



the premier

Department of
the Premier
FREE STATE PROVINCE

2002 STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY PREMIER, MS I.W. DIREKO

14 February 2002

The hon Speaker,
hon Members of the Executive Council,
hon Members of the Legislature,
hon Members of National Parliament,
hon Permanent Delegates to the National Council of Provinces,
hon Mayors and Councillors,
Marena le Dikgosi (Traditional Leaders),
distinguished guests,
ladies and gentlemen.

Hon Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to wish hon Members of the Legislature and the hon Executive Members, and all distinguished guests a happy Valentines Day.

This being the year of the volunteer, for reconstruction and development, it is appropriate that we reflect on what it means. I will indicate that for me being a volunteer has been my life's story. The call for us to initiate *Letsema* resonates well with the majority of the people of this province.

It is a value, a work ethic we should embrace as new Free Staters. After all, this is how our people traditionally, engaging in the fight, to fight hunger and poverty, produce prosperity and care for the weak, vulnerable and sometimes visiting strangers. Our ancestors for once, will be proud that we have call on their value system that is time-tested. For me this call is about the work I did as a volunteer through the justice system, the courts, the prisons, the police, and with the community, to plead in mitigation of the sentences, rehabilitate offenders, reintegrate them into society. This volunteer work was driven by an understanding that "*Motho-ke-motho-ka-Batho-ba-bang*". (You are a person, because of others)

It is also for this reason that we call for humane resolution of conflict, especially in the farming communities. We commend strongly the work of volunteers who continue to seek harmonious relationships in these communities. We must root out any vestiges of racist conduct and inhumane behaviour that may still exist. We must do that as part of the celebration of the fifth year of our world-acclaimed Constitution that seek to restore the dignity of all, irrespective of their race, creed, class, or religion.

Our province has often been called the breadbasket of the country, as a result of the work that we produce on the farms. It is our obligation to recognise the negative consequences of bad race relations on the farms in a global community that has become sensitised to human rights.

Last year, I described a new Free Stater as "...someone who has a culture of caring, who is willing to face challenges, who can compete without fear, who is educated and learned,

disciplined, trustworthy and efficient". This new Free Stater's set of values should include hard work, perseverance, excellence, ethical conduct and a commitment to the creation of a better life for all.

In one of our many attempts to build the new Free State, the Provincial Government convened a Provincial Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances. The conference provided an opportunity for all men and women of goodwill in the Free State to come together and take a stand against racism, xenophobia and related intolerances. Given our historical background as Free Staters and South Africans, it was necessary to take such a stance in order to create prosperity and everlasting peace.

It becomes important therefore that we commit ourselves to the declaration signed by key stakeholders in the Provincial Conference on Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerances.

The provincial effort to implement the provisions of this declaration will ensure the achievement of the values of human dignity, non-racialism, and non-sexism, which are articulated in our country's Constitution. It will assist us to build the culture of inclusiveness, which our National Constitution seeks to promote.

I would like to assure all Free Staters that the Free State Provincial Government belongs to all of us. It is not acceptable that when the Provincial Government organises activities for the benefit of all citizens of the Free State, only black Free Staters attend. The participation of the groups we have is indicative of that fact.

I would like to call upon white citizens of the Free State to show more active support of government programmes. I would like you to join us in creating a non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic Free State Province. The Free State Province belongs to all who live in it, black and white.

It is therefore imperative that you become New Free Staters, who will live by the vision and values enshrined in our national Constitution. It is therefore imperative to exercise responsibilities expected of any decent citizen of the Free State. I want you to show a sense of moral outrage when a white person kills a black citizen, and drag a black corpse behind his bakkie. In the same way, I expect the black community to show a similar outrage when black youth rob, pillage, and plunder the property of white families. That is our tasks as the new Free Staters regardless of colour.

We will not tolerate it when white farmers humiliate and dehumanise black farm workers. By the same token, we condemn the killing of innocent white farmers and pledge to pursue the killers and ensure that justice is done, and is seen to be done. Building a non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic society was never going to be easy, and seven and half years of being in government are too short to accomplish the entire vision. However, a start has been made. Let us all dedicate ourselves to the implementation of the declaration of our Provincial and the United Nations Conference on Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances that was held in Durban. Let us commit ourselves to the founding principles of our Constitution. For these can only lighten the burden of building a new country and a new Free State.

As in the previous year, the levels of poverty in our Province still humiliates our people to the point that we are presumably one of the poorest provinces in the country, and the dignity of many of our countrymen and women has been eroded by the spate of joblessness and unacceptable levels of unemployment. The scourge of HIV/AIDS still ravages our motherland.

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

Motivated by the need to ensure and promote the well being of our people in the face of these hardships, you will recall that I committed the entire Executive Council of the Free State and myself to implementing the Provincial Strategic Plan for the financial year 2000/01. We set ourselves three priorities of:

- The provision of infrastructure and housing;
- Job Creation and Economic Growth; and
- Human Resource Development.

Despite the difficulties and challenges we experienced in the implementation of this plan, I am pleased to indicate that we have achieved the following, amongst others:

With regard to the provision of infrastructure and housing, we have established Multi-Purpose Community Centres in rural areas such as Namahadi in Thabo Mofutsanyane District, Sediti in Motheo District, as well as Botshabelo.

The portfolio of infrastructure that the Provincial Government has delivered in line with undertakings I made last year includes:

- A new pension shelter in Thusanong, and upgrading of Tshireletsong both in Mangaung in Motheo District;
- Clinics such as the MUCPP, which is a 24 hour clinic in Mangaung, and one built in Trompsburg in Xhariep District;
- Schools such as the Thuto-ke-Tsela school in Frankfort; Retshiditswe school in Villiers, and Yakhisizwe and Boitlamo schools in Parys in the Northern Free State;
- We re-gravelled roads in Dihlabeng in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District, and we are rehabilitating the Ficksburg/Clocolan road.

These projects, and others I have not mentioned, resulted in the creation of a minimum of 5 000 jobs for Free Staters.

We have upgraded holiday resorts and game reserves in the province to improve tourism. We have also completed the Smithfield nursery in the Xhariep District as part of the Provincial government's greening project.

The Provincial Government through Phakisa staged a Motorcycle Grand Prix for 2001 in which the province, the country and the continent were marketed, and which contributed to sport, tourism, and local economic development in the Goldfields area of the Free State.

We established jewellery hub zones with foreign investment of 120 million creating 2000 jobs.

We embarked on agricultural community programmes worth R3.4 million and which created 340 jobs. Our land distribution and agricultural development programme worth R10.3 million benefited 308 people.

The Provincial Government had eight local economic development projects worth R8, 7 million.

You will recall that in the Strategic Plan for the financial year 2000/01 we committed ourselves to increasing our provincial pass rate for Grade 12 to 50% by December 2000. In December 2000 our results were 52%, and in December 2001 we recorded a 59% pass rate. This indicates we have exceeded the target we have set ourselves in the financial year 2000/01; and we commit ourselves to do even better in the coming exams. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the MEC for Education, officials of the Department, Principals, educators, learners and parents for the hard work they have shown. However, I expect you to work even harder.

I am also happy to report that we have filled the Head of Department posts in all Departments except the Department of Agriculture. I am confident however; this post will be filled very soon.

We also established 24-hour Victim Support Centres for abused women and children in Petrusburg, and Koffiefontein in the Xhariep District. These assists our citizens with support, and counselling for women and children. These are inter-sectoral victim support centres that involve the Departments of Social Development, Health, Justice, non-governmental organisations and the South African Police Service.

The Department of Optometry was established in the Faculty of Health Sciences in collaboration with the University of the Free State. Two Senior lecturers at the level of Director were appointed from the 1st February 2002. About 29 students of whom 11 are black, were admitted. The Department of Health will provide bursaries mainly to students from disadvantaged communities.

Last year, I reported that the Department of Social Development has completed the registration of social security beneficiaries. The process led to the suspension of beneficiaries who failed to re-register. I am happy to report that 2825 legitimate beneficiaries have now been reinstated. A total payment of R9, 3 million, which was owed to them in arrears, has now been paid. This includes all backlogs in the processing of new applications during this period. We are now on track, and we have eliminated all backlogs because the Department of Social Development worked very hard.

We successfully hosted the national launch of the Indigenous Games in line with the spirit of the African Renaissance and revival of the traditions of the African people.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

In order to rise to the challenges posed by underdevelopment, poverty and HIV/AIDS our Provincial Government, as you know, has adopted an integrated approach to service delivery. Our pursuit of such an approach has culminated in the adoption by the Executive Council of the three-year Free State Development Plan. The vision of the Free State's Development Plan is:

“A unified Free State Province that fulfils the needs of all its people.”

Our mission is to work effectively with all stakeholders to serve the people of the Free State through:

- Enhancing economic development and job creation;
- Providing and facilitating sustainable infrastructure development;
- Investing in the development of the people of the province; and

- Ensuring a safe and secure environment.

We will do all of this by means of good and co-operative governance, and sustainable use of our resources and the environment.

The Free State Provincial Government is determined to implement the above vision and mission. Having noted the levels of poverty and unemployment, we are inspired by Stephen Sondheim's lyrics from "Sunday in the Park with George" when he says:

"A vision is just a vision if it is only in your head.
 If no one gets to hear it, it is as good as dead.
 It has to come to life; Bit by bit, putting it together... Piece by piece, only way to make
 a work of art.
 Every moment makes a contribution,
 Every little detail plays a part.
 Having just a vision is no solution
 Everything depends on execution,
 Putting it together, that is what counts.

(Quoted From Warren Bennis' Old Dogs, New Tricks: 2000, p.184)

Last year, the Executive Council continued to visit various towns in our province as part of the provincial government's commitment to public accountability. From these visits, and others that individual MECs and I had, as well as my monthly programme on *Radio Lesedi*, we have learned a lot about what counts. We specifically undertook these interactions with our people in the Free State because we know that, like Sondheim warns, our vision will remain just a vision if it is only in our heads, and if it is not shared with ordinary Free Staters. Because we understand that such a vision has to come to life, our Executive Council Clusters will focus on the following in this financial year:

- What we are going to do!
- Good Governance

Through our Good Governance Cluster, we will focus on:

- Improving our ability to deliver services to our customers by training frontline officials in customer care. We will also establish help lines to which our citizens will call to register their reaction to government services they are provided with. This initiative will seek to improve the interaction between government and citizens and make the spirit of the government's policy of *Batho Pele* more meaningful;
- We will improve communication between the Departments of the Provincial Government, and the national and local governments through the effective functioning of our Provincial-Local Government Forum;
- We will ensure proper coordination and compliance with the international agreements signed by the Free State Provincial Government and overseas countries. This will be with the view to ensure that our province benefits from the technical expertise and investments which arises as a consequence of these agreements;
- To ensure the successful implementation of the Free State Development Plan, we will manage government's development planning efforts in an integrated manner. This is crucial if we are to avoid unnecessary duplication and wastage of scarce resources;
- This cluster will also strive to improve the government's implementation capacity. Training and development will be the primary means by which government's

implementation capacity is improved. I am therefore very proud to announce that the Provincial Government has decided to establish the Free State Institute for Training and Development. This Institute will provide generic courses focussing on, amongst others, leadership and management, project management, information and communication technology, adult basic education and training, and financial management.

My office is currently working with the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) and the National Department of Labour to implement the Executive Council's decision to establish this Institute.

An interactive Communication and Management System called I-CAM, which was initiated, and will be launched by the Department of Health this month, will complement the institute. This system is the first of its type in the Public Service. It will be used for the training and development of personnel as well as for meetings. It will beam from Bloemfontein via satellite to 40 classrooms scattered in all the districts of our province.

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

Through our People Development cluster, our Department of Education will focus on Adult Basic Education and Training in order to enhance the skills and self-reliance of our people.

We will also improve access to and quality of formal education by reducing the number of under performing schools in the Free State. We will specifically focus on improving the level and quality of education in mathematics, science, and information technology.

To ensure the survival, development, care and protection of the vulnerable in our society, the Free State Provincial Government will implement service programmes targeting the vulnerable, elderly citizens and frail persons. R25, 8 million will be spent on residential care programmes to provide outreach programmes to support children and families in the communities. The local programme for children will be piloted in five local municipalities.

The Free State Government is concerned about the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The impact of the pandemic is felt in all sectors of government, business and indeed families. Government, in partnership with society and civil formations, is fighting the pandemic.

The newly established District Aids Council in partnership with the Free State Provincial Government, successfully hosted the World Aids Day celebrations held on the 1 December 2001. The theme was "Do you care enough to act – I care!". The Free State Provincial Government cares enough to act in partnership with others.

The Free State strategies are aimed at reducing the spread of HIV as well as caring for those with AIDS. These strategies are a holistic package and not the piecemeal approach advocated by others.

In this year of volunteerism, the Departments of Health and Social Development will train 1 000 volunteers for home based care and step-down facilities for AIDS patients. Home-based care will be established in all local municipalities and one step-down facility will be established per district Municipality.

The Free State Provincial Government will extend the present two Prevention-of-Mother-to-Child-Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV research sites by increasing the number of clinics per

site to fulfil the national criteria, and the conversion of District hospitals as approved by the Executive Council. The programme reached a significant number of women from July to December 2001. The Virginia site will now include Winburg, Theunissen and Verkeerdevlei in the Lejweleputswa District and the Frankfort site will now include Heilbron. More babies born of HIV positive women will benefit from this programme. The Department of Health will investigate the possibility of establishing one site per remaining district for consideration by the Executive Council.

The Free State Provincial Government will increase the cure rate of Tuberculosis to 70% by the end of the next financial year. We have one of the highest incidents of Tuberculosis in South Africa. The Directly Observed Treatment Strategy (DOTS) will be strengthened in partnership with the recruitment of volunteers called DOTS supporters. The Multidrug Resistance Tuberculosis Unit will be established at Moroka Hospital in the Motheo District during the new financial year.

In order to improve access to and quality of health services, our Department of Health will open two eye care centres, one at Kroonstad in the Northern Free State and the other one in Dihlabeng in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District. The purpose of these centres will be to reduce the cataract surgery backlog. One-thousand-and seven hundred and ninety (1790) cataract surgery operations were done last year to improve the sight of citizens of the Free State.

A new Psychiatry Unit to the value of R7, 9 million will be built at Manapo Hospital. The new unit will improve mental health services in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District.

The Department of Education will ensure the integration of sport and cultural activities at schools. School sport will be linked without of school sport for identification and continuous development of talent. The Free State Provincial Government will support the development of world-class performers in sport.

SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Through our Sustainable Infrastructure Cluster, we commit ourselves to overcoming backlogs in the provincial infrastructure. We will increase access roads for our communities in the coming financial year by building three roads in Sasolburg in the Northern Free State, Oppermansgronde in Xhariep, and Dihlabeng in Thabo Mofutsanyane District.

The Provincial Government will also increase the number of schools and classrooms in the province. We will build 12 schools, 143 classrooms, and in addition, 10 halls, which were not provided by the previous regime for black schools; 10 media centres, 10 laboratories and sports grounds will be provided particularly to those schools that performed well in their examinations.

Our Department of Local Government and Housing will improve access to portable water by installing 14 000 water points throughout the province. We will also increase housing units by building 12 000 new houses.

We will build two multi-purpose community centres in Trompsburg and Zastron in the Xhariep District, and we have started with the planning of 2 new hospitals. A new district hospital will be built in Trompsburg to cater for the road accidents on the N1 South of Bloemfontein. The Hospital in Ladybrand will be rebuilt in a more accessible and central location.

We will build two district offices in the Xhariep District and the Northern Free State to provide the infrastructure necessary for smooth governance.

We will promote labour intensive construction and maintenance by building the following community facilities:

- A Community Hall in Fauresmith;
- A crèche in Wepener;
- Storm Water Drainage in Koffiefontein;
- A Community Hall in Hertzogville;
- A crèche in Bultfontein;
- Storm water drainage in Jagersfontein;
- A bridge in Smithfield;
- An access road in Bethulie; and
- A Community Hall in Luckhoff.

In our attempt to remove some of the remaining vestiges of the past, we are going to bring an end to the bucket system. Our Departments of Public Works, Roads, and Transport, and Local Government and Housing, will work together with the various municipalities to investigate effective ways in which the bucket system can be done away with once and for all.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION

The Provincial Government has established the Premier's Economic Advisory Council, which will work together with the Economic Development and Job Creation cluster to develop the provincial economic development strategy. Such a strategy should assist us to promote the diversification of the provincial economy.

We will also, through our cluster, establish central business support infrastructure including a business database. We will implement effective livelihoods programmes in which a safety net is provided in the form of grants to the most vulnerable, and poor sectors of our communities. As we heard during the President's State of the Nation Address, we appreciate the increase in the payment of social grants. This will serve as an important tool in our endeavours to eradicate poverty.

Farming in the Free State represents an important area with regard to building our capacity to ensure food security for the province and the country, as well as improving the capacity of the province to export and penetrate markets that seem to be beyond our reach. One of the important prerequisites, however, is to transform this sector and ensure that as many black farmers as possible are developed to ensure and promote social equity in this area.

To this end, through our Department of Agriculture, we will initiate programmes amounting to R70 million to establish previously disadvantaged individuals as farmers through land reform, in partnership with the Department of Land Affairs, as well as through agricultural projects funded by the European Union.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Compared to the rest of the country, we continue to be a relatively safe province. However, the prevalence of crime and the safety of our communities remain the primary concerns of the Free State Provincial Government. In addition to our normal duties, our Department of Safety

and Security has set aside R3 million to rehabilitate gangsters in the province, and contribute to the reduction of the number of criminals in the province

The Provincial Government will also create a new disaster co-ordination centre, which will be sufficiently equipped to enable us to effectively manage disasters in the Province.

We intend strengthening our partnership with the Business Community and municipalities through extending the Closed Circuit Television Network, which has proved so useful in our fight against crime. We hope to extend this service in Motheo and Matjhabeng Districts in collaboration with those municipalities. We hope the CCT will be mend by volunteers who are not necessary policemen but who will relieve our police to do this work.

INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Presidential Node at Maluti-a-Phofung in Thabo Mofutsanyana is well underway. Construction, building and other work are taking place in several places. Bulk Water Supply, and the on-going housing project, for example, the Makwane Sports Stadium, the Basotho Cultural Village, Elizabeth Ross Hospital, and the Setsing Shopping Complex first phase is complete. Further progress will be reported on by the MECs during their budget speeches.

TRANSFORMATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Having taken stock of Local Government Transformation last year in the province as well as at the President's Co-ordinating Council, a programme of action is being elaborated tomorrow at the Local Government Minmec. The resolutions of the President's Co-ordinating Council are aimed at strengthening the third sphere of government. These resolutions include:

- Building stable institutional and administrative systems in local government;
- Deepening local democracy and accountability;
- Improving and accelerating service delivery and economic development; and
- Building financially viable local government.

We call upon all municipalities to ensure that they complete their integrated development plans.

URBAN RENEWAL

The state of our inner cities remains a matter of deep concern to the Provincial Government. In order to achieve the rehabilitation and renewal of our inner cities in the Free State, we will implement an urban renewal strategy in Mangaung in the Motheo District, Matjhabeng in the Lejweleputswa District, Sasolburg in the Northern Free State District and Bethlehem (Thabo Mofutsanyane) in consultation with the relevant municipalities.

IMPROVEMENT OF REVENUE COLLECTION

To do all the things we envisaged in the new financial year, we need money and one way to augment what we get from the Central Government is the improvement of revenue collection.

The Provincial Government managed to reverse the downward trend experienced in the past in the collection of its own revenue. This is clearly indicated by the drastic increase in collections during the past financial year. The amount of R216 million collected in 1999/2000, increased to R305 million in the 2000/2001 financial year. This increase represents a growth

of 70%. It is expected that this amount will continue to grow in the current financial year to approximately R320 million.

Although the traditional sources of provincial revenue, such as motor vehicle licenses, patient fees, betting and gambling, as well as interest on investments still remains the major sources of revenue, all these items indicate an increase in the amount collected compared to previous financial years. These increases are mainly due to effective and efficient collection of revenue by the Provincial Government.

We continue to have a positive bank balance, which resulted in the opportunity to expand the investment portfolio of the province thereby generating more revenue for the province.

May I in conclusion, say, the achievements mentioned in this speech, were made possible through the partnership and team spirit that exists in the Free State. The plans and priorities reflected in this will only be achieved if we remain united and allow ourselves to obtain strength from this unity. If, like Sondheim said, having just a vision is no solution, then such a vision can only succeed if we put it together with the co-operation of all those in business, youth formations, the religious community, non-governmental and community based organisations, political parties, and all other interest groups.

Hon Speaker, I now present the Development Plan, which will shape the future of the Free State Province in the next three (3) years. Together, let us make this vision come alive.

I thank you.
