

Wednesday, 26 February 2025]

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MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2025

1. The House met at 18:30.
2. [18:30] The Speaker took the Chair and allowed the opportunity for a musical introduction by Zolani Mahola and Avron Halevi. The Beaufort West residents namely, Thembisa Mtana, Soqoba Magele, Yonela Xhalabile and Ayabonga Khedama rendered the National Anthem of the Republic of South Africa.
3. The Speaker read the prayer.
4. [18:37] The Speaker made a general announcement regarding the sitting of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament and indicated that at this sitting the Standing Rules of the House applies, further, in compliance with the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act 2004, the entire hall in Beaufort West, including all visitor seating areas, passages and ablution facilities, were regarded as the precincts of the Provincial Parliament.
5. [18:40] The Speaker made a general announcement regarding the logistical arrangements for the sitting taking place in Beaufort West.
6. [18:41] The Speaker welcomed all guest to the Premier's State of the Province Address.
7. [18:42] The Premier delivered his State of the Province Address, as follows:

The PREMIER: Thank you, hon Speaker. Hon Deputy Speaker, Cabinet Ministers, hon Leader of the Opposition, hon members of this Provincial Parliament. Members of the Consular Corps who have travelled all this way, thank you very much for being here. Executive Mayors and Deputy Mayors, Municipal Managers, servants of our people, special guests, people of the Western Cape.

En die spesiale mense van die Karoo en Beaufort-Wes.

Good evening, *molweni, goeienaand!*

And may I also begin with a special message to Zolani Mahola and Aaron Halevi and of course your local stars, your backup singers. Thank you so much for that song, for those words, *Step Up, a Call to Action* for every single one of us in this province. In actual fact, when I was listening to you, I thought about a step up for everyone in our country and on our continent.

Leadership is not just about politicians or administrators. It is about every single one of us, about every single citizen, and calling on all of us to step up at this time or in these uncertain times, I think about Neighbourhood Watches and CPFs and I think about organisations like Revive Knysna who gets out there and just gets ahead and does things, cleans up the town. I think about the citizens of Theewaterskloof who get stuck in and help the President's Special Investigation Unit to bring justice and lead to clean governance in a town. I think about the nurses and the teachers. I think about the governing body members at our schools. I think about every single person across our province that really does step up but also I think about your absolutely unbelievable message calling on all of us to step up because if ever there was an uncertain time in our world, it is now.

Speaker, mag ek ook net vir jou baie dankie sê, dankie dat u nou ingestem het dat ons Parlement hier in die Karoo die openingsessie kan hou. Baie, baie dankie daarvoor. En weet u dat 'n opening van 'n Parlement wat weggaan van waar ons sit daar in die middestad van Kaapstad, ek is seker beteken baie vir mense, veral hier in die Karoo, and you know when I look at what has been happening over the last few days, when I see Ministers out there busy handing out bicycles, and checks for sports fields or spades in the ground to look at infrastructure investment, or visiting our clinics, or visiting spaces where we spend money to put water management systems in place. When I think about the launching of a new energetic GBV Programme here in the Karoo, knowing that GBV in our country and in our region and in our province is such a horrendous scourge that affects so many people.

When I see the Standing Committees out there, Opposition, that means Parliament is looking at what is happening on the ground, so that Government can also be held to account when things perhaps aren't working. When we even have protest action, Mr Leader of the Opposition, and I can come and fetch a document from you, that we can take back into government and look at it, and as I said today, correspond back to you within 14 days.

Agb Speaker, baie, baie dankie dat julle in die Parlement ingestem het dat almal van ons kan hier wees in die Karoo, in Beaufort-Wes. Ek wil ook sê vir die Burgemeester en die Burgemeesters, die Burgemeester van die dorp en die streek, baie dankie vir die weer. Want die Speaker het eintlik vir ons 'n brief gestuur om te sê jy hoef nie 'n das te dra nie, jy kan eintlik aantrek wat gemaklik kan wees want ons het almal verwag 'n Februarie in die Karoo, 40 grade, so Burgemeesters, baie dankie vir die weer, 'n heerlike dag hier in Beaufort-Wes. Maar nogtans, ek het die das gelos en ek sien van ons het, en Speaker, ek weet nie, dit is jou huis – nie myne nie – maar miskien kan ek sê vir al die amptenary, as julle meer gemaklik sal voel, vat julle dasse af.

We got that rule from the Speaker even before today's sitting.

But, Speaker, as I stand here today, I first reflect on the last term, and thinking about that last term, it was a term of difficulties, a term of crisis. It was a term that we had to step up, deal with things as we went through, I think of water shortages and droughts, I think of the

pandemic, I think of floods and reactions to floods, I think of financial difficult times in the last term. I think of this time last year talking about those fire-fighters, those men and women that were out across our province fighting those massive blazes because we are in February, and it has not rained yet, and as I stand here today exactly the same thing is happening. Our fire-fighters are out there in the City of Cape Town, in the Winelands, in Drakenstein, across our province fighting blaze after blaze, across our mountain ranges, fighting fires, that make sure it does not affect our citizens, and I want to say to them thank you very much. I know that as we speak right now seven helicopters are on duty bombing fires in the City of Cape Town alone. A whole lot more helicopters, Minister Bredell, thank you very much to you and your team, busy bombing fires as I speak here tonight. But thinking back at that time, we adapted, we innovated, and we responded to the matters at hand. I think also, and Mr Yedwa, thank you very much for being here from Eskom, I think about the time that we lost all those power lines, and local Government, Provincial Government, National Government, Eskom, everybody got together and saved 40 000 residents from months of no electricity, managed to step in, innovate, find ways to fix that problem, and as we do in this province, we step up, and so again the message for this year is “Step up.”

Speaker, each of the moments and many more forced us to find new solutions, and today I am proud to stand here to say that we have. We have partnered with municipalities in the private sector to add another 5 700 megawatts of affordable reliable renewable energy to our grid by 2035. I will say a bit more about that later.

We stood together to expand our law enforcement efforts by deploying more law enforcement and traffic officers and K9 units to make our communities safer. We have built schools in less than 100 days and invested in infrastructure across our province that enables us to grow our economy and more jobs.

Dit is wat die Wes-Kaap definieer. Ons steek altyd ons hand op, maar nou vra ek dat ons almal moet meer inspring en meer doen. We have to step up more than ever before.

How we respond, both as leaders and as residents, matters. The way we engage with each other matters. Listening with compassion and responding with humanity matters. Taking personal responsibility, whether it is picking up litter or tackling a big policy issue or big challenge, matters. Holding spaces for difficult conversations without inflaming divisions matters.

In times like these it can be tempting to take the easy route, to play politics instead of solving the world’s wicked problems, but that is not who we are. We are not afraid to work hard, make the tough calls, because we know that when we focus on one clear goal we will achieve the extraordinary.

Hon Speaker, this province is built on robust dialogue and listening. As I make this speech we are in very uncertain times. No clarity on our budget. We have gone through processes since last year already. Processes in MTECs, budget in budget policy. We have gone through processes as Cabinet, and at minute 99 all of those allocation letters actually mean nothing. So we are in very uncertain times.

International markets are in distress and elections are resulting in massive policy shifts across the world. Aid is being cut and free trade is being replaced by trade barriers and tariffs, but while I think of those negatives we also have major opportunities.

In 2025 our country plays host to the G20, the first time on the African continent. We also play host to the many ancillary events that come with the G20.

I think of the B20. On Monday and Tuesday I had the honour of being part of those global CEOs from around the world, those Sherpas from Brazil, our own Sherpas here in this process in South Africa for the African continent, and the Sherpas who are going to take over the G20 from the US, sitting in those B20 meetings, understanding that the world is in turmoil and talking about how business is going to find its way in this new uncertain environment.

As we sit here today our Finance Ministers from the G20 are all busy gathering, talking about the new environment that the world finds itself in. Our own very Finance Minister sits here this evening, but I am sure she is probably going to leave early tomorrow morning to play her part as it is our opportunity to be part of these global gatherings.

Next week the G20 Ministers will be meeting on fighting corruption and looking at good governance mechanisms. It will be my honour, because it is here in this province, to welcome those Ministers, to talk about these very things that are challenging us here in South Africa. If we cannot get a handle on corruption, we cannot make sure that every cent that is supposed to go to the citizens of our province gets to work where it has to be.

The Western Cape this year will also play host to our Regional Leaders Summit. These are the sister and partner regions from around the world where every two years we gather. This year we all gather here in the Western Cape just before the G20 takes place at the end of the year.

We will be also launching our first and inaugural Western Cape Investment Summit. Thank you, hon Minister, to you and your team for putting that together. These will be the key platforms for us to amplify our voice and ensure that the principles of constitutionalism, rule of law and the respect for human rights are protected.

The global order is in turmoil and we will stand for those key principles and against the attempts to reshape the world in a paradigm of "might is right". It seems that the very foundations of democracy are at risk, and we must make sure that we stand for what is right. Speaker this province has built key relationships with a myriad of international partners.

I just think of our 30-year partnership and relationship with the State of Bavaria and the help that that brings us, the partnership that it brings us and how it makes us a better province. Together our partners will keep holding the centre, keep doing the right thing.

Our singular focus for the next five years is clear. We will do everything we can to help businesses drive economic growth so that they can create more jobs and so that our residents can get those jobs.

Hon Speaker, this commitment is encapsulated in our Provincial Strategic Plan 2025-2030, and it is aligned to the national Medium-Term Development Plan which will guide our work over the next term. Each one of the hon members will get this plan today, but what I would like to say is to those leaders of parties in our Province, thank you. Thank you for those that came to Beaufort West when we came last year and table both the National Plan with our national colleagues and the Provincial Plan from our own administration and engaging in this plan to make sure that we are building a proper plan for the next five years, and then the next

25 years for the citizens of our province.

Hon Speaker, more people can find a job in this province than anywhere else in our country. For the last half of 2024 our employment rate was below 20% and remains so. The Western Cape now leads South Africa by so many of these indicators. We have South Africa's highest job absorption rate of 55,2%. We have the highest labour force participation rate of 68,7%.

Hon Speaker, when the last quarter jobs numbers came out, this province was responsible for another 62 000 jobs. That is 62 000 jobs out of a total of 132 000 jobs created in our country, nearly half of all the jobs in South Africa.

Hon Speaker, these are not just numbers, they represent real people, residents who are now part of our economy, earning an income, securing a future for themselves and their families. This is the story of a province that is stepping up, but our work, Hon Speaker, is far from done.

Unemployment at 19,6% is still horrifyingly high. Only one in five job seekers is still unable to find work in our province, and we have to change that. We recognise the critical need that social grants play for the vulnerable, but I want us to rather celebrate when people progress off a social grant and into a job. A social grant is a safety net, a protection, and we should not be coming out year after year saying we have now gone to so many more million people in our country on social grants. We should be celebrating this is how many people have come off a social grant into a job. That is why we all have to step up. That enables them to also step up for themselves.

We also know that programs like Expanded Public Works help our residents to get the critical step up the ladder. That opportunity to get some experience, to earn some money, to start to build a way of work and step up.

Last week the Western Cape Government hosted a community information session here at KwaMandlenkosi here in Beaufort West, and, hon Minister, thank you very much for doing that. I saw again yesterday the kind of projects in our infrastructure spend where those individuals get at least a two-month opportunity of R4 500 a month. That makes a massive difference, but to those people of Beaufort West wat daai kans kry, gebruik daai kans. Gebruik daai kans om te leer, gebruik daai kans om jou CV te bou, gebruik daai kans om in te kom in die toekoms van 'n voltydse werk. That is actually the province that we need to build.

A job is more than just financial security. It gives you purpose and it gives you dignity. As I always say, nothing stops a bullet like a job, nothing puts food on your table like a job and nothing, nothing gives you dignity like a job.

Hon Speaker, GDP per capita in 2023 was lower than it was in 2012. Can I say that again? In 2023 our GDP per capita was lower than it was in 2012.

That means that South Africans are not getting richer, South Africans are getting poorer, and that is why we have to get strong economic growth, because that's the foundation of job creation.

Hon Speaker, between 2019 and 2023 the national economy grew by an average of just 0,3%. When GDP growth is way lower than population growth, than the inflation rate and continues to be so, and we have in this province increased migration on top of that population growth,

we go backwards, and that is why it is so important that in our country we get the focus right to grow our economy, to create the jobs we need so desperately.

Dink net in hierdie provinsie as ons ekonomie kan net met 1% groei, en dan die jaar daarna met 2%. Dink aan 5% groei en die verskil wat dit sal maak. Hoeveel meer mense sal die waardigheid ervaar wat saam met 'n werk gepaard gaan. That really makes a difference to our citizens, but, hon Speaker, South Africa is charting a new path through our Government of National Unity.

We emerged from the 2024 election a new country. The GNU has given South Africa a reason to feel hopeful again. This follows years and years of that decline that I have just spoken about.

Hope, you can feel it. I can see the Leader of the Opposition nodding. I know that at a national level we have a different agreement to what we have here in the province, but that is why we all have to step up and play our roles and build our country. The GNU is not perfect, we acknowledge this, but I believe the center will hold and that the GNU partners, no matter their policies and ideologies, have one thing in common, putting our residents first so that they can see our country succeed. This beautiful country called South Africa.

Here in the Western Cape and in South Africa we are often consumed by all that is wrong, but I was recently invited to participate in the Munich Security Conference, and what struck me was that while the North was consumed by tariff increases, by increasing military spending, by wars, by cuts in critical aid, by building walls and borders and division, it was interesting, even at that space climate change seems to have fallen off the table. They are all in a panic mode and that pressure, that pressure when I sat there was unbelievable, and thinking about where we live here on the opposite side of the world, it really made me think that our GNU and the challenges that we face are much easier to overcome. We can actually get these right if we all stand together and do the right thing. Build that hope, create the optimism.

I sat there was unbelievable, and thinking about where we live here on the opposite side of the world, it really made me think that our GNU and the challenges that we face are much easier to overcome. We can actually get these right if we all stand together and do the right thing. Build that hope, create the optimism.

This is what the GNU adds in our country and in this province we will work with our National Government in every way that we can to make sure that we do exactly that: Build South Africa.

Hon Speaker, in a world where people are seeking to split us, to split us and them, I celebrate this give and take that we have achieved. Two recent practical examples stand out, and I want to mention them to you here tonight.

Just last week we had a meeting in the City of Cape Town, something that we have been disagreeing about for quite a long time, and that is the District Development Model and our very own model, our model of cooperation amongst our districts.

You know that we sat in the City of Cape Town with Minister Hlabisa and his team, with myself, Minister Bredell and our provincial team, with the Mayor and his team, and we listened to each other and we listened to our different viewpoints ...

The PREMIER: ...and we found ways that said we have to compromise; we have got to find a new way around this. We cannot end up in court on this. That is not the way to go. And in the interests of this newfound hope in our country, we have agreed to go away, and we have given ourselves sixty days to come up with a solution. Much better than going to court. And those administrations have already met, they have already met and the message I got back from our administrators that sit in those meetings saying very positive discussions are taking place.

Hon Speaker, we might not have a tabled National Budget right now, but you know, as political parties stand together and say, 'no ways can we see a VAT increase for our citizens.' You know, our citizens, as I have said, are getting poorer. We cannot put tax increases in place, even though we have seen that decline in GDP growth and we need to fund Education and teachers, we need to fund Health and nurses.

I do not see us not finding a solution on that budget and going back to the drawing board as a bad thing. That is actually a GNU coalition government in action. Going back to the table saying we have to now find a solution and there are going to be those tough choices that we have to make. We are going to have to make compromises, but I look forward to this process over the next two weeks so that we can actually end up with a budget that will give us clarity on the way forward, but also our country clarity. I see that as part of how this GNU is going to find our way over the next few years.

While the GNU has begun the difficult task of righting the wrongs of previous administrations, we are grappling with the consequences now. The next few years are going to be very difficult for our country as we work to change South Africa's trajectory. We know that if South Africa succeeds, the Western Cape succeeds and vice versa.

I say that about Gauteng as well. I really need Gauteng to succeed. Gauteng is actually the engine room of South Africa's economy. We have to play a part here in the Western Cape, but so do every single province and we will play our part in the GNU and we will play our part here in the Western Cape.

Indien ons ernstig daaroor is om meer werksgeleentede te skep, moet ons onthou om druk op te sit vir volhoubare ekonomiese groei.

Why, hon Speaker, is this collaboration key? Through our partnerships with the GNU and operations like Operation Vulindlela, we will work to remove barriers to investment, cut red tape, and unlock the economic potential that enables businesses to grow and employ more people. And it is exciting to see the Vulindlela teams coming, engaging with the DG and our teams in our boardrooms, looking at ways to find these solutions.

A critical part of Operation Vulindlela must be to dramatically improve the performance of the Port of Cape Town and developing other ports at Saldanha and Mossel Bay. Of course, do not forget other ports like airports. Our airport is at capacity, and we have to see the investments now going into that airport, the new private airport, and even our smaller airports in our smaller towns across this province.

The TAD group from the Elgin region. This is a group comprising of more than 50 farms or agricultural businesses, highlighted the estimated cost of inefficiencies in the Port of Cape Town, to the province's pear and apple industry. Nearly R1-billion a year, is what the inefficiencies cost our economy. Just imagine if we can turn that around. It then turns to

exponential positive growth. You know, that translates into a loss of R26 000 per hectare of farmland.

A farmer who cannot get a product, a container load of product from somewhere in our province out of the port and now has to send it to Kouga or one of our other ports, the minimum charge is another R75 000 on that container. That means we become uncompetitive in the global market, and we lose exponentially. That is why it is so critical that we get this right.

We are facilitating the establishment of a task team comprising of multiple stakeholders, among them Wesgro, Transnet National Ports Authorities, our departments and this is to develop solutions to operational challenges in and around the Port of Cape Town. We have already had a meeting with Minister Creecy to facilitate this and she has come back with actions that she will action now to make sure that we actually get private sector operators to operate efficiently, like ports operate every single day around the world.

We cautiously welcome the progress being made. The port achieved a milestone late last year by handling the longest vessel ever to call at the container terminal. This vessel was more than 348 metres long. Three and a half rugby fields' long and those of you who saw it, it was almost a rugby field wide. An unbelievable vessel: MSC Lines. Those are the kind of vessels that we need to have quick turnaround, load them with our product and get them into our markets.

If we act swiftly with purpose, we can dramatically increase economic growth nationally to over 3% if our ports operate more efficiently.

Like we invest in the movement of freight and logistics we must also invest in the mobility of our residents, goods as well. In Mobility Month, last October, I caught a train with hon Minister Sileku, and we travelled from Bellville to Cape Town. Tens of thousands of people rely on trains daily to get to work and school and to healthcare.

We are currently working with PRASA to support the ongoing restoration of rail as the backbone for the transport of thousands of people in the City of Cape Town. We used to have 600 000 people per day catching a train. Now, our average is around 80 000. We have got a long way to go, but there seems to be a will. We still believe we have got a devolution of rail management, but we are working together to find a solution because out here in the Karoo, I promise you, julle het nie daardie verkeer wat hulle het in die stad. Dit raak erg. But, hon Speaker, it is also clear on Mobility that we have a lot more to do.

In December 2024, we celebrated 10 years of the GoGeorge bus service. I think back to the humble beginnings of 2014 where we had twelve buses and three routes. This vital transport lifeline has grown. We now have 133 buses servicing 33 routes of more than 460 kilometres and thousands of George residents rely on this service every single day. Thank you, hon Minister.

In October last year, we launched a new GoGeorge bus service linking Thembalethu with the George Industrial Area. I see now that those weekly passenger trips are nearing 21 000. That is unbelievable in a region that is fast growing in our province. When you put Transport and Mobility solutions in the middle, it just enables the economy to grow even faster.

The Western Cape is proving that when the right policies and infrastructure are in place, the

right investments follow, and jobs get created. Hon Speaker, in my office I have a map of the world, and it hangs the right way up. Most maps of the world, specifically in the north, they hang them the wrong way around because we are actually here in Africa at the top of the world. The Western Cape and South Africa were at the top of the world if you hang the map the right way up. That speaks to me every single day about our positioning in the world.

I spoke to you about how I felt when I was in the middle of global political change when I was in Munich two weeks ago, a week and a half ago, listening to those speeches of outgoing Chancellors in Germany, from Chinese leaders, from Ukrainian leaders, from American leaders. J D Vance's speech and how that went down amongst the citizens of Europe. I was sitting right there and as I said earlier, it was amazing to come back here, walk into my office and see that map, and understand where we live. If we fix some of these problems, we become the destination in the world. The importance of how we position ourselves in the world is critical during these times of indecisiveness and, as I said, tariff wars and thinking of war.

But getting back to this place at the top of the world and looking at our track records, we have in the last few years attracted 296 Foreign Direct Investment projects and that value of R171-billion was added to our economy. Cape Town and Stellenbosch are among the top cities in our country and in Africa for Foreign Direct Investment.

Between 2021 and 2023, we recorded 35 direct investments from Europe alone. That was to the value of R7,37-billion. One of South Africa's biggest cement companies at the moment, is constructing a new R3-billion plant right here in this province. Why? Because there is demand for more cement, hon Minister. It is for those roads and those bridges and those schools and those hospitals.

Our Red Tape Reduction team has so far achieved a saving of over R2,4-billion for businesses. We have over 300 000 SMMEs, Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises in our province and these are the businesses that drive our economy and these are the businesses that drive employment. These are the businesses that grow jobs faster than the big businesses.

Our SMME Booster Fund has enabled 1 185 small businesses creating over 1 000 direct jobs and sustaining more than 5 000 more indirect jobs. Our 'Getting YOU to Work' voucher system where jobseekers get a free voucher for a number of routes on our Golden Arrow busses to go and look for a job, to go to an interview.

More than 150 employers have now partnered with us and more than 2 300 jobseekers have registered for vouchers, and roughly 50% of surveyed users have found employment. That is amazing, 50% actually got a job through that programme and getting to that interview. Over 90% of those on the programme have reported that it was absolutely beneficial to them. We know that they did not have to go and borrow money from the food kitty to get a taxi or a bus to go to that interview or go and borrow money from Granny and then, you still had to pay it back. That bus trip is a massive step up.

With over 240 000 people employed in the agriculture sector in the Western Cape, its potential for further job growth is undeniable. We are responsible, hon Minister, as you keep on saying, for 55% of South Africa's agricultural exports and growing.

That is why we must do even more to grow even more, create more economic opportunities for this critical industry. Over the past several years the Western Cape's agri-processing

exports to the rest of Africa increased from 35% to 37%. Africa is a key partner in our agri-exports. It has got to be. The relative share of primary agriculture and agri-processing to the Americas increased from 6% to 9% and 7% to 10% respectively. Over the past year, we have made significant progress in supporting our agricultural sector and rural communities. Among our achievements: 35 rural projects completed creating 1 417 job opportunities and rehabilitating 31 471 hectares of agricultural land. Direct support to 13 red meat producers, two grain producers, and 19 black commercial farmers. Big farmers. Assistance for small farmers, subsistence farmers, and food security initiatives have helped 3 930 households establish food gardens.

Funding for the Lower Olifants River Water Users Association to maintain 268 kilometres of concrete-lined canals that support approximately 840 farms. I am also so happy that the Clanwilliam Project, that dam project, is now well on its way and the wall increase going up very nicely. I have personally been there and seen the concrete being thrown. I have seen the space created for the hydro plant that is going to be connected to it and we know that that is going to create another 9 000 hectares of potential agricultural possibility for growth and jobs.

Investing R25-million to modernise the Provincial Veterinary Laboratory and there again, hon Minister, not only vet services to this province. You give vet services to this country and to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa and we will keep on doing that.

In the past financial year alone, our Veterinary Export Certification office issued 15 203 export certificates confirming that animals and animal products from this province meet international standards.

Hon Speaker, our efforts to further enable tourism to grow more jobs are paying off.

Tourism is a critical economic driver. The World Economic Forum estimates that for every 30 new tourists that arrive, one new job is created. We have, therefore, set a target of 1 million additional tourists to come to our region. That will create 33 000 more jobs over the next few years.

The number of arrivals at Cape Town International Airport in December 2024 soared to their highest ever in 12 years! In December, 160 537 international arrivals went through our airport. We passed the 10 million mark in that very same airport. That is why I say we are at capacity and now we need infrastructure investment to enlarge it.

This is largely due to the Cape Air Access initiative which we know has been running for quite a few years but has seriously paid off dividends. Seven new airlines through seven new routes are touching down in the Western Cape with 1 million inbound seats.

On Saturday night, and I see the CG, thank you very much for being here. The Chinese Consul General and I joined a few of our colleagues and our National Minister of Tourism, and our National Minister of Home Affairs, and that specifically because of our new Trusted Tour Operator Scheme where tour operators in China and soon in India, will make it so much easier to get a visa to come and visit us. That will exponentially grow our economy just by changing one piece of regulation. That is how easy it is to do sometimes.

And we really thank Leon Schreiber for doing that. It is making a massive difference. So, CG, the challenge is for you and I and, of course, the challenge for the Airlift team as I really

look forward to that direct flight out of Shanghai all the way into Cape Town. So, that is next thing we have got to work on.

Hon Speaker, the cruise-line industry, just as the airline industry, is also growing in leaps and bounds. Just the passenger vessels and crew generated R1,5 billion in expenditure, supporting 1 965 jobs across various sectors.

Ons wil egter aanhou met hierdie fondasies wat ons gelê het as 'n hefboom te gebruik, moet ons seker wees dat ons 'n arbeidsmag het wat toegerus is om hierdie geleentheid aan te gryp. Ons moet aanhou bou, ons moet aanhou seker maak da tons mense hierdie geleentheid kan kry en gebruik.

Die sukses van ons provinsie begin in ons klaskamers. The success actually of our province begins in our classrooms.

Hon Speaker, am I sounding a bit gravely...Speaker, we are educating our future workforce. Our matric class of 2024 excelled with a pass rate of 86.6%, and 5.1% increase over the previous year. That is phenomenal. Each Grade 12 learner, their families, communities and schools contributed to this achievement through their dedication and hard work. They stepped up. Baie dankie.

The province's bachelors pass rate, which is a crucial indicator of the quality of matric passes, has also increased by 5,6% to 47,8%.

We are incredibly proud that our Province and Matrics achieved the top Mathematics and Physical Science pass rates again this year, with a Mathematics pass rate of 78%, and Physical Science pass rate of 79,4%. Our candidates achieved the highest number of subject distinctions to date, with 11 699 candidates achieving a total of – I will say it again, 11 699 candidates, achieving a total of 27 948 distinctions. [Interjections.] We have also an amazing pass rate for learners with Special Education Needs, our LSEN schools, at 91%, and the highest bachelors pass rate in the country for LSEN learners at 63.3%, and once again, South Africa's top Matric learner comes from this Province, and so, I would like to say to Rayyan Ebrahim from Pinelands High School, congratulations, well done, thank you very much.

We are especially proud of the learners and teachers who, despite their circumstances, steadily improve their results across this Province. Minister, Joe Slovo Secondary School in Khayelitsha is one such institution. This school scored a 99,3% Matric Pass rate, up from 87,2% the previous year, their largest pass rate since the National Senior Certificate began in 2008. [Applause.]

But they are not alone. There are many more from across our Province. Spine Road High School in Mitchell's Plain, a pass rate of 100% and a bachelor's pass rate of 91,8%. Mondale High School in Mitchell's Plain, 99,2% pass rate and a 81% bachelor's pass rate. Usasazo Secondary School in Khayelitsha, 99,1% pass rate. COSAT, Khayelitsha, a pass rate of 98,3%. South Peninsula High School, Diep River; Bernadino Heights Secondary in Kraaifontein, Rylands High School in Gatesville; Chris Hani Secondary in Khayelitsha; Kairos Secondary School, Heidelberg; Hector Peterson in Wallacedene; and Uxolo Secondary School in Khayelitsha, all with Pass rates in the high 90's. Unbelievable and well done to every single one of those teachers, principals, governing bodies.

Maar ons is hier in die Karoo. Ek wil sê vir Sentraal Hoërskool hier in Beaufort-Wes, 95,5%,

baie geluk. [Applous] Bastiaanse Sekondêre Skool, 86,9%. Laingsburg met 82,7% en Swartberg Hoërskool in Prins Albert met 97.1%. Maar die boodskap vir daai skole is net soos Spine Road, net soos Spine Road, julle kan dit ook doen. Net soos Joe Slovo, julle kan dit ook doen. Ek sien uit vir volgende jaar vir 100% in elkeen van ons skole hier in die Karoo.

So thank you very much for every single one of you who are preparing our learners to become part of a thriving growing workforce in this Province and in this country and across the world. Our efforts to further improve the quality of our future workforce are being acknowledged. The World Bank Education Sector Analysis Report released last September has singled out initiatives such as the #BackOnTrack and Rapid School Build programmes as examples of the Western Cape Education Department's ability to be agile and creative in overcoming some of our wicked problems.

15 450 Grade 4 and 7 learners from 223 primary schools will attend Saturday classes this year as part of the #BackOnTrack initiative. These classes which have already begun will focus on mathematics and languages. 8 000 Grade 12 learners will receive academic support as they prepare for their matric exams this year. This will include Saturday classes and revision camps during autumn, winter and spring school holidays. Our teachers will also receive professional development support through the #BackOnTrack programme. In person training will be provided to 2 483 Grade 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 teachers, with primary focus on Mathematics and Languages.

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Additionally, online training will be available to all teachers for Grade 8 Languages and a variety of Grade 10 and 12 subjects. These sessions were all well attended last year, and these sessions were attracting up to 540 teachers. I look forward to that number growing and enabling more and more teachers so that our schools can keep on getting better and better, and more and more excellent results.

Speaker, the Department's annual systemic test results in 2024 confirmed that good progress is being made in reversing the learning losses of COVID-19. The #BackOnTrack initiative is the only initiative in the country of its kind, and the Province is also the only Province in the country that conducts annual systemic Mathematics and Language for learners in Grades 3, 6 and 9. The pass rates for Grade 9 Mathematics and Grade 3 Languages are now higher than they were in 2019.

A University of Stellenbosch study also confirms that #BackOnTrack has demonstrated a significant success in mitigating learner losses caused by the pandemic. The study found that the programme achieved subject-specific recovery of an equivalent of up to 205 school days' worth of learning, and that gains were most pronounced in Afrikaans- and isiXhosa-speaking learners who attended extra #BackOnTrack classes.

I sat in on one of these classes myself last year and was thrilled to see the excitement of learners being in school on a Saturday. That I was not expecting, and of course our teachers as well, who give of their time to be there on Saturday. Hon Speaker, we are investing in our youth in other ways too, and thereby also building a workforce for tomorrow.

Ons toewyding aan ons Provinsie se jeug begin en eindig nie net in die klaskamer nie. Ons belê in en ondersteun die arbeidsmag van die toekoms – ons verseker dat jong mense die vaardigheid, kennis en geleentede kry wat hulle nodig het om hul hande op te steek en om te

floreer.

While our youth unemployment rate is more than 10 percentage points lower than any other province in our country, we have got to keep pushing this down, because that still is unacceptably too high. That is why we are working with partners to create pathways into jobs, entrepreneurship, and further education. Our Experiential Learning Programme has helped over 12 000 young people gain skills in fields ranging from artisanal trades to clothing and textiles, to business process outsourcing and hospitality.

This year, 417 matriculants will get their first work experience through the PAY Intern Programme in our Government. The MOD Programme will expand to 500 locations, reaching now 200 000 learners annually, and 1 500 work opportunities will be created through our partnership with Northlink College, helping TVET students gain practical experience in coaching and recreation. We could not achieve these results without our private sector partners and NGO partners. Fancourt Hotel has taken over 60 YeBoneers for training. Lepco is creating logistics entrepreneurship opportunities for 10 young people. Dotsure and Old Mutual are building a pipeline into the insurance industry, while hundreds of YeBoneer alumni are now studying teaching and early childhood development. That is something that really stands out for me, a matriculants that gets an opportunity through one of these programs and when you engage them they say to you directly, “I have now decided what I want to do and I want to go back and further my studies because I want to get involved in treasury, or I want to get involved in an NGO, or I want to become a teacher”, and that is the real added value of these programmes. Hon Speaker, 40 000 children have been supported to develop a love of reading, thanks to the YeBoneers increasing library literacy hours. 6 000 caregivers have been empowered to help children with literacy and life skills. The Community Art Centres Network (CACNET) has grown from 12 to 52 centres, providing safe spaces for youth to express themselves and to tackle social issues. elves and to tackle social issues.

The Chrysalis Academy, a Legacy of Empowerment – as the Chrysalis Academy celebrates 25 years of transforming lives, we are reminded of the power of resilience. Many of our graduates, along with our YeBoneers, are proof that when faced with adversity, hard work and determination leads to success. Through all of these initiatives, we are instilling a culture of excellence. We are teaching our young people to work hard, to aim high and never give up, just as this government does every single day, and while on Chrysalis, I would like to use this opportunity to specifically thank Dr Lucille Meyer who heads up that institution. She will be going on retirement, but for years and years and years she has made such an impact on so many young people in this Province. Lucille, thank you, thank you, thank you!

Chrysalis, I would like to use this opportunity to specifically thank Dr Lucille Meyer who heads up that institution. She will be going on retirement, but for years and years and years she has made such an impact on so many young people in this Province. Lucille, thank you, thank you, thank you!

Hon Speaker, for the Western Cape to thrive economically we must support our residents when they need it most and ensure that they are healthy and are able to take advantage of these opportunities, whether they be in the classroom, on the sports field or in the job market. That is why we are investing all we can, despite our constraints, in our health and social services.

Daar is te veel huishoudings in die Wes-Kaap wat voedselonsekerheid in die gesig staar. Leerders kan nie in 'n klaskamer konsentreer as hulle honger is nie. Belemmerde groei en

ontwikkeling is 'n ernstige probleem. This is stunting, so many of our kids are stunted and our study has shown more and more in our province because of what I spoke about, how we are getting poorer and not richer in our country. This has massive consequences, en as ons nie by ons kinders staan daar nie, then those children will not have an opportunity into the future.

Do you know that if we do not fix that at that level, stunting could lead to the cost of those households of R357 billion by 2040. That is an unbelievable number, but this province has stood up and we have created a Cabinet Level Committee on food security and nutrition, which draws its resources from multiple departments to lead and coordinate efforts to reduce food insecurity, improve nutrition and support families and specifically focus on that wicked number in stunting.

NGOs, hon Speaker, are also under severe pressure during these economic times. NGOs are among those hardest hit and even as their role in supporting our most vulnerable residents remain critical. This is why – and thank you, hon Minister, you have stepped up, and along with the lessons and support of the Health Foundation, who have done such an amazing job in raising funds in our healthcare space over the last years, you have partnered with them and you have created the Cape Care Fund to specifically look at how we can raise much needed funds to support the NGO sector that is under such pressure when our economy is failing. Our businesses do not have the extra money that they would normally put through their CSI money into these NGO programs. It is really tough and they give our citizens critical, critical care.

So thank you for that establishment and I really look forward to see how that starts to enable our NGO sector.

Our GBV Ambassador Programme has trained over 170 residents to raise awareness in their communities about that scourge, gender-based violence. These tenacious individuals think little of giving of their own time as our broader efforts to end all forms of violence, at the same time offering much needed help to our social workers. Ordinary residents are stepping up to help us to end this scourge.

One such individual, Dawn Marcus, I believe is here. Is Dawn here? Good evening, Dawn, thank you very much for being here.

Dawn Marcus has joined us this evening and, you know, Dawn came to one of our First Thursdays. She said she wanted to get involved and help. She engaged with the Minister at First Thursdays. She was brought into training programmes, she was trained up and is now a proud GBV Ambassador in her community in Goodwood. Dawn, thank you so much for what you are doing. Thank you for stepping up.

Just yesterday we launched the 8th GBV Ambassador Programme right here in the Central Karoo. Thank you very much for that.

Hon Speaker, to expand our service footprint we have taken our services on the road. Three DSD mobile offices, the first initiative of its kind in the Western Cape and in South Africa, are traveling across this province bringing services and dignity closer to you. They have already travelled over 8 000 kilometres and already assisted more than 400 people and counting. Thank you for that.

We have invested R86 million in the construction of the Easter River Hospital Acute

Psychiatric Unit, the APU unit. This is just one aspect of a bigger initiative to build APUs and health facilities across the province at a cost of R279 million.

The following projects are under construction at the moment:

- Caledon Hospital
- Khayelitsha District Hospital
- New Somerset Hospital.

There has been impressive progress in the construction and upgrading of the Ravensmead, Bothasig and Ladismith healthcare facilities, thank you, hon Minister.

- The new Ravensmead Community Day Clinic, once completed, will include youth-friendly care, women's health, family healthcare, chronic disease management, mental health support, as well as emergency services. Expanding new kinds of services to our citizens.
- The existing CDC in Bothasig is being upgraded to serve more people.

In 2024 we opened the new state-of-the-art Ladismith Clinic at a R25 million investment in quality healthcare. This was relocated from the Allen Blythe Hospital grounds. This modern facility now meets the growing healthcare demands of this town and thank you, I have also personally visited it and it really does offer great service, and people feel good about going to work in these new facilities. It offers world class service, including chronic disease management and immunisations, family planning and specialist care in dentistry and physiotherapy, amongst others.

Hon Speaker, over the past decade we have invested R18,5 billion in metro healthcare infrastructure, increasing capacity, efficiency and access to specialised care. Villiersdorp now has a new ambulance station that houses three ambulances and a HealthNet vehicle to serve rural communities. This improves emergency response times and provides a base for training EMS staff, benefiting over 15 000 residents and handling approximately 500 calls every single month.

Hon Speaker, the Tygerberg Hospital modernisation project is proceeding well. This is a World Bank partnership with us in a PPP. This R10 billion redevelopment will transform this hospital into a cutting edge facility, improving specialist care and addressing Cape Town's growing population needs, and planning, hon Speaker, is well underway to deliver regional hospitals in the Klipfontein and Belhar communities.

These initiatives represent a commitment to delivering dignified, high-quality healthcare backed by innovation and collaboration to benefit every single resident of the Western Cape and ensure that when opportunity presents itself they are equipped to step up.

Hon Speaker, we are building hope and jobs through infrastructure investment.

Die Regering se sleutelrol is die ondersteuning van ekonomiese groei deur grootliks in infrastruktuur beleggings, en baie dankie, agb Minister, vir die uitrol van daai beleggings. Ons infrastruktuur-projekte word deur die Wes-Kaapse Infrastruktuur Departement en ons 2025-plan voorsien.

In the last 10 years the Western Cape has spent R98 855 526 000 on infrastructure. I should have said, "Now listen carefully", but I did not.

When you invest in infrastructure you promote partnerships, you promote confidence and you promote economic investment, and we are seeing the fruits of that investment everywhere we look. You see cranes, you see yellow fleet roadworking machines, you see builders with workers going to work and investing alongside us in infrastructure.

Government investment lays the foundation for the private sector to build upon and create a booming job rich economy. For every R1 that the Western Cape Government invests in infrastructure, R5,63 is estimated in capital formation and investment directly and indirectly into the economy.

So that nearly R100 billion that, hon Minister, you have invested over the last 10 years, has got more than a 5,6 times actual stimulation growth rate.

- If you go to Worcester and to George you will see how these infrastructure investments have put up water facilities, be they reservoirs or sewerage processing plants.
- If you go to the N7 you will see the Melkbos-Potsdam and Van Schoorsdrif Interchange. That is a R790 million project well under way.
- The Malmsbury New Trunk Road under construction. Those bridges already built by businesses, new businesses that are emerging businesses and building these magnificent bridges for us. That has a cost of R650 million.
- And at a combined R39,5 billion for the next three years, the City of Cape Town's infrastructure budget is 80% bigger than the next biggest city, Johannesburg, and almost 100% bigger than the third biggest city, Durban, because alongside our infrastructure investment and, hon Deputy Mayor, I see you are here from the City of Cape Town, congratulations. When our municipalities and our Province and our National Government invest together you exponentially build more and more hope in our economy.

The vast bulk of the spend, a full 75% of the spend in municipalities and in Cape Town, is earmarked for projects that will directly benefit Cape Town's lower income households. Over the past three years the growth of building plans has exceeded the national average by another 8,26%. So we are building more than any other province in our country.

Building plans passed is a key economic indicator reflecting positive economic activity and confidence, and we need more and more faster and faster because we want less shacks in our province and not more. We want more people with dignity and a roof over their heads.

Hon Speaker, our roads are the arteries of our economy and you just have to get in your car and drive from the City, many of you did, along a beautiful road all the way here to Beaufort West. People comment about it. We have just had a magnificent tourism season and people come here from the rest of the country and talk, hon Minister, about our road infrastructure and our continually focusing on reinvesting in it.

Last year alone 837 307 square metres of road surface was either resealed or surfaced, and I am told by your team and your HOD, which I am sure is here somewhere, that you are going to hopefully get that to a million square metres before the end of this financial year. Well done to you, our Department and our roads crew. You make us very proud, and even international visitors, CGs [0:12:39], they also say to us, "Wow, your road infrastructure is

amazing.”

We are also reimagining urban centres and how communities interact with their surroundings. The Conradie Park, which we have seen in the last five years come out of the ground, and I was there again for the next phase, which is offering 3 500 units, residential units, over 2 000 job opportunities, 90 SMMEs benefitted. We were there the other day for the setting up of the new sports fields and facilities there for the residents. It was great to see people coming home from work and using the recreation spaces and having picnics in the park. It really is an amazing investment, but of course it is finishing, but it has changed the way we invest, not only in this province, and the way we create dignity and roofs over people's heads, not only in this province and across all municipalities, but in our country, and so, hon Minister, you know what I always say. I am looking forward to the next Conradies and the next Conradies and more and more of them as we deliver them across our municipalities and across our province, but I am sure you are going to talk a little bit more about that tomorrow.

Hon Speaker, a safe province is a prosperous province. Without safety we cannot expect investment and jobs growth. For communities to thrive and for our economy to grow, residents and businesses and business owners and investors must feel safe.

In August last year we took a significant step forward in our fight against crime by signing a Memorandum of Understanding. This Memorandum of Understanding with the police, and I actually did see our PC earlier. I am not sure if he is in the room, but General Patekile – there he is. General Patekile, thank you very, very much for being here. Thank you for the partnership, that partnership that we signed between National Government, Provincial Government and Local Government. That partnership that said we have got a whole range of areas, we have got to look at how we work differently.

We have still got to see the fruits of this partnership, but it is a good step in the right direction and thank you very much for that. We have got to work really hard to make sure that we start to move the needle.

This agreement has ensured closer collaboration, better use of resources and shared focus on data and evidence in policing. This MOU reflects the urgency that is needed to tackle rising crime. It adds significantly to the concept of improved collaboration, which is needed to take the fight to criminal syndicates.

It is also a realisation that it is a need for policing. I still believe we have got to decentralise certain models and we have got to get more power closer to the people and allow more stakeholders a say in how we collectively address this scourge. We are working to ensure that this MOU serves as the nexus where all our crime fighting resources are pooled, where we include community based organisations, our Community Police Forums, the more than 500 Neighbourhood Watches with 16 869 members at present that walk our streets at night when people are in bed, many of them women. They are there to keep our communities safe and we thank them for stepping up.

This MOU will accelerate progress on our plans to collaborate with the South African Police Services. The destruction of illegal firearms is just one such collaborations and we have got to get that going faster. We have got to get it going so that they do not end up in some store and then, by some criminal act, end up back in the hands of our gangsters.

PC General, I still want to see lifestyle audits. There has been a promise of them. We will still

fund it, General. We need lifestyle audits in our senior echelons of our Police.

We need to make sure that our LEAP programme, our Law Enforcement Advancement Plan, managed in partnership with the City of Cape Town, is just one example of where we are finding better partnerships.

Our LEAP members have been increasingly busy. In 2024 alone, 12 074 arrests alone and since the LEAP's inception, 40 065 arrests have been made with more than 740 firearms taken off our streets.

Last year, we initiated a trial where LEAP resources were concentrated and redeployed to six precincts in Cape Town with a double-up of resources. Together with 120 members forming a roving Reaction Unit and when the crime statistics came out on Quarter 4 of 2024, we saw major year-on-year increase in illegal firearm arrests in Delft up by 70%, in Gugulethu up by 94%, in Mitchells Plain up by 33%, and in Philippi East up by 40%. These areas have benefitted from increased policing resources under this strategy. Similarly, drug arrests have increased in these hotspots, including Delft, a 43% increase in drug arrests, Gugulethu, 114% increase in drug arrests, in Khayelitsha, 62%, and Philippi East, 333% increase in drug arrests. Thank you very much to every one of our officers who are out there performing and getting these kinds of numbers.

Hon Speaker, on the fringes of that very same Munich Security Conference, I got to meet some of our international partners. Of course, we are partnered with Bavaria, but we are also partnered with the Institute for Security Studies, as well as the Global Initiative. Together, they are also independently measuring our programmes here in the province. It was really good to see the difference and General, it was good to see a reduction in crime in our province. Thank you for all that hard work.

But it was also amazing to see how we use evidence-based policing, how we saw a control measure of a reduction of 3%, but we saw a 13% reduction in those hotspot areas where the double-up is taking place, and SAPS and LEAP and Law Enforcement and citizens are coming together to fight crime. So, that says to us we have got to do things differently, we have got to learn and of course, these independent surveys tell us exactly that.

Hon Speaker, in rural communities like in Mossel Bay, and in the Overstrand, and in Swartland, we have increases in our Safety Units and our K-9 Units that are out on patrol. These units made 1 581 arrests in 2024.

Our Peace Officer programme offers another safety and security layer beyond Cape Town. Thank you very much, hon Minister. The 89 Peace Officer opportunities were created last year while 60 more graduates are being trained. In October, I attended the official opening of the Mossel Bay K-9 Unit, and it was really amazing to see how these police officers, these Law Enforcement officers, how they work with those canines to really, can I say, take a bite out of crime.

And hon Speaker, as we tackle today's challenges, we are also planning for tomorrow. PC, yesterday the crime statistics coming out was exponentially down and we need to keep that trend going, and we will continue as per that MOU. Hon Minister, from our side in the Province, we will continue to work with you in every way we can to make sure that we build a safer province.

Hon Speaker, I mentioned earlier on that we did not have a budget and sustainable funding for the future is critical.

Ons kan nie as 'n land aangaan op ons huidige finansiële koers nie. Dit kan nie so werk nie. So of course, that is why we have to take some really tough choices, make some tough decisions and make sure that we can get to a fiscal system wat volhoubaarheid het, wat ons kan beleggings in ons sisteem inkry en 'n beter toekoms bou. And, of course, we will work hard as a province in supporting our colleagues at National to find a way to get to that budget. While Government funding is being squeezed and our residents are also struggling to make ends meet, we will make and as I said earlier, we are getting poorer. The escalating cost of food. Mr Yedwa, the escalating cost of electricity is really becoming difficult. Fuel prices, poor households are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Of course, we will talk about some of those extra costs that maybe are looked at being brought in. We need to make sure that we find efficiencies in our system.

In the last few years, in actual fact, electricity increases have come up at 650%! Now, that is just not sustainable, and we have got to make sure that we find alternatives. The pressure over the last while with the growing budget cuts, the growing fiscal financial crises have left us with less funding in order to maintain our recognised high standards of service delivery and support our most vulnerable residents. At the same time, our rapid growing population is placing greater pressure on all of our frontline services.

To cut our Equitable Share and Conditional Grants are just brutal. The coming years will be tough as we work to rebuild our economy. Yet, even as our funding shrinks, our responsibilities grow.

Do you know that our population grew by nearly 20% between 2015 and 2024? But over the next ten years, the next decade, we are projected to grow by another 2 million citizens. That is an unbelievable pressure. We welcome our population growth, we welcome people coming to this province to put shoulder to the wheel, to solve our problems, to help us build a province, to step up. We welcome them! But of course, we must be better prepared and we know that our frontline are under huge pressure.

That is why our Provincial Treasury is exploring these new ways of approaching funding to look at external partners and ways to collaborate, looking at partner funding, looking at ways in which we can stretch that Rand even further.

But hon Speaker, it also about how we spend our money. En ek is baie trots om hier te staan, om te sê in ons regering, ons het nou vir die laaste twee jaar skoon oudits gekry. Nie net in ons departemente, en ons departemente en ons entiteite het almal 'n ongekwalifiseerde oudits gekry vir twee jaar in a ry. Agb DG, jy en jou span: ...[Applause.] baie, baie dankie daarvoor.

But it is not only in our province that we get these unqualified audits. Of our municipalities, 20 have now achieved unqualified audit status with no findings and six of our municipalities are unqualified, but with some findings. We still have a few municipalities that we have got to support and get across the line, and of course, we have to work hard to make sure that they get there. But audits and good quality audit outcomes show good governance and that is how you build trust. That is the foundation of enabling us to borrow more money. That is the enablement of trust why people want to invest and that is how we create this echo system.

We will continue to invest, but sound government is not only about good audit outcomes and

good governance, but it is also about how we understand what our risks are and how we tackle those risks. Whether they are investing more in managing cyber crime or, for example, putting money and the shoulder behind the wheel of climate change.

I started off by saying once again, in the opening of this Parliament, our firefighters across the province are busy fighting fires because it is the fire season and getting worse. We are getting less and less rain. Climate change has a massive impact on us.

And I must say, I stand here hugely honoured to have accepted the position of co-chair representing Africa in the Under2 Coalition of regions across the world. I, along with three other Premiers. One from Scotland representing Europe, one from a province in Mexico representing the Americas and a Premier from South Korea representing south-east Asia. The four of us are co-chair representing our continents of regions. More and more COP meetings are not getting the resolutions that we want, and regions are where the impact is felt of climate change. So, we have to step up, we have to step up! And along with our cities, we belong to an organisation called C40 and Under2 and C40 have got to play a much stronger role in making sure we deal with disasters and climate change not only here, but across the world into the future.

Just in the last few years, since 2011, we have had 55 disasters in this province, with 30 of those 55 in the last four years alone. We have had to respond. We have had to innovate. We have had to build back quicker and faster using our own 'Yellow Fleet'. We have had to really manage these disasters, and we have stepped up. And I want to say as I said earlier to our firefighting teams, but to our disaster teams, to our road workers, to people who get in there and put roofs back on our schools that blow off: wherever the problems hit us from climate change disasters, we step up every single time and we innovate, and we get it done. Thank you very much to every single one of them! ...

Hon Speaker, in this Government, innovation is not just a buzzword. It is how we solve problems, improve service delivery, and create opportunities. Across society and government, we make a plan and we find solutions.

Two bright young minds at school level in our Province that are doing just that, Thiedu Du Preez and Aadil Dawood. Thiedu comes from Vredenburg High School and Aadil comes from Bishops. The two of them represented South Africa and this Province, at the 2024 Izmir International Innovation Science Energy Engineering Fair in Turkey and showcased the absolute talent that we have amongst our young people that is worldclass.

In healthcare, hon members and ladies and gentlemen, in healthcare we are embracing cutting-edge technology. Georgie, which comes from George, a double robotic device which connects George Hospital to specialists in Cape Town or any other hospital around the world and reducing unnecessary patient transfers in bringing top-tier expertise closer to our communities. Using innovation, using technology added to what we were investing on two years ago in robotic surgery and staying ahead of the curve as the only state-owned hospital in the country and on the continent, that offers these kinds of new technological services.

In social development, our Social Work Integrated Management System or the SWIMS app, another use of technology and innovation which has now connected 1 052 social workers and making it easier for them to do their jobs, to file and track and manage their workload. Using this app, over 28 000 cases have so far been logged and hon Minister, I am glad to see you are now rolling this SWIMS app out to our NGOs as well.

I mean, just imagine when all of that data comes together and how we can then be utilising AI and new technologies to really bring across or bring about faster change and benefit through our NGOs to our citizens. This is how we step up by embracing innovation to improve education, to improve healthcare and social services for every resident in the Western Cape.

And while we are honing our ability to respond to disasters, innovating for our future, we also need to build our water and energy security. Thriving jobs-rich economies need reliable, affordable and renewable water and energy

While we can adapt to energy shortages, we cannot survive without water. That is why we have repurposed our Energy Council, which we started two years ago, to the Integrated Energy and Water Council so that we can deal with both of these issues that climate change is going to benefit at the end of the day, looking at water security and energy security.

Despite good rainfall last winter, we cannot afford to be complacent. Annual rainfall is declining and could drop by as much as 30% by 2050. Our 15-year water plan is already in place and being acted upon. This uses science and collaboration to guide our approach. Residents and businesses remain water-wise. Just as the lessons we learnt in Day Zero and still using today in the City of Cape Town, less water than we used prior to 2017 with all of that population growth. These are the kind of programmes we have got to make sure we adhere to. Making sure that even in non-drought years, we are being responsible.

Investments into infrastructure that protects our water supply. I have spoken about new dams, and we need more of them, but we also need to look at other ways of making sure that we are water resilient.

Then the electricity space in our province. We have always said that we use 4 000 megawatts at peak. Well, that was two years ago when we started with our plan. We now use 4 479 megawatts at peak. So we are feeling more and more pressure.

Our Energy Resilience Programme which we launched two years ago is well on its way. You know that that is the 5 700 megawatt programme. We have already unlocked in the last two years 2 000 megawatts of new energy development delivered and already in the market.

We have already added 1 000 megawatts to the provincial grid, and this is not REIPPP, or this is non-Eskom, in our municipalities, in those grids of where it is landing. REIPPP is still offering big new investments into our energy grid system. Those of you that drove up from Cape Town yesterday would have seen those long blades on those long trucks going off to our windfarms.

At this pace we are on track not only to meet our target of 5 700 megawatts by 2035. In actual fact it looks like we are going to reach those targets by 2032, and these initiatives are going to attract investments between R21 billion and R68 billion over the next few years.

Globally renewable energy now has overtaken coal for the first time. Here in South Africa solar capacity has jumped from 2,8 gigawatts to 7,8 gigawatts in just two years. That is quite phenomenal.

By late 2024 710 megawatts of rooftop solar PV was installed just in the Western Cape, that

is small businesses and households, and combined solar could generate nearly a fifth of Eskom's coal power capacity.

The recent bouts of loadshedding though have said to us do not stop, do not take your foot off the gas, keep with these projects and I know you are working hard to keep the lights on. We have got to keep working hard to keep the lights on. We do not like loadshedding, but we have got to get this new energy into the system. If we do not get it into the system we are going to fail, not get the investments in place and we are not going to create the jobs that we need.

Addition to our programme is also our Green Energy Plan and that Green Energy Plan and our Green Energy Strategy is not just in the Western Cape. It is the Western Cape, it is the Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape. The three Premiers have come together with our teams and we have got an agreement now. We have even, through our National Minister of Energy, engaged with Qatar on some of their investments and their direct investment and sovereign wealth fund, looking at investments.

Other investments are already exceeding R120 billion in this province alone into green energy, that is going to drive economic growth, create thousands of jobs and fast-track a transition to a net zero emission, and added to that is also the potential of green steel in Saldanha Bay, and so we stand ready to make sure that we play our part.

In our municipalities, in our bigger municipalities like Saldanha, Cape Town, Stellenbosch, they are already out on tender for thousands of megawatts, but our small municipality of Hessequa is leading the way, showing small municipalities that it can be done. We are already busy with a R210 million solar project there, a battery backup to show that small towns and municipalities can also get this going. That hopefully will also help Beaufort West *en ons ander klein dorpe hier in die Karoo*. That is why energy resilience in action, that is what it looks like and that is why it is so important.

Hon Speaker, we are also bringing the Western Cape Government closer to our residents. Ek is baie trots op ons Regering se oop deur beleid. Ek is baie trots op ons Eerste Donderdae. Ek is baie trots wanneer ons Kabinet uitbring na ons mense. Ek is baie trots dat ons hier in die Karoo kan wees met die oopmaak van die Parlement. Ek is baie trots dat ons maklik is om 'n afspraak te kry by ons publieke verteenwoordigers.

When I travel across the province I make sure of visiting hospitals and clinics and police stations unannounced to see what it feels like to be a citizen going to one of those facilities and receiving those services.

I go there firsthand to get that knowledge that we can feed back into the system and bring change if necessary, but also to say to those officials thank you very much for what you are doing when things are running smoothly and citizens are happy and not waiting in queues or feeling that they are getting great service.

Hon Speaker, this is a responsive government that works for you, the citizen.

Our First Thursday initiative has this year already registered and resolved more than 1 090 public queries. Expanded access to our ATE Centres across the province is bringing digital services to rural communities. We have processed 115 869 calls through our contact centre, with a 98,3% resolution rate and a resolution rate within our targeted turnaround time.

Last April I was in George and we launched our mobile E-Centre, and it was amazing. My wife and I, earlier this morning were walking up the road to go and find a cup of coffee and that very mobile E-Centre drove into town. I got a little hoot, that was really great. Gave them a little wave. Since that launch in George they have already helped 1 836 residents in this state-of-the-art facility going to the smallest of towns across our province, and during the George building collapse that very centre also became a critical component on site as an office to manage that disaster.

So a huge thank you goes to the officials who make this mobile service possible. Jakobus Pretorius, Vinelic Afrikaner and Gurshville George, *ek dink julle is ook hier*. Daar is julle. So kan ek sê baie, baie dankie. Dankie vir die diens wat jy vir ons mense gee. Dankie vir daai toet vanoggend, en rêrig, hou aan met wat julle doen, julle maak 'n groot verskil vir soveel van ons mense. Dankie.

Hon Speaker, in conclusion – I am sure you are all happy about that. We have all worked with the residents of this province to make sure the Western Cape, this remarkable province and region, does what it does. Steps up and makes the biggest difference that it can.

In 2025 all of us, all of us, every single one of us, must step up ourselves and do more than we have ever done before. Many of our officials tell me that the pressure that they are under so often, they say to me, “We do it because we care.”

That is why they put up their hands and we need to say to them as well step up, but I know that you already do. You go above and beyond. You really do push the envelope and thank you very much for that.

This reflects on our dedicated officials. Our people need their aspirations and expectations, and the heart of everything that our Government does is about caring for our citizens. That is why we are there for you.

We have faced uncertainty before and we have always managed to prevail. Ons doen dit deur ons inwoners eerste te stel en deur saam te werk om uitdagings aan te pak. Ons inwoners het ons gekies om te lei en ons moet nou die mandaat uitoefen tot ons beste vermoë om ons planne in dade te sit.

Beyond all the hard work that we have put in over the past year, I am filled with pride when I see government being done right, and especially when it is done right here in the Karoo, *en in die Wes-Kaap*.

While there is much still to do we feel proud of all that we have been able to achieve. Urgency and hard work underscore how this Government functions, because every day each of us is stepping up.

Hon Speaker, before I end I must say thank you to my Cabinet colleagues. Thank you for the hours and hours that you put in. Thank you to the members of this Parliament for the job that you do, holding us to account, visiting our offices and our spaces of service delivery, speaking to our residents, understanding where those pressure points are and bringing it back here so that we can have those debates and those conversations that I spoke about. That we can look at how together we can all step up to build a better province.

DG, to you, the HODs that are here, the officials that are here, baie, baie dankie vir die ure en ure wat julle insit vir ons mense hier in die Wes-Kaap. It does not go unnoticed. Thank you very much.

Citizens of the Western Cape – ja, ons kan vir hulle hande klap.

Citizens of the Western Cape, I know that we have said, and it was said in a beautiful song as we started this evening, step up. Let us all step up again. Let us all push even harder during these times of uncertainty to make a bigger and bigger difference. So thank you for what you will be doing this year.

I must say to my office, to the dedicated team in my office, thank you so much for the support that you give me because without the work that you do I would not be able to do what I do and we definitely would not have the happy customers that we do have. So thank you very much for everything that you do.

To Tracy, thank you for the love and support. To you and both Jason and Lauren, I think without you I definitely would not be able to do what I do and so the real backbone. Thank you so much. [Applause.]

So, hon Speaker, in the year ahead every single day we all have a choice. We can choose to be negative, to break down, to fight amongst ourselves, or we can choose to step up, be constructive, to build a better province. This year let us all make a choice to step up for that better province, the Western Cape.

Baie, baie dankie, nkosi, the Western Cape is a Government for you. Thank you. [Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Order! Order. Thank you very much, hon Premier. Hon members, in terms of Rule 15 of the Standing Rules, the hon Premier's Address will be placed on the Order Paper for debate. Hon members and guests are requested to remain standing in their places while the procession leaves the Chamber. And hon members, please note that on Thursday, 27 February 2025, that is tomorrow, the proceedings will commence at 08:00 AM.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite the hon members and guests to congregate outside the entrants to the hall on their way out, for a short audio-visual presentation.

Hon members and guests, that concludes the business for the day.

8. The House adjourned at 20:19.

ROMEO ADAMS
Secretary to the Provincial Parliament