform for effective and direct interaction with government. Our people have embraced this program with zeal, attending in their thousands. We therefore dare not let them down by failing to answer their questions and address their concerns, lest they lose confidence

in government. We are, accordingly, improving our capacity to respond timeously to the issues they raise.

Madam Speaker, the efficiency and effectiveness of our governance is dependent upon our public servant corps, where the proportion of those with 10 or more years' experience has improved from 37% to 49% – making our staff generally better equipped to perform their duties. We have also implemented the new OSD in Health and Education as required by the relevant agreement. True to the commitment by the ruling party, through this we are improving the conditions of service of our public servants, particularly in scarce skills areas.

Proactively we have, since 1994, also allocated bursaries to our people based on our skills needs. This is in line with the new Joint Priority Initiatives on Skills Acquisitions (JIPSA) programme and our Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS) on scarce skills. From the 1994/5 financial year to the 2008/09 year we spent a total of R123m on public servants who are studying – which is, by any measure and to any political party, a massive investment in our human resources.

All indicators, Madam Speaker, point to greater investment in the skills of our staff. This enhances state capacity to execute the developmental mandate of service delivery and good governance, thereby ensuring that our vision lives on.

Madam Speaker, our definition of governance includes the prudent management of public resources. Our track record in this regard is encouraging.

At the end of the financial year 2005/06 we received 10 qualified audit reports. We registered an improvement when we received only three qualified reports in 2007/08. Even our Investment Promotion Agency, Invest North West, and the NW Development Corporation have been exemplary in this regard. We are, however, still not happy with audit reports of other Public Entities and some Municipalities.

Pursuant to even better governance, in partnership with the University of North West we have established a Centre of Excellence to improve financial management skills and thereby improve Audit outcomes as well as deal with issues raised by the Auditor General.

Madam Speaker, our continued commitment to clean governance must be a reassurance to our people that our vision lives on.

Building a caring nation

The vision lives on as social services continue to facilitate the building of a caring nation prioritising the provision of a safe and nurturing environment for child development and the protection of all those that are vulnerable. Partnerships with civil society are critical to the realisation of this noble vision. The steady rise in funding of NGOs providing services to all those eligible children has seen us transferring R29m of our social development budget in the 2007/8 financial year to support their provision of children's services.

The vision lives on as protection services for older persons improve with the establishment of 154 service clubs. Twenty five old age homes, 9 service centres and 24 older persons' local forums are being supported by us. Four cooperatives have been established to promote the participation of and ensure that the aged benefit from local economic development.

A Directorate for Family Services has been established, prioritising family preservation and empowerment of victims of abuse. Currently the state is funding 3 state-run Victim Empowerment Centres. We fund seven civil society victim empowerment organisations. Local victim empowerment forums have been established at 21 service points, and every year we have commemorated the 16 days of Activism to raise communities' awareness on and mobilising them against violence to women and children.

To deal with substance abuse we have developed an integrated Provincial Mini Drug Master Plan, funded three community-based organizations dealing with substance abuse and, since 2005, implemented the Ke Moja Anti-drug Strategy in schools and at 24 service points.

Our vision of building a caring nation which emphasises communities supporting one another and government providing a conducive environment and necessary resources lives on.

Building a healthy nation

Madam Speaker, the provision of health services will remain a focal point towards realising the commitment we made to our people in the Freedom Charter. Indicators on the health front suggest that we are registering steady progress and making some impact, thus keeping the vision alive.

True to our commitment, we are continuing to train more health professionals so that we are able to deliver quality health care and we are aggressively implementing preventive health care initiatives. The cooperative involvement and participation of our communities in determining the provision of health services is continuing unabated with the establishment and strengthening of health forums.

Our cooperation with countries like Tunisia, the Republic of Cuba and Iran has improved the rate at which we are able to improve patient-doctor contact at the lowest level of health care.

As part of our health professionals' retention initiative we have successfully implemented the Occupation Specific Dispensation for nurses. In the next two financial years we will continue to implement the same programme for the other remaining categories of health professionals. We are confident that the successful implementation of such initiatives, coupled with the improvement of health technology in hospitals and the provision of accommodation for health professionals, will result in the increase of health professionals in the public sector.

Our fight against HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases, too, is generally proving successful. The drop in HIV infection rates of women attending antenatal clinics, from 31.8% in 2005 to 29.0% in 2006, confirms this. Our programmes to encourage testing and eliminate stigmatisation, together with an increased uptake in antiretroviral therapy (ART), are critical for progressive declines in HIV infections. Our Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMCT) uptake has increased significantly, resultantly reducing the vertical transmission of HIV from mother to baby.

We must be concerned, though, about TB. Our figure of 711 TB cases per 100 000 people in 2005 had increased to 727 TB cases per 100 000 people in 2007. We are therefore intensifying our efforts to increase our cure rate from the current 55% to 65%, including the construction of dedicated provincial MDR and XDR-TB facilities at Tshepong Hospital, and preparations are underway for facilities in other districts. The programme for the tracing of defaulters has been intensified through the procurement of vehicles dedicated for defaulter tracing and management.

Our programme to expand health infrastructure, including the revitalisation of hospitals, continues apace. The programme for the construction and upgrading of our facilities has registered many successes. We have built 38 new clinics since 2004, and the Itsoseng Community Health Centre has been completed. We await funding for the upgrading of the Lichtenburg and Bophelong Hospitals, while the new Vryburg and Moses Kotane Hospitals should be long completed by the end of this calendar year.

It shouldn't pass without mention, Madam Speaker, that we are particularly committed to ensuring equitable health care for our people in the rural areas through the implementation of the Primary Health Care (PHC) approach in each sub-district of the Province. Our programme for the training of nurses in primary health care will ensure that patients attending our health care points in areas where doctors are not available receive appropriate assessment and treatment. In addition, we are improving our patient referral system and realigning it to the infrastructure programme in order to realise our goal of improving access to health services for all as per our undertaking in the Manifesto of the ruling party. The implementation of the TRIAGE system will ensure that the long queues seen at our hospitals become a thing of the past.

Madam Speaker, even low-occurrence health challenges have received our attention. We have used indoor residual sprays to prevent malaria where necessary and have tested water sources and supplies from urban and rural areas to monitor the possible incidence of cholera – and we are pleased to report no case at all and that our vision of a healthy nation lives on.

Educating the nation and developing our human resources

Madam Speaker, for our economy to expand as per our PGDS goal the question of skills development is an important one – beginning from ABET up to tertiary education, both at school and in the workplace, and for both workers and the unemployed.

The opening of over 252 ABET centres between 2004 and 2008 is part of our goal towards 100% literacy in our Province. Indeed, we are making some progress as

functional literacy has improved from 57.1% in 1996 to 66% in 2007, but there remains an estimated 698 000 people older than 20 years who have not completed grade seven.

With regard to early childhood development the number of subsidized ECD centres has increased from 184 in 2006 to 290 in 2007. To ensure equitable distribution of the service to all those that are eligible within the province, an additional 386 ECD sites have been registered through the massification project. The subsidy has been increased from R6.00 to R12.00 per child per day.

On the school front we have registered some progressive success in our Matric results, with our graduation from a 64.9% pass rate to 68% over the past four years so attesting. In this regard let us, Madam Speaker, take inspiration from the 71% pass we registered in 2003, which shows the levels we can actually reach, if not exceed.

Our flagship quality enhancement project of 60 Dinaledi schools has exceeded the national allocation by ten. This project already proved effective when in 2006 a hundred more matriculants passed Mathematics at higher grade, and 83 more learners passed Science at higher grade. This achievement arises as part of our efforts to support schools when we supplied all our high schools in the Province with Science equipment.

One of the contributing factors to our ongoing improvement must be our concerted concentration on educator training. This is demonstrated by the 75% rise in the number of educators who were subjected to ACE Maths, Science and Technology training between 2005 and 2008. Our equipping of 314 schools with access to the Internet in the three years, 2005 to 2007, is also a positive contributory factor.

In the FET sector student numbers stood at 23 113 in 2007/08, while the proportion of the population with a qualification higher than grade 12 improved from 16.6% in 1996 to 26% in 2007.

Our efforts towards the education of the nation include funding 180 tertiary students, through the North West Arts and Culture Council (PACC) in arts and culture disciplines.

Through the Taung and Potchefstroom Agricultural Colleges we continue to render specialised agricultural education with more women significantly entering the field.

In December 2006 we were awarded a R98 million grant by the Department of Labour to support three years of skills development for unemployed youth as part of PGDS/ASGI-SA Strategic Projects. This has complemented our own workplace skills training where we have, since 2004/05, been registering one thousand unemployed youth per annum in internship programmes, resulting, thus far, in a total of 20 000 young people trained in various skill areas.

In the public service bursaries have been allocated based on the skills development needs of our departments. Accordingly, between 1994 and 2008 about 4 000 students received bursaries. Between 2004 and 2008 our skills training budget increased from R100m to R269m, and a minimum of 102 000 skills development interventions were

made. We intend increasing this number through participation of unemployed youth in the learnership and internship programme.

Through Project Khaedu, we have paid particular attention to middle management capacity building and exposed all senior managers to core frontline service delivery challenges.

Our educational vision, then, Madam Speaker, lives on.

EPWP, infrastructure development and job creation

Madam Speaker, our vision of economic development and halving poverty and unemployment by 2014 requires investment in infrastructure and the involvement of the masses of our people in the development thereof. Our Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is our vehicle for the creation of job opportunities. In this regard in 2007/08 through this program we delivered 8 000 job opportunities, more than 50% of them going to women, and almost 50% benefiting the youth.

Representative of this is the Modimola Project, whose third phase closed at the end of the 2006/07 financial year. This project won several awards, of which the national Impumelelo Award is the most recent. Fifteen hectares of land are under vegetable production and a total of 30 families are direct permanent beneficiaries, deriving sustainable jobs from the project. The Road Project has employed 209 beneficiaries so far and 27 more have been employed in the construction of two community halls. Small contractors have benefited from this project and were also trained to compete for future contracts.

The Modimong initiative was launched in 2006. It included the upgrading and surfacing of the road between Taung; Moseja; Cokonyane and Modimong with labour intensive construction methods. Integrated into this is a food security project called Letsema LaMantsha-Tlala.

The planning of the related Tosca EPWP intergrated project began in 2007/08. The upgrading of the Tosca to Jakkelskop road has started, and agricultural activities; food security; and community infrastructure project challenges are being addressed.

With regard to the economy as a whole, between 2004 and 2007 the number of jobs created increased from 771 000 to 841 000, therefore comfortably meeting our PGDS target of 44 000 jobs per annum.

While this progress, as earlier intimated, may be slowed down by the downturn in the global economy, our infrastructure programmes still have a massive potential to help us turn back the frontiers of poverty through job creation and the training of our people in diverse areas.

Madam Speaker, projects illustrative of our infrastructure development programme, and already familiar to many of our people as they are multi-year projects dating back to 2004/05, are the Taung Irrigation Scheme – which is allocated R300m over ten years. In addition there is the Western Frontier Cattle Beneficiation Initiative - to benefit small and

commercial farmers; Taung Tourism – to develop the potential in and around the Taung dam, including the Taung Hotel School to address the shortage of hospitality skills in the tourism industry; and the Wild Silk Project – to investigate the commercial exploitation of silk worms in the Ganyesa area.

Added to these is the Mafikeng Industrial Development Zone, which is an integral part of the Regional Industrial Development Strategy, the Light Industrial Parks and the Afthatch project, all of which will be of benefit to all our people, in particular the SMMEs.

The implementation of the Lotlamoreng Dam project, the Bloemhof and the Vaalkop Dam Developments – are all part of our eco-tourism initiatives.

In an endeavour to turn aspirant young entrepreneurs' casual businesses into the realm of more formal enterprises, a Youth Cooperatives Development Centre has been established in Mafikeng. Operations will start in March 2009. A sister project will commence during March 2009 in Vryburg, in the Naledi Municipality, and such projects will be established at every local municipality over the MTEF period. In a related development, the Small Industrial Parks within the province have been refurbished at a cost of R10m, and to the benefit of small industrialists.

The Automotive Industrial Development Centre project, formerly known as the Madibeng Dry Port, is currently in its second year and will be taken forward during the coming financial years.

A feasibility study on the establishment of a catalytic recycling plant in the province is also underway. A total of 132 employees from various companies have been trained.

The Platinum Trust Project, aimed at enhancing beneficiation efforts, was kickstarted at a cost of R10m and is now operational. With regard to the Bethanie Granite Project, a feasibility study has been completed. The project entails the cutting and polishing of granite. Negotiations are underway with potential investors from Germany for the project to commence.

In agriculture the Multi-Purpose Livestock Handling Facilities project will bring markets closer to the farmers; and the Fencing Programme will control the carrying capacity of the land and ensure the production of more food crops. Additional projects are in hydro-culture; co-operatives; and small scale dairy initiatives.

Madam Speaker, the rehabilitation of our transport and roads system is an integral part of our economic development architecture and infrastructure. Among the beneficiaries are our taxi operators, who have already lodged 14 000 applications for the conversion of their permits to operating licences. Some 10 000 of the applications have been approved.

With regards to taxi recapitalisation, 3 500 applications have been received. They constitute 20% of our taxi fleet, demonstrating some progress, albeit not as fast as we would like it to be, knowing how aged our taxis are, and the implications for road safety.

Mafikeng Airport has regained its international status, and this should see business and tourism enhanced in our province, especially in the context of the Mafikeng Industrial Development Zone.

The challenge of provincial road construction and maintenance is acute, demonstrated by a recent internal assessment that 36% of our surfaced roads are in poor to very poor condition, and that 70% of our gravel roads are in poor to very poor condition. This excludes the municipal roads. Recent 2008 statistics show an estimated maintenance backlog of R6 billion, requiring an average investment of R1.2 billion annually for an unbroken period of five years. Madam Speaker, for our economic growth we need to invest progressively in our road infrastructure.

In education the school infrastructure programme continues apace in line with the targets we set for 2014. At least 64 new schools have been built and 151 renovated since 2004. The number of classrooms constructed increased from 17 000 in 1999 to 20 000 in 2006. From 2004 about 715 mobile classrooms have been provided. Ablution facilities were improved in 2 045 schools.

In sports, outside of the 2010 programme, 20 sports facilities have been greenified. The National Conditional Grants have been de-centralised to each Municipality. Over four hundred Community Development Workers have been employed to ensure that we now have sports activities on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The North West Academy has been funded over the past four years to assist in identifying and developing talent in various sporting activities. The Siyadlala Mass Participation Programme, Women in Sport and Indigenous Games are key in popularising sport in the Province. Our Province was the 2007 Indigenous Games champion, having won in 2003, 2005 and 2006. There was no Indigenous Games Festival in 2008 as South Africa hosted the African Zone VI Under-20 Youth Games in Tlokwe.

Nearly half of all South Africans, 46%, are completely inactive and a further 24% don't do enough regular physical activity to protect themselves from lifestyle-related ill health. We must therefore encourage our children and our communities to participate in recreational activity.

On the more cerebral side eighteen libraries have been completed since 1994. A further four are in progress, eight renovated, and another eight in the pipeline. Libraries are central in giving our children and communities access to knowledge, space to study and access to stimulating toys to assist in early childhood development. The library service is fundamental in assisting learners in school and higher education with access to a warm and safe environment in which to do their homework, projects and study. This will particularly assist children from poor households.

The Provincial Archives and Library Headquarters Building, which will house all our historical documents and therefore give our future generation an understanding of our democracy, identity and history, has been completed at a cost of R85million. We have built Kraaipan and Seolong Museums and two Cultural Centres in Mogwase and Maubane. These institutions will assist in the development of the creative industry and in social cohesion, nation building and an understanding of our identity. The Gateway to

Freedom Legacy Project has started to harness our history and develop a liberation struggle tourism route. In the next few years this project has a potential to generate interest in the Province and improve our relationships with Botswana,

In the Creative Industry we have developed various festivals, for example the Cultural Calabash, Zindala Zombili, Jazz festivals, other music festivals, drama and various other activities to support artists and the creative industries to enable various job and career opportunities for our artists. Our four Mmabana Centres have trained hundreds of musicians, artists, crafters and actors.

Madam Speaker, the list of projects is long, but of key relevance to us is the estimated 71 000 jobs created, 32 000 benefiting women, and 33 000 young people. About 200 people with disabilities also benefited, and we have plans to increase this number quite significantly.

Madam Speaker, the significance of the jobs created lies in the fact that a single worker typically provides for a minimum of five family members.

Our contribution to poverty alleviation through these projects has therefore been much greater than meets the eye, and it stands to be further enhanced by increased private sector participation. The mining industry; DBSA; AgriNW; the IDC; NERPO; FNB; Standard Bank; ABSA; the Land Bank; McCain; SENWES; the African Farming Franchise and Magaliesberg Graan Kooperasie, NAFCOG, NWAUFU, The NW Chamber of Commerce, BUSA and BMF are already important partners in this regard, and we sincerely thank them all for their contribution.

That our overall developmental vision lives on, Madam Speaker, is evident from the fact that while our resources have been limited, we have continued our investment in our people's development. The increase in our budget from R16 billion to R18 billion over the last 5 years demonstrates this. This is in spite of the 2007/08 demarcation exercise having reduced our share of the fiscus by about R2.5 billion.

Our investment in infrastructure, Madam Speaker, is paying off, as evident from our official unemployment rate having steadily declined from 32.6% in 1995 to 27.4% in 2005.

Indeed, our vision lives on.

Access to Basic Services

Madam Speaker, it is through basic services that government is palpably felt, especially in a country where these were, a mere ten years ago, something of a dream for many of our people, and where rampant urbanisation is creating a never-ending need and demand for these services. For effective monitoring and evaluation, our provision of basic services to our people takes place within the context of our 5-Year Local Government Plan, and our 15-Year Review reveals a picture of progress on this front.

In 1996 less than 50% of our households had access to piped water. As at 2007 it stood at 76.1%. Access to sanitation improved from 30.0% of households in 1996 to 93% in

2007. Access to electricity currently straddles 86% of our households, as reported in the Community Survey by Stats SA.

The figures will of course hold different meaning to most of the people within this House, Madam Speaker, depending largely on our political homes, but what no one can dispute is the fact that the 26.1% more households which received piped water between 1996 and 2007; the 63% that received access to sanitation; and the 48.2% that received access to electricity all had the quality of their lives significantly improved. Those who have never experienced life without piped water, a running toilet and an electric bulb can never fully understand the life-changing experience of these services to our people.

What makes our performance in this regard even more outstanding is the fact that even the indigent have access to these services through our free basic services programme. We are, however, still experiencing some challenges in providing free basic electricity due to systemic challenges and infrastructural backlogs. We shall work closely with our municipalities to further improve this situation as part of our overall war on poverty. We are also aware of the challenges faced by ESKOM in further generation of energy. This is a societal challenge which requires all of us to save energy.

We have also experienced some capacity and service delivery challenges in some of our Municipalities. This situation, we believe, will and must continue to be attended to until all our Municipalities can perform to the fullest capacity. Service to our people cannot and should never be compromised.

That is part of our vision, and that vision lives on.

Housing and human settlement

It is, however, on the housing front where our impact as a Batho Pele – people first – government has been most strongly felt, Madam Speaker. Our records show that 136 000 houses have been built in the Province between 1994 and 2007. One of the most significant contributions of that has been the empowerment of women contractors.

The empowerment of housing lies even more particularly in the fact that to many of our people a single house, whatever the number of rooms, is typically a shelter for at least four people. That should place our figure of 136 000 into greater perspective and make it possible for us to say we have largely delivered on our promise to our people.

Access to houses is also increasingly considered as access to wealth, given the economic security aspect of property ownership. We are therefore creating wealth for our people, as we have done through the 216 000 hectares of land we transferred to 10 000 households between 1994 and 2007.

On another housing note over 390 hostel units have been converted into family units, and processes are already underway to facilitate the provision of affordable medium density rental housing stock.

Mention should be made of the role that the private sector can play in housing and infrastructural development. In this regard may I draw your attention, Madam Speaker, to the partnership we negotiated with the Western Limb Platinum Producers Forum for joint infrastructural developments in the province, and not only in the immediate vicinity of the mines. Our MOU incorporates 12 programmes ranging from road construction and water supply to settlement developments. Most of these projects will soon be in implementation.

It is such partnerships which reassure our people that the Province's vision of development lives on.

Poverty alleviation

Madam Speaker, it must gladden us that in terms of the PGDS poverty levels among our people have declined somewhat as the share of households living in poverty has decreased. The poverty rate has also dropped to below the population growth rate, indicating an improved quality of life for most people, including the very poor and marginalized, as the GDP per capita increased from R11 000 to R33 000 between 1996 and 2006.

Our fight against poverty, Madam Speaker, is personified by our integrated Poverty Eradication Strategy, which is anchored by four strategic options, including the provision of basic services; the creation of jobs; improving the effectiveness of the social security system; and implementing human development and food security interventions.

These, Madam Speaker, are required throughout the value chain of our governance, hence the critical emphasis, as well, on coordination, synchronisation, monitoring and evaluation in the Strategy. This is the essence, Madam Speaker, of our "War Room on Poverty" programme which was launched in December 2008. The launch made it possible for us to go from house to house to identify the degree of poverty so as to make precise interventions. We succeeded in this regard and we are now certain that all the households in our indigent areas can be supported to graduate out of the cycle of poverty.

We are of the firm conviction, Madam Speaker, that through this Strategy and reliable data, and with more enhanced coordination and integration, we shall meet our Vision 2014 objective of halving poverty.

Our poverty alleviation interventions have resulted in an increase in the number of beneficiaries of social grants from 15.2% in 1999 to 55.8% in 2007. Approximately 255 000 children are recipients of the Child Support Grant. We provided 6 000 needy children with school uniforms and subsidised centres for children to the tune of R27m, catering for 20 000 children, in the past financial year alone.

Our effort to increase access and to provide quality education to all has been part of our strategy for poverty alleviation. In recent years we have declared 1 384 "No Fee" schools out of 1 732 schools, which is 79% of the public schools in our Province. This translates into a benefit for 532 000 learners. In addition to that, we have established four Mega

Schools across the province to address the plight of farm school learners and ensure them access to quality education.

All schools have benefited from the Quality Improvement Development and Upliftment Programme to improve the condition and performance of schools in the poorest 20% of our communities. We have also increased the number of learners transported from 35 000 in 2004 to 45 000 in 2008. Those we provided with nutrition increased from 301 000 in 2004 to 489 000 by 2008. In addition to that we have developed 230 food gardens in schools.

Our partnership with the Royal Netherlands Embassy introduced a special initiative called "Schools as centres for care and support", which focuses on support for learners who are directly and indirectly affected by HIV/AIDS.

With regard to our senior citizens the number of elderly people receiving pensions increased from 130 083 in 1996 to 186 924 by 2007.

A minimum 123 000 households have benefited from the National Food Emergency Scheme. 500 needy families in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District have received blankets and food parcels. Agricultural starter-packs were provided to five villages in Bojanala. People at Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati were provided with seedlings, roller drums and irrigation systems. 1 026 gardens, benefiting 724 households, have been implemented.

Madam Speaker, of the 868 000 beneficiaries of social grants 575 103 are children. This represents over 50% of the total grant beneficiaries which demonstrates government's commitment to improving the quality of life of children.

To all the beneficiaries, Madam Speaker, government support means the vision of a better life – free of the pangs of hunger and the ravages of poverty – lives on.

Economic empowerment, SMMEs and the Second Economy

Madam Speaker, beyond tourism we have identified the creation of and support for new and emerging SMME's as a job-creation intervention to reduce our high levels of poverty and draw previously disadvantaged people into the mainstream economy.

Conferences and seminars were held in order for SMMEs to make inputs into policies and programmes. Among these are the SMME Summit, the BBBEE Policy Awareness Seminar, as well as the World Productivity Congress, which we hosted in partnership with the Productivity Institute of South Africa.

A research study was commissioned to investigate the economic impact of the discontinuation of railway services on small towns. The results of the study will be released during this year. Another set for this year is on the state of small to medium enterprises in the province.

It is encouraging to note the keen interest demonstrated by some of the leading financial institutions in SMME development and access to finance.

With specific reference to young people we have evolved the Youth Cooperatives Centres Roll-Out Plan in terms of which the youth would be developed from informal and casual income generation approaches to more business-like practices.

In terms of agricultural development some progress has been registered, including through the facilitation of farmer loan funding and the Western Frontier Beef Beneficiation Programme. We also have land reform initiatives, specifically redistribution and restitution; the Wolmaranstad goat processing project; the Mechanisation Programme; and the Nguni Cattle Development Programme.

For the artistically inclined we have established forty SMME's in craft, leather, paper, grass and beads businesses, creating at least two hundred jobs. We anticipate support for another 60 businesses over the next three financial years. On a related note the establishment of the North West Craft and Design Institute is being finalised through a multi-stakeholder partnership,

Other poverty alleviation interventions include support for more than 50 SMMEs through the procurement of goods and services during the commemoration of national days; major sports and recreation games.

In support of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment our Public Works Department awarded tenders to the value of R413 million to HDI contractors during the 2006/2007 financial year alone, and a further R135m in 2007/08. More than 86% of the tenders went to HDI's.

For our SMME's too, then, Madam Speaker, the vision lives on.

Moral regeneration and social cohesion

One of the things we are increasingly recognizing, Madam Speaker, is the rapid decline of morality in our communities. This manifests itself in a variety of ways, including disrespect for others, abdication of parental responsibility, vandalization of public property, and abuse of state resources.

Failure to meaningfully nip this emerging social monster in the bud could spell disaster for our democracy and the achievements of the past 15 years. It is for this reason that, as government, we developed a programme on Moral Regeneration and Social Cohesion. Through this programme the Province advocates a society free from racial prejudice, xenophobia, tribalism, other forms of intolerance, and the abuse of the elderly, the disabled, women and children.

One of the successes of this programme in 2008 was the hosting of district youth summits on moral regeneration. These culminated in a provincial summit, which served as a platform for young people to talk about issues of responsible citizenship, patriotism and ethical consciousness. Without reservation, young people committed themselves to working for a caring society and to take their responsibilities seriously.

Through this programme we have pursued the development of ethical conduct across all sectors so that we can, once more, be able to look one another in the eye and say, without any consideration of race, social origin or political affiliation, "You are my sister, you are my brother; I am my sister's keeper, I am my brother's keeper".

It is values of brotherhood and sisterhood like this which shall ensure that our vision lives on.

2010 – Delivering a Soccer World Cup to be proud of

Madam Speaker, with regards to 2010 we promise that Rustenburg, as the Host City, will successfully deliver a 2009 Confederations Cup and the 2010 FIFA World Cup. As the Provincial Government we have made a commitment to support Rustenburg and the Royal Bafokeng Administration in their endeavour to deliver on this spectacle.

Preparations to host the Confederations Cup are well on track in relation to the upgrading of the Royal Bafokeng Sports Palace and related infrastructure, the volunteer programme, safety and security, health, disaster management and the mass mobilization of our communities. The match venue will be handed over to the LOC and FIFA before 14 June 2009, when it will be hosting the first match to be played in it after the Peace Cup and the British Lions tour shall have been used as trial runs.

Together with other stakeholders, we shall ensure the full participation and economic benefit of communities neighbouring the host city, including the wearing of the BAFANA BAFANA sportswear every last Friday of the month until the beginning of the FIFA World Cup matches in 2010.

That, Madam Speaker, shall ensure that our vision of a Soccer World Cup to be proud of lives on.

Building safe communities

Our criminal justice departments have worked tirelessly and closed ranks in order to win the fight against criminals. The establishment of the Provincial criminal justice cluster and provincial case flow management, chaired by the Judge President Mogoeng Mogoeng, has contributed immensely towards the high rate of arrests and conviction of criminals in the province.

We are also pleased to report that we continue to reduce contact crimes by between 7 to 10% as promised. These crimes include murder, rape, assault, robbery, car and truck jacking, house and business robberies. We are also mindful of the fact that some of these crimes still remain a problem to the community and we will do everything in our power to fight against their perpetrators. House robberies, business robberies and car hijacking, which we refer to as "Trio Crimes", will continue to receive special attention by the police, especially in Rustenburg, Brits and Fochville, where car and truck jacking proliferates.

We are also mindful of the fact that our rural communities continue to lose their livestock, which is the backbone of their economy. While we have been successful in arresting a

number of syndicates, we will continue to intensify implementation of the Provincial Stock theft business plan.

Madam Speaker, I am also pleased to announce that we have been highly successful in all other general crimes, including bank robberies, cash in transit heists, ATM bombings and burglaries. Crimes against women and children will also remain on top of our agenda, and we will continue to provide support to the victims through our victim support programmes and other government programmes.

The implementation of the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, the maintenance strategy and the development of safety plans by municipalities will all complement other efforts to make our Province safe.

While the police do everything in their power to combat crime, we also need to continuously mobilise communities against crime. I would therefore like to thank the business sector for its involvement and plead with it to continue supporting the fight against crime.

We re-commit ourselves to taking the fight back to the criminals and win it. This, I must stress, will only be successful through the continued partnership between the police, community policing forums and the business community.

It is through such partnerships that our vision will continue to live on.

These partnerships must extend to our fight to make our roads safe for both drivers and pedestrians. Our Arrive Alive campaign during the festive season taught us much about interventions required to reduce road accidents and deaths. These include traffic control centres, weighbridges and roadblocks.

Women, the youth and people with disabilities

Madam Speaker, part of our mandate is to work towards the advancement of women and children, the eradication of all forms of gender discrimination, and the implementation of equality for everyone.

When we began our term we adopted the Integrated Provincial Gender Strategy and the Gender Matrix plan. The strategy has yielded some positive results towards the empowerment of women. In the Provincial public service alone, as of November 2008, 64% of our employees were women, compared to 59% in 1997. We currently have 106 senior women managers compared to 186 senior male managers. At the middle management level we have 382 women and 863 men. At the junior management level we have 3 890 women and 2 540 men.

We will continue empowering our women managers to ensure a 50-50 representation at all levels. Gender Focal Points have accordingly been established in 80% of our provincial departments.

Matters concerning the youth are dealt with through the Youth Commission. The Commission's mandate is to advocate and lobby for youth programmes across all government departments on policy matters through the Legislature and the Office of the Premier. The key elements of this mandate, as determined by the National Youth Service, include community service, the acquisition of skills and exit opportunities.

The focus of the Commission during the last 5 years has been on skills development, moral regeneration, health and education programmes. Under skills development we managed, inter alia, to equip young people with skills in carpentry, landscaping, construction and information technology. A total number of 410 young people were recruited and trained in this regard. Of these youth, 56 were absorbed into permanent jobs while 356 were engaged on a 15-month learnership contract, with 40 of them later permanently employed by the private sector.

One of the successes of the Moral Regeneration Programme among young people was a series of district youth summits on moral regeneration. These culminated in a provincial summit which served as a platform for young people in the province to talk about issues of responsible citizenship, patriotism and ethical consciousness. Without reservation young people committed themselves to work for a caring society and to take their responsibilities seriously.

On health and education the Commission has recruited and trained 450 Community Health Workers from various communities in the Province. This programme helped young people meet entry level requirements to be trained and employed as auxiliary nurses. We also trained 50 young people in computer skills under our e-learning programme. 160 unemployed graduate educators were recruited and trained as assistant teachers to provide administrative support to substantively employed educators. 349 young people were trained as ABET educators to help reduce the high illiteracy rate in the Province. 160 young people were also trained and are on site in schools to help refurbish and repair school desks.

Madam Speaker, the protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities remains high on our priority list. Our country has signed and ratified both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. As a Province we were part of the South African delegation to the U.N. First Conference of State Parties to the UNCRPD in November last year. This Conference deepened our understanding of the relationship between the global developmental agenda and the rights of people with disabilities. Our Office on the Status of Persons with Disabilities (OSDP) will continue to co-ordinate the disability program in the Province in a manner that ensures the implementation of the different articles of the UNCRPD.

The Provincial Disability Forum continues to function well as a platform of engagement and interaction between government and organizations of people with disabilities. We have successfully launched similar structures in the Bojanala and Dr Kenneth Kaunda Districts. We will cover the remaining districts before the end of this year. We will also begin the process of establishing the Provincial Disability Machinery, which is aimed at bringing all sectors together so that they can make a contribution to the disability agenda.

Madam Speaker, I need to however indicate that regarding employment equity for persons with disabilities, more is required from us. Of the target of 2% we currently stand at 0.12%. The Job-ACCESS provincial intervention strategy is being finalized to ensure that by the end of 2010 all our departments have met this target.

Land redistribution and restitution

Madam Speaker, between 1996 and 2008 the Provincial Land Reform Office transferred 285 000 hectares of land under the redistribution programme.

As at 31 December 1998, 1 219 land claims had been lodged. Of those, 96% have been processed, with 154 000 beneficiaries getting 304 000 hectares of land restored to them.

We remain committed to land redistribution and restitution, but the land price constitutes the greatest threat to the 30% target for land reform. Other challenges range from limited budget allocation, staff capacity and settlement support grants.

Conclusion

Our vision, however, lives on, Madam Speaker, and whatever happens, it shall be realised.

It shall be realised as we, mindful of the debt of service and development we continue owing our people, prioritise the five focus areas that define our plans moving forward, and including the 24 Apex priorities which define the macro governance of our country.

Emphasis and focus will be particularly placed on the following:

When the voting is completed on the 22nd of April we will expect the next legislature and the executive to build on the economic successes of the last 15 years.

We can expect that government will take all steps necessary to ensure the success of industrial policies which will lead to the creation of decent and sustainable jobs.

Government will further be expected to work towards achieving sustainable livelihoods.

Our children, particularly those in previously disadvantaged areas, must benefit from a renewal of our schooling and education systems. In this regard the work already embarked upon on increasing the number of early learning centres will be intensified.

All efforts will be made through aggressive prevention campaigns and increasing access to ARVs to drastically reduce the rate of HIV infections and AIDS.

All efforts will be made to upgrade and improve the health services at our public hospitals and clinics. In this regard we take pride in the large numbers of clinics we have built in the last 15 years.

Madam Speaker, I have earlier spoken about our Province being predominately rural. Government will continue to empower rural communities through, amongst others, improved rural farming thus ensuring food security in those areas.

As indicated earlier, we will also root out corruption and fight crime in every sphere of our lives, ensuring that we leave no space available for any criminal activities.

In a very real sense, Madam Speaker, all these are not part of our vision, but they ARE our vision of this Province even as we close our term.

In closing, Madam Speaker, we conclude our term at a time when our economy, both provincial and national, is stable. We cannot, however, escape some of the seismic movements of the world economy, but we dare not panic. We must stay the course, and continue living our vision of the 6.6% economic growth we require annually to continue making a dent on our unemployment and poverty figures. Let us not be derailed by the current economic instability of the world. As Rudyard Kipling says in his poem "If":

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you...*

*If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same...
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools;*

*...If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"*

*...If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!*

If, indeed, we heed the wisdom of that poem, we shall note that even as challenge and anxiety stare us in the face, the year 2009 offers us great hope and promise as we elect a new government, inaugurate a new President, host the Confederations Cup, and round off our preparations for the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

I thank you all.

