



2006 STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY PREMIER F.B. MARSHOFF

[10 February 2006]

Hon Speaker and hon Deputy Speaker of the Free State Legislature,
hon leaders of our political parties and hon Members,
the Mayor of Mangaung, the leadership of SALGA, all Mayors and Executive Mayors,
our hon Traditional Leaders,
senior managers of the Free State Provincial Government, representatives of the private
sector and public entities, all our social partners, ladies and gentlemen, dear comrades and
friends.

It is indeed an honour to address the Third Session of the opening of the Legislature exactly
50 years after the brave women of our movement marched to the Union Building to protest
against the former apartheid regime. The 50th anniversary of National Women's Day
epitomizes the gallant role our women played in the struggle for democracy.

Some of these heroines who took part in this historic march are present in this hon House
today, and we are humbled by their presence. I want to identify some of them and call them
by name. As part of our tribute in the Province we are proud to announce that this
Government provided houses to some of those women who participated in that historic march,
and they are now proud beneficiaries of houses in Winburg and Theunissen.

We have done this and will continue to do it to remind us that there can never be genuine
liberation of a nation without the complete emancipation of women. The vision of the
Democratic Government centrally integrates the genuine emancipation of women as a
fundamental goal; hence ours continues to be about the creation of a fully-fledged non-racial,
non-sexist, democratic and prosperous society.

We spare no energy in ensuring that we continue to strengthen our efforts in improving the lot
of the quality of life of women in the Province, by increasing their participation in all aspects of
our socio-economic life, including the labour market, social policy, governance, sport, arts and
culture.

Comrades and friends, we are also privileged to address the Legislature of our people on the
solemn occasion of the 30th anniversary of National Youth Day. We salute the youth for the
heroic role they played in fighting for national liberation. Their continued active participation in
the unfolding process of democratisation, reconstruction and development, should equally be
encouraged.

We are proud to announce that the Provincial Government, with the assistance of the private
sector and the financial institutions, has employed more than 2 000 young people who were
part of the unemployed graduates database compiled by the Free State Youth Commission.
This database feeds into the national database, which the hon President spoke about last
week. The database is a product of extensive research and consultation by the Commission.
It is therefore reliable and encompasses the cross section of skills and intellectual capital

found across our Province. More needs to be done. However, we are confident that this development is a major affront in our efforts to reduce unemployment and eradicate poverty among young people of our Province. For this reason we agree with former President Nelson Mandela in his observation that:

The youth of our country are the valued possession of the nation. Without them there can be no future. Their needs are immense and urgent.

This year is also an historic one, because we as a nation will celebrate the 10th anniversary of our democratic and progressive Constitution (108/1996). As we celebrate the coming of age of our Constitution, we should call upon our people to rise in defence of their human rights and dignity to ensure that we will never again regress to a point where racial discrimination is institutionalised. We would like to take this opportunity to condemn the alleged racial crimes that have been taking place in our Province in the strongest possible terms. There is no place for racists and bigots in a non-racial Free State Province.

May I remind everyone that as a ruling party we have just concluded “The year of popular mobilisation to advance the vision of the Freedom Charter”. We are confident that we have worked hard to lead the perspective of fundamental social transformation and consolidated our resources and the collective will of our people to move forward with more determination.

The third democratic local government elections

It is now five years since the current dispensation of local government was introduced in December 2000. Therefore, together with our people, we must take the opportunity presented by the holding of the third local government elections, to report to our people and to assess the progress we have made in building a developmental system of local government.

The Government’s main activities during this second decade of freedom are geared towards halving unemployment and poverty. To this extent the whole Government, including local government, will have to play an activist and interventionist role in the economy to steer growth and development. To drive local economic development, we have to appraise the capacity we have and still need on local government level.

The third democratic local government elections must help to strengthen the popular participatory character of our democracy in many ways. Our leaders in local government should, among others, make time to allow our people to talk while they listen. Council structures, which make popular participation possible, should be strengthened. We need to build our municipalities into real democratic organs of self-government.

The Free State Growth and Development Strategy: Our cardinal roadmap

We wish to reiterate from the onset that, in the context of our country and our Province, we are pursuing development from the conviction that ours is a developmental activist state with a clear responsibility to tackle poverty, unemployment and economic inequalities.

We have a mandate to expand economic opportunities for our people, to fight social deprivation and to provide public facilities for the poor. We have a duty to grow the economy and restructure productive forces, as well as redefining production relations with emphasis on gender equality.

All of these are urgent matters, as the National Cabinet *Lekgotla* of June 2004 cautions:

The advances made in the first decade by far supersede the weaknesses. Yet, if all indicators were to continue along the same trajectory, especially in respect of the dynamic of economic exclusion and inclusion, we could soon reach a point where the negative overwhelms the positive...

Clearly, this requires our Government to be focused and decisive. There must be a willingness to weigh trade-offs and to make choices.

In the last State of the Province Address, we announced that a process of drafting the Free State Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (FSGDS) was in motion. We are delighted that as we speak today, the FSGDS is a living document incorporating a broad development policy framework representing a watershed for development in the Province. It outlines basic Provincial priorities and is also a guiding tool to carry over our plans and vision towards 2014.

Since the FSGDP was launched on the 20th May 2005, we moved swiftly to ensure all other policy and planning platforms are aligned to the FSGDP as the main policy framework. This includes budget allocations over the MTEF (Medium Term Expenditure Framework) and baseline periods. In this instance we have increased allocations to infrastructure, a point we will elaborate on later. We were humbled by the enthusiastic participation of our social partners and the optimism with which the Growth and Development Strategy was received by the people of our Province.

It is this enthusiasm and optimism that will inspire all of us in Government to pursue our responsibilities with a sense of urgency and robustness. We are already in the process of finalizing our monitoring and evaluation tools, so that we can be measured in terms of the realistic targets which we have set for ourselves. The 2014-vision remains our futuristic framework for Growth and Development, but we should break it down into annual business plans which need to be well resourced for maximum impact.

Good governance and effective administration

During the review period, we have taken decisive actions on a number of focused areas. Thereby we ensure that the confluence of possibilities in our country and Province will be of such a nature that our Province has:

- Faster economic growth and job creation;
- Faster and more efficient provision of quality services;
- Increased social cohesion; and
- The reduction of the paradigm of exclusion, prevalent amongst sections of our society.

This means that in terms of Government planning, there should be much more integration and synergy amongst all spheres of Government.

The alignment summit held in October 2005 managed to align all the municipal IDPs (Integrated Development Plan) to the objectives of Free State Growth and Development Strategy. The Provincial Spatial Development Plan was also aligned to the National Spatial Development Perspective. As a result we can now execute our development strategies with full confidence, knowing that we are investing our resources where they are most needed and where their developmental spin-offs will be sustainable. During the next financial year we will

finally consolidate the alignment process and make it a normal way of governance moving forward.

Keeping our sense of urgency and the need to have effective co-ordination to successfully attain our growth and developmental objectives, we have established four Cabinet clusters which speak directly to the following objectives:

- Economic growth, development and employment;
- Justice and crime prevention;
- Social and human development; and
- Effective governance and administration.

During the new financial year, it is our intention to capacitate our municipalities to develop and implement similar cluster arrangements, so that our system of co-operative governance can function optimally. It will create a condition for all spheres of Government to work closely to improve their capacity to implement their programmes, including the development of realistic local development plans.

Keeping with the prescripts of the Intergovernmental Relations Act (13/2005), we have created structures to enhance co-operative governance amongst all levels of Government in the Province. They include:

1. The Premier's Coordinating Council; PCC is attended by, amongst others, the Premier, mayors and MECs. The PCC meets quarterly and focuses on the strategic co-ordination of Government functions at both Provincial, District and Local Government level.
2. The Technical PCC, which is a forum of the Director General, Municipal Managers and SALGA.

We are very passionate about Local Government, because of our deep-seated conviction that it is the point of direct contact with local people. We are mindful of the challenges which have confronted us during the past year, but we are more inspired to consolidate our partnership with our people to make local government a true repository of our people's aspirations. In our endeavour to continuously support and strengthen our capacity at that level, we launched Project Consolidate as an intervention aimed at:

- Improving the provision of basic services to communities;
- Enhancing local economic development;
- Improving financial viability of municipalities, especially as a result of challenges brought about by the Municipal Finance Management Act (56/2003);
- Consolidating the transformation of municipalities; and
- Entrenching the culture of good governance.

We are very satisfied with the progress we have made thus far. In order to effectively respond to the identified local government challenges, we are going to give attention to critical skills necessary for effective service delivery like:

- Programme management;
- Financial management;
- Engineering;
- Local economic development; and
- Public participation skills.

Community Development Workers (CDWs)

The recruitment and intake of community development workers went very well. To date 94 CDWs have successfully completed their training programme and will be inaugurated early this year. The second generation of 198 CDW learners were recruited and commenced their orientation programme in November last year. The impact of these specialised cadres of the public services will accelerate service delivery capacity and the public participation efforts of our Government.

We are going to continue with our mass outreach programmes through our Government's *Imbizos* and *Exco Meets the People* campaigns. In the past year, we covered every corner of our Province and interacted with the masses of our people who spoke out on instances of poor service delivery. They equally commended us where we were doing well. During this year's outreach programme, we will involve national departments, parastatals and willing partners from the private sector, so that together, we present a united front of our urgent mandate of fighting poverty and undermining underdevelopment.

We will make more use of our multi purpose community centres (MPCCs) to make sure that, despite our visits to communities, our people are able to have access to critical information wherever they are. We are pleased to announce that we are officially going to launch three fully fledged MPCCs in Trompsburg, Zastron and Tseki. We will also hand over centres in Winburg and Hertzogville, following the successful conclusion of discussions between the two communities and ABSA. We want to thank ABSA for their generous support and assistance in this regard.

Our long-term goal is that each municipality should at least have one MPCC as part of our commitment to ensure integrated service delivery and taking services to the people. In this regard we want to call upon all municipalities to prioritise the establishment of MPCCs as an integral aspect of their IDP review processes.

Alongside the community development workers and the multi purpose community centres, are the ward committees, which are the cornerstones of our democracy. Our ward committees are not functioning at optimal strength. We take this opportunity to urge community members to take full advantage of these democratic participation institutions at their disposal. Our democracy can only get stronger if all of us appreciate it. We, the people, are the principal drivers of our transformation. Our active participation in strengthening our democracy is a key aspect in this regard.

Our key priority for the new financial year is the effective utilisation of information technology for developmental purposes. We have made remarkable progress with our E-Government project. Among our targets are that by 2013, all learners, educators and managers will be fully computer literate. To support the E-Government project, we are going to ensure that sufficient funds are available to establish and maintain connectivity, equipment, service points and skills development. We will also create the necessary co-ordination capacity to ensure collaboration of E-projects at local and provincial government levels.

Traditional Leaders

The institution of traditional leadership is vital for a transformed system of local governance like ours. Traditional Leaders have a critical role to play in governance at all levels, but most importantly at local government level. Therefore, together with the House of Traditional Leaders in the Free State, we facilitated a conference held under the theme: Transformation agent for rural, economic and social development.

The main objective of this conference was to support Traditional Leaders to effectively participate in all governance matters. It is encouraging to note that our Traditional Leaders are already active in other sectoral departmental committees like:

- HIV&AIDS;
- Poverty Relief;
- Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Plan Committees; and
- The African Peer Review Mechanism Provincial Governing Council.

As Government we will always endeavour to build our capacity so that we never fail in our responsibility towards our people. The Free State Training and Development Institute will continue to play a critical role in building our public servants' capacity in line with our work skills plan. The Free State Training Institute will collaborate with institutions of higher education in the Province to strategically reposition it for the continual generation of necessary intellectual base for our Provincial Government.

Our Provincial Human Resource Development Strategy is geared towards the attainment of our growth and development objectives, as well as responding to the structural problem of the skills mismatch in our Provincial economy. The year 2006 will see a much more robust and aggressive approach towards the promotion of intermediate to high-level technical and vocational skills. Our youth should be encouraged to take full advantage of FET (Further Education and Training) colleges, which are repositioned to respond to the skills problems of our country.

Over the past five years, Government has already invested R160 million in our Bursary Programme. We challenge the private sector to match us rand for rand, or even to better our investment in the skills development programmes of our youth.

Youth development can never be treated outside the integrated socio-economic transformation and development of our Province.

As we pay tribute to the heroism of our youth, we are going to ensure that Cabinet adopts the Integrated Youth Development Strategy this year and that it is aligned to the Free State Growth and Development Strategy. This will happen in June as a fitting recognition of the 30th anniversary of the Soweto uprising. Furthermore, as one of our interventions to youth development, my office will establish a co-ordinating unit that will oversee the rollout of a comprehensive National Youth Service Programme.

However, the role that the private sector plays in the production of critical skills amongst our youth has not been very encouraging. Our plea is that private sector companies should make bursaries and other resources available to complement our own Government Bursary Scheme as well as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

We would like to acknowledge and show our appreciation for the contributions made by some private sector companies in this regard and urge them to do more.

We appeal to companies to also adopt youth owned enterprises and initiate voluntary training and mentoring programmes. Equally, we appeal to companies to do more in absorbing more young people into learnership programmes.

Social and human development: A better life for all

Poverty eradication is one of the major priorities of this ANC-led Government. To this extent we are implementing a number of social programmes that will provide a social safety net for the most vulnerable in society.

We regard these challenges as our policy objectives that we have to tackle through the Social and Human Development Cluster. I will deal briefly with these issues in terms of what has been achieved so far and what still needs to be done.

Safety net and livelihood

The major challenge remaining is the fragmented nature of funding for poverty alleviation projects. An integration of funding is obviously required in this regard.

We have made major strides with regard to the assistance we provide to needy households through the Food Emergency Scheme and the assistance we provide to emerging farmers through the comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme. Good progress has also been made in the provision of social grants to those who qualify.

In order to deal with challenges facing rural children, transport for farm school learners is operational in four districts and will also be implemented in Xhariep during this financial year. A total of 2 170 learners, who walked distances of between 15 to 21 kilometres to school, are benefiting from this.

The Hostel Accommodation Programme for learners from non-viable farm schools is supporting this initiative. During the 2005/2006 financial year a total of 1 011 learners have been accommodated in seven such hostels. Four more hostels will become operational during this financial year.

During the 2006/2007 financial year “no fee schools” will be introduced in the Free State. Presentations are at an advanced stage and we will provide more detail on this matter.

The Provincial Government remains committed to extend free basic services to those who qualify. In this regard, 2 638 domestic households, 140 farm workers' houses and 40 schools will benefit from the Eskom Electrification Programme. The free basic electricity rollout to 16 municipalities was completed by the end of August 2005 and about 77 000 families benefited from this programme. Municipalities that are yet to implement the extension of free water provision to rural and needy communities will do so during this financial year.

Comprehensive health care services

As the ANC-led Government we are mindful of the importance of health in the lives of our people. We have accelerated the provision of free basic health services to our people at all levels.

A Rural Health Plan was developed and implemented to mobilise resources in rural areas. Currently, primary health care services to farm communities are rendered by a total of 104 mobile clinics. A total of 233 fixed clinics render primary health care services in all Free State towns.

A comprehensive plan on care, treatment and management of HIV/AIDS has been implemented and will be strengthened.

The number of ARV-sites has increased to nine and they are spread over the five districts. The number of patients that have accessed the programme is more than 11 000 and 4 229 of these patients are from the Department of Health. From our social partners 279 patients are placed on the ARV programme. During the next financial year two additional treatment sites will be launched in Lejweleputswa and Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipalities.

The programme is available in all five districts and covers 95% of all towns. A total of 350 volunteers are involved in the provision of VCCT (*voluntary confidential counselling and testing*) services in the Free State. During the next financial year the programme will be rolled out to 100% of health facilities.

A regional office for the Khomanani Social Mobilisation Programme was established in Bloemfontein with sub-offices in Qwaqwa and Thaba-Nchu/Botshabelo.

The National TB-strategy, a focused intervention plan which is targeted, will be implemented. Fezile Dabi district, that has been declared a high priority area, will be the starting point. This will be a community based project with the involvement of all structures in TB-control.

The Free State School of Nursing has increased their new intake of students from 160 in 2005 to 260 in 2006. This brings the total number of students at the Free State School of Nursing to 1 010.

Housing and human settlement

It is our view that housing provision in the Province is moving at a pace. Last year alone, we managed to hand over 9 523 housing units to beneficiaries. In our endeavour to improve the livelihood of the rural poor in our Province, 2 000 houses were allocated in Maluti-a-Phofung and 1 000 houses in Thaba Nchu.

In December 2005, an additional 7 900 subsidies were allocated to qualifying developers in accordance with the grading adopted by the Provincial Government. The deadline for completion and transfer of these houses to beneficiaries is 31 March 2006.

In recognition of the 16 Days of No Violence against Women and Children, 16 units were allocated to women headed households. We want to express our gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of this project, especially the contribution by First National Bank, the contractors and the communities.

During this financial year, a further 12 000 housing units will be built, thus giving effect to our commitment of providing adequate shelter to those in need.

Over a number of years we have all been haunted by unfinished housing projects throughout the Province. We are happy to report that on 30 September 2005, we launched a turn around strategy for all incomplete RDP- houses in the Province. In the Xhariep district, a total of 153 units have already been completed and are ready for hand over to beneficiaries. The next phase of the project will be launched in Lejweleputswa district within a fortnight and we hope to complete this project in all the districts by the end of the year.

Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Plan (ISRDP)

The ISRDP is a ten-year programme to transform rural South Africa into sustainable and economically viable communities.

For the year under review, we have achieved improved co-ordination and integration of projects between government departments, state owned enterprises, the private sector and affected municipalities. This has resulted in improved service delivery with regard to social infrastructure to the communities.

Agriculture is at the core of rural development. Hence, we have invested massively in infrastructure support to emerging farmers through initiatives like the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP), land care, the Provincial Infrastructure Grant (PIG) and other forms of assistance.

We will continue to support emerging farmers with mechanization in the form of implements and tractors, seeds and fertilizers, livestock and animal vaccine.

Economic growth, investment and job creation: A season of hope

National Government has set broad economic targets of increasing economic growth to above 6% by 2010 and halving unemployment and poverty by 2014. It is the Provincial Government's responsibility to develop policies and strategies that will enable us to contribute towards what President Mbeki described as the elaboration of specific interventions that will ensure that Asgi-SA (Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa) succeeds in its purposes, which include the reduction of unemployment levels.

The Millennium Development Declaration, through the 2014-vision, identifies the following economic growth focussed developmental targets and objectives:

- Reduction of unemployment through creation of new jobs, inculcation of skills and provision of support services to SMMEs (small, medium and micro enterprises); and
- Reduction of unemployment through stimulation of economic development.

For our Province this implies a sustained economic growth of between 6% and 7% per annum up to 2014. This will be achieved through investment in infrastructure development projects, empowerment of SMMEs and skills development. This entails incorporation of programmes that will ensure transfer of skills to all categories of labour to realise accelerated economic growth and employment in the Province.

The objectives identified in our Growth and Development Strategy will enable us to achieve the ambitious targets we have set ourselves.

The hosting of the Provincial Investment Conference in September 2005 laid a platform for increased investment opportunities in the Province. It also resulted in the repositioning of the Free State Development Corporation to enable it to fulfil its developmental mandate.

Working together with our social partners, the Provincial Government is now better positioned to provide financial and non-financial support to SMMEs and will focus on providing incentives at local government level to enhance SMMEs. The repositioned Free State Development Corporation has been mandated to develop appropriate funding models in an effort to address the issues raised during the conference. We take this opportunity to congratulate all

distinguished individuals who have been appointed in several of our boards and we hope they will give their all in the service of the Province.

In the last State of the Province Address, we explained the approach we will follow in addressing socio-economic challenges. We indicated that the Economic, Employment and Investment Cluster would complete an extensive study on the growth potential of towns in the Province by the end of this financial year. We also indicated that this cluster will be responsible for the establishment of a chemical incubator by the end of November 2005.

The realisation of these goals depended largely on the full implementation and use of both the Free State Growth and Development Strategy and the Provincial Spatial Development Framework. The cluster reported in the recent *Exco Lekgotla* that the effective use of the Spatial Development Framework still remains a challenge to be addressed.

The lack of a coherent investment strategy has hampered direct investment into provincial economy for a long time. To this end, we are happy to announce the establishment of an Investment Promotion Agency through an amendment to the existing Investment Promotion Act (18/1998). The role of the agency is to promote the Province as a premier investment destination. A few bilateral agreements on trade and investment have already been explored in conjunction with our missions abroad, the Department of Trade and Industry and Foreign Affairs.

Tourism has been identified as one of the key economic growth drivers of our Province. As promised in the last State of the Province Address, the Tourism Authority has now been established and the Tourism Investment Strategy has been completed.

The declaration of the Vredefort Dome as a World Heritage Site was indeed a defining moment for our tourism industry, as well for the management of our bio-diversity. It has improved our attractiveness as a trade and investment destination. We will be preparing for a joint meeting between the Free State and the North West Provinces led by the Premiers, as part of the process of developing an integrated management plan for the Vredefort Dome.

Following our infrastructure summit we have produced an infrastructure blueprint for the Province, which places greater emphasis on co-ordination and massification (sic) in order to grow the economy and create jobs. In order to meet this objective, we have increased our infrastructure expenditure from 4% to 9% during this financial year with a further growth to 10% during the MTEF cycle.

The Free State is proud of its contribution to the Asgi-SA Programme, as spearheaded by the Deputy President. As we have indicated, the Province has committed itself to growing the economy by 6% in line with the national objectives. The logistical hub in Harrismith, which will be linked to the cargo hub at the Johannesburg International Airport, has been identified as one of Asgi-SA's flagship projects. Another flagship project is the production of bio-fuel from maize, which has already been approved by Cabinet and is ready for implementation. Both these projects will contribute significantly to the attainment of the objectives of halving unemployment by 2014 and achieving 6% economic growth.

In ensuring that the Free State SMMEs gain access to markets, we have facilitated their participation in platforms like:

- Export Africa Exhibition;
- SAITEX (South Africa International Trade Exhibition);

- ITG (International Trade Group) Exhibition; and
- One of a Kind Exhibition.

To further strengthen and co-ordinate our efforts aimed at supporting SMMEs in the Province, the cluster has convened a series of workshops. With these workshops they aim to determine the impact procurement policies and practices of Government departments and their public entities have on SMMEs.

The Expanded Public Works Programme will remain one of our critical interventions in stimulating economic growth and reducing unemployment levels. Already 10 034 jobs have been created in this programme throughout the Province. We intend to improve on this figure through better co-ordination and monitoring.

By the end of this year, all the economic developmental initiatives we have mentioned so far would have created an excess of 50 000 jobs.

We have to indicate that these interventions do not reflect the totality of our projected economic performance, but that their impact will have many effects on other growth sectors of our economy. We have a reason to believe that yesterday was another Province, but that tomorrow represents a brighter future.

A safe and secure environment, a fundamental human right for all

Hon Speaker and hon Members, crime has the potential to undermine the efforts of the Government and the community to maximize the social, economic and political development of any society. Therefore, for our Province to realise commendable economic growth and development, safety and security should be prioritised. We should make a concerted effort to reduce the number of violent crimes, crimes against women, children and the vulnerable in society. We need to intensify our efforts to eradicate corruption and fraud in both the public and private sectors.

As a responsive and caring Government we listened and empathised with our people, for example:

- When they said communities and municipalities must participate much more effectively in community safety issues;
- When they indicated that substance abuse was a worrisome youth engagement;
- When they refused to remain oblivious to the plight of children who are in conflict with the law;
- When they expressed their anger against rape and other forms of sexual offences;
- When they stated that victims of crime needed effective empowerment;
- When they complained about shortage of police stations; and
- When they raised concerns about corruption.

To this extent we rolled out a comprehensive strategic response which, amongst others, has ensured that we:

- Embarked on a campaign to popularize the Service Charter for Victims of Crime within the Province;
- Convened an anti-rape summit where an awareness and empowerment programme was adopted; and

- Established Victim Support Centres in Tshepong, Moroka Hospital, Botshabelo Hospital and established Kopano Victim Support Centre in Welkom.

Our resolve to end all forms of violence perpetrated against women and children remains unchanged. We will continuously make life difficult for perpetrators of abuse and violence and make sure that they have no place in our communities.

Equally, our commitment to protect and promote the rights of the disabled, the elders and children will continue to constitute our day to day crusade in building a Province where all our people are equal.

Therefore, let us together make optimal use of February as National Safety and Security Month. We can use this month to assist the police by reporting criminal activities in our communities as and when we become aware of it.

Access to quality education

One of the flagship projects identified by the Free State Growth and Development Strategy is the enhancement of a knowledge-based economy. As a Province, we have taken drastic measures to ensure that access to education for poorer learners is provided.

Access to quality formal education will be improved in 2006/2007 through the Provincial Strategy by improving learning, teaching and the overall Grade 12 pass rate and exemptions. Even though our Grade 12 results have slightly dropped, we intend to have an overall improvement of the quality of our education focussing on all the grades. This will mean improving our position as the third highest in the country in terms of the overall results, and the second highest in terms of quality. We will also give attention to the recapitalisation of the Further Education and Training (FET) sector in line with our Skills Development Strategy.

We have increased allocations to Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN) and Early Childhood Development (ECD) for pre-Grade R. The National School Nutrition Programme and Learning Support Project will also be intensified.

Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture:

Hon guests, ladies and gentlemen, we are proud to announce that Vodacom Park was recently announced as one of the 10 stadiums that will host the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Preparations for the successful hosting of this prestigious event are already under way. Additional budgetary allocations have been made towards road, transport and stadium infrastructure. We are collaborating with other stakeholders like the hospitality industry and ACASA (Association for Communication and Advertising of South Africa) to enhance our readiness to host the event.

The Free State sporting fraternity is doing us all proud. We take this opportunity to formally congratulate Bloemfontein Celtics and Free State Stars for gaining promotion to the Elite PSL (Premier Soccer League). We also congratulate the Cheetahs for winning the Currie Cup, Celtics for scooping the SAA Supa 8 trophy and the Free State Eagles for winning the Standard Bank Trophy two years in a row. We wish the Cheetahs the best of luck in their match against the Blue Bulls tonight.

This achievement augurs well for our preparations of the 2006 Inter-Provincial Sports Tournament and the 2007 SA Games, which we will be hosting.

MACUFE (Mangaung Cultural Festival) continues to grow annually and it is firmly consolidating its position as one of the biggest arts and cultural eisteddfods in the country. We are looking into ways of improving it even more so that the economic benefits are much more tangible to especially benefit the SMMEs.

In conclusion, I wish to inform this hon House that the Executive Council will unveil a detailed programme of action for 2006, which will elaborate our comprehensive programmes regarding:

- Accelerated economic growth and development;
- Job creation through massive infrastructure investment;
- A comprehensive Skills Development Programme especially focusing on youth and women;
- Improved service delivery; and
- Capacity and financial viability of municipalities.

We therefore call on all our people, our social partners, the parastatals and the private sector to join our forward march to the consolidation of our freedom and democracy. We have to unlock the creativity and energy of collaboration and partnership, because when all is said and done, it is our collective actions that will make the difference between a life of human possibility or despair, clean or contaminated water, a shack or a real dwelling, the freedom that comes with economic activity and a true escape from unemployment and poverty, or a life with no possibility at all.

We will continue to expand the frontiers of international solidarity and friendship as we make friends with other countries. This partnership is underpinned by our endeavour of positioning our Province as the ultimate investment and tourism destination. Among such initiatives is the generous support we receive from the Flemish Government. Through their financial and other assistance we have established four SMME support centres in Mangaung, Botshabelo, Thaba-Nchu and Welkom.

Every international trip we undertake and every international friend we host, reinforce our principles of an equitable world order, while at the same time it opens enormous possibilities for our Province and her people.

Equally, we will continue to mobilise our people to take the processes of the African Peer Review Mechanism, currently guided by our Provincial Governing Council, seriously. This process must help us inculcate a sense of loyalty and pride in being Africans before we are South Africans. We are Africans and we owe our being and heritage to Africa.

As we conclude, we wish to salute the people of our Province for their resilience and their determination to make their Province a true repository of the ideals of the Freedom Charter.

Today we want to assure them that their contribution in shaping the strategic direction of this Province is immeasurable. We understand their frustration when things sometimes do not go according to plan, but we are greatly inspired by their refusal to avail themselves as instruments of political opportunists hell bent on derailing us from our national agenda.

Similarly, we want to salute the great sons and daughters of this Province who, because of their untimely death, cannot join us today. In the memory of Noby Ngombane, Selebano

Matlhape, Bazooka Mabaso and other great revolutionaries who passed on, we will make sure that the precedence they and their forebears have set will be honoured. Their dedication to service, struggle and sacrifice should become an inspiration to our cadres to be united in pursuit of a people's contract to create jobs and fight poverty.

Our people expect nothing but the qualitative improvement of their lives borne out of their struggle. To this extent we concur with our President during the State of the Nation Address that:

Clearly the masses of our people are convinced that our country has entered into its age of hope. They believe that the country they love, their only homeland, will not disappoint their expectations of an accelerated advance towards the day when they will be liberated from the suffocating tentacles of the legacy of colonialism and apartheid.

The task we have set ourselves last year at this time constitutes the basis for our assessment and evaluation. In terms of our own self-assessment we are delighted to report that we have attained 82% of all the objectives we have set for ourselves in 2005. This score card is available on our website www.fspg.gov.za and we invite members of the public to do their own evaluation. While we are proud of our achievements, we are never the less mindful that a lot more still needs to be done.

For attaining this high success rate I want to thank the Executive Council, hon Speaker and Members of the hon House, our social partners, senior management in Government led by the Director General and all the dedicated cadres of the public service who are also inspired, like us, by the belief that everyday, every week and every month we are doing a little bit more to strengthen the People's Contract to create work and fight poverty.

We have confidence in our success, because today we are no longer infantile dwarfs unable to think for ourselves or inanimate fruit ready for picking by whoever has sufficient strength. We are a force capable of uniting our people in action to realise the ideals of the Freedom Charter in our lifetime!

We call on all our people to go out and vote. It is their right and it is their responsibility.

Let the work begin and let the good times roll!
