



**economic development
& tourism**

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



POLICY & BUDGET SPEECH

2025/2026



Ms. J Sidell, MPL

MEC: Economic Development and Tourism

**22 JULY
2025**



Time:
14H00

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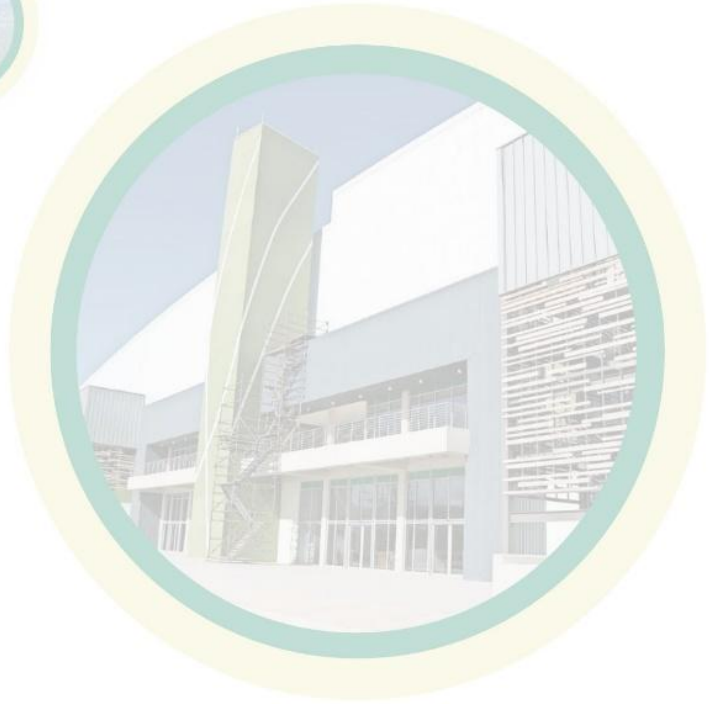


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VOTE 6: DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM – POLICY AND BUDGET SPEECH 2025-2026 DELIVERED BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, Ms. JESTA SIDELL, MPL, TO THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE, RIVERSIDE PARK, CITY OF MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Tuesday, 22 July 2025

Salutations

Honourable Speaker, **Ms. Makhosazane Masilela**;
Honourable Deputy Speaker, **Mr. Sam Masango**;
Honourable Premier, **Mr. Mandla Ndlovu**;
Honourable Chief Whip of the Majority Party, **Ms. Eva Makhabane**;
Colleagues in the Executive Council;
Honourable Members of the Provincial Legislature;
Chairperson and Members of the House of the Traditional and Khoi San Leadership;
Director-General in the Office of the Premier, **Ms. Margaret Skosana**;
Head of Department, **Ms. Immy Serakalala** and all other HODs present;
Chairpersons of the Boards and CEOs of our Public Entities;
Representatives of the governing party in the Province, the ANC;
Organised Labour and Private Sector Partners;
The people of our Province, Mpumalanga – *the Place of the Rising Sun*;
Esteemed guests;
Members of the Media;
Ladies and gentlemen.

Sanibonani!

Introduction

1. **Madam Speaker**, I am humbled and honoured to present the Policy and Budget Speech for Vote 6, before this august House, during a significant month in the calendar of South Africa, as we are called upon by the United Nations' General Assembly, to celebrate and honour the selfless contribution to humanity by our former President, *Isithwalandwe, Tat'uNelson Mandela*.
2. This is my maiden Policy and Budget Speech since my appointment as the Member of the Executive Council responsible for Economic Development and Tourism in our Province. It is indeed a humbling experience, and I commit without reservations, to serve the people of Mpumalanga – ***the Place of the Rising Sun***, with a great sense of humility.
3. Honourable Members, I believe that this is an opportune moment for me to extend our profound appreciation to my predecessor, who is now the Speaker of this Legislature, Honourable Makhosazane Masilela, for steering *the dedt* ship with zoom and zeal. We commit to continue to build on the work and achievements that have been recorded under her leadership.
4. I, therefore, stand before this august House, to re-assure our people that as the Department, we remain committed to continue to address their aspirations, as clearly expressed in the **Manifesto of the governing party in the Province, the African National Congress**.
5. On a sombre note, we present this Policy and Budget Speech, at a time when we are still struggling to come to terms with the untimely death of the former Deputy President of the ANC and the country, **Comrade David Dabede Mabuza**. We continue to remember him as a fearless and tireless leader who dedicated his life towards the cause of our liberation, and towards creating a better life for the people of this great Province. His name will forever be engraved in the history books for eternity.

6. At the same time, we bow our heads in remembrance of **Comrade Veli Mahlangu and Bishop Dr Simon Dingane Gumbi**, who both have contributed significantly to politics and spiritual upliftment of our people, respectively. Comrade Mahlangu was a towering figure with a rich history both in the football and political fraternity. May their souls rest in eternal peace.
7. Madam Speaker, we also present our Policy and Budget Speech, when our liberation movement, the ANC, is commemorating **70 years of the adoption of the Freedom Charter**. Even after 70 years, the Freedom Charter remains more relevant, as a guiding document towards our pursuit to build a better Province and a better South Africa. Accordingly, the ANC has declared 2025 as the **“Year of the Freedom Charter”**, and reaffirms its commitment to the principles as espoused in the Charter.
8. We are alive to the fact that, we proceed from the understanding that the present-day South Africa, is a continuing product of heroic struggles waged against colonialism and Apartheid. The National Democratic Revolution is our strategy to bring about fundamental social change. Its core social outcome is the creation of a non-racial, non-exist, democratic and prosperous country, in line with the provisions of the Freedom Charter.
9. Madam Speaker, there is an interplay between politics and economics that produces social outcomes. Every political choice or action has economic implications, and likewise, any economic choice or action has political implications. It must be understood that the National Democratic Revolution has at its belly, **the task of pursuing economic growth** in a manner that broadly allocates and develops capital assets, consistent with the country’s demographics.
10. We are, thus, enjoined to restructure the economy in order to increase the asset base of the majority. This requires the **mobilisation and direction of increased levels of investment**.

11. Honourable Members, in the 2025 State of the Nation Address, His Excellency, President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa reminded us of our utmost urgent task of **growing the economy, creating jobs, reducing poverty and improving the lives of our people**. Equally so, the Honourable Premier, Mr. Mandla Ndlovu, has also directed us to **accelerate the implementation of catalytic projects, which are geared towards the realisation of inclusive economic growth and massive job creation**. We are, amongst others, directed to:

- **Host the Mining Indaba and Investment Summit;**
- **Finalise the feasibility studies for the Mariepskop Mountain Cable Car and the Hazyview Water Waves;**
- **Operationalise the Nkomazi SEZ;**
- **Support tourism development and product offerings in the various nature reserves;**
- **Continue to develop, nurture and support MSMEs;**
- **Finalise the Petro-Chemical and Forestry Industrial Parks;**
- **Support Economic Infrastructure projects;**
- **Conduct the feasibility study on the 4th Casino License; and lastly**
- **Establish training and incubation programmes to enhance skills development.**

9. I can, therefore, without any fear of contradiction, indicate that if **we can fully implement all these catalytic projects**, we will surely be able to grow the economy and uproot the scourge of unemployment, which continues to bedevil our people, particularly the youth.

10. We do possess the analytical capacity to mobilise private capital to take up a leading role in such sectors of the economy, that they could better manage and innovate in.

11. We will endeavour, as far as possible, to invest in human capital development as just alluded, as well as economic infrastructure. It calls upon all of us to be addicted thinkers.

Mpumalanga's Economic Landscape and Outlook

12. Honourable Speaker, before I present the progress we have made in steering economic development activities in the Province, and our interventions for the 2025-2026 financial year, let me begin by laying a foundation through an *Economic Landscape and Outlook*.
13. The world economy is currently experiencing extreme levels of uncertainty. This is triggered by a combination of higher trade barriers, plus elevated global uncertainty in especially the Middle East, which are likely to weaken the world economy. Accordingly, there is no doubt that these geo-political risks will also have a negative impact on the national and provincial economy.
14. This has led to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) cutting its 2025 economic growth forecast for South Africa, to just 1% for the year. **Mpumalanga's growth is also predicted to be very much in line with the national growth expectations.**
15. In the latest economic performance reported, both South Africa and Mpumalanga unfortunately did not perform well in Quarter 1 of 2025. Key industries like mining, manufacturing, electricity, construction, as well as community services, recorded negative growth rates between January and March 2025. On a positive note, **agriculture, transport and the communication industry performed exceptionally well.**

16. Consequently, Mpumalanga recorded a **net job loss of around 43-thousand** the first Quarter of 2025, with the majority of the job losses being in the informal sector. South Africa as a whole a net job loss of almost 300-thousand during the same period.
17. To improve our economic performance, we must therefore **work together to identify and explore new and sustainable export opportunities and markets**, over the medium and long term, especially in an African Continental Free Trade Area, and in the BRICS plus countries context.
18. In our quest to reduce unemployment significantly to 25% by 2030, our Province must **create at least 60-thousand new and sustainable jobs per annum**. This means we must at least increase our growth rate to 3% per annum. We will, thus, target industries with the high potential for job creation, such as agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, construction, the trade industry, tourism, Micro Small and Medium Enterprises, including the informal sector and finance.

Growing the economy through re-industrialisation and localisation

19. Madam Speaker, when we stood before this august House last year, we submitted that if we are to change the economic landscape of the Province for the better, we must focus on re-industrialising the provincial economy. We further pointed out that, as a Province, we have already put in place an Industrial Development Plan that is geared towards guiding the implementation of the re-industrialisation programme.
20. One such intervention Programme is the Nkomazi Special Economic Zone. This massive catalytic project would be a game changer in economic growth and job creation. It will undoubtedly contribute significantly in **growing the agricultural sector, increase export volumes and unlock value chains and value add opportunities**, especially for small businesses and black industrialists.

21. However, given the massive nature of the project, such a project is implemented in four phases; namely, **the Designation Phase, the Interim Phase, the Development Phase and the Operations Phase**. As I speak, we are now currently implementing the second phase of the project, which is Interim Phase. In essence, this is a phase where issues of detail planning are being addressed. Yes, it is a phase where we have to ensure that, inter alia:

- A well-oiled and fit-for-purpose SEZ Entity is established;
- All the statutory requirements are fully complied with;
- The township is established and registered with the Office of the Surveyor-General;
- All the necessary licenses, such water use and Environmental Authorisation are obtained; and
- All the detailed engineering designs of bulk infrastructure and internal services are towards completion.

To date, we can report that:

- We have managed to appoint the full-term Board of the Nkomazi SEZ Entity in November 2024, and also appointed the Chief Executive Officer;
- Parallel to the activity of the detailed engineering designs, the Department is also working with Infrastructure South Africa in the Presidency, to bring the current business plan of the Nkomazi SEZ Entity into bankability level;
- The Entity has managed to establish an investment pipeline of **14 potential investors**. Four of the 14 potential investors are almost ready to locate into the SEZ. However, this is dependent on the availability of the appropriate bulk infrastructure and internal services;
- The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, in collaboration with our Department, are currently also looking at a possibility of positioning the

Nkomazi SEZ as a cross-border SEZ – an objective that is in line with the 2063 Southern African Development Community (SADC) Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap, whose primary goal is to foster intra-Africa trade, particularly among the 16 Member States of SADC. This will promote and deepen regional integration, cooperation and economic development.

20. In line with the directive by the Premier, as it relates to fast tracking of the establishment of catalytic projects, such as the **Petro-Chemical Industrial Park** in the Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, we can report that we have finally **received Section 53 approval**, in terms of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development act 28 of 2002. This will now enable the Department to ensure that the necessary conveyancing is completed, to open the Township Register, that will conclude the planning phase of this development.
21. Our Province also offers many opportunities to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in infrastructure development, notably through initiatives like the Nkomazi SEZ, the Mpumalanga International Food Market, and the Industrial Technology Parks in all the three (3) districts.

Investing in the Green Economy

22. Honourable Speaker, it is with great pride that I also reflect on the progress we have made in positioning **Mpumalanga as South Africa's green growth frontier**, through the strategic work that the Department has been doing in collaboration with the **Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency (MGCA)**. Our Province has pro-actively explored **green economy opportunities** through a **cluster development model**, engaging **government, business, and academia** to drive sustainable growth. This entails removing barriers to development, such as assisting developers to obtain authorisations required for utility scale projects to reach financial close.

23. And notwithstanding the undisputed fact that Mpumalanga remains the country's coal generated electricity powerhouse, we must be **amenable to adopt new technology as an additional source of energy**. Accordingly, we commit to adopt green energy to supplement coal-generated energy, in our quest to even save jobs, which are currently being threatened.
24. During our last appearance, we highlighted some high impact projects in the green economy space, some of which were also mentioned by the Premier in the State of the Province Address. These projects have the propensity to create more job opportunities and inclusive economic growth. It is my greatest pleasure to report on the progress as follows:
- The realisation of **Umbila Emoyeni Wind Farm** in Bethal, where Seriti Green is injecting an amount of approximately **25 billion rands investment in first phase, estimated at 4.8 billion rands**. This catalytic project will bolster the nation's energy security by increasing generation capacity, contributing to job creation. As we speak, construction has commenced with over **1 thousand jobs** created.
 - Madam speaker, I am pleased to announce that the first wind turbine has been erected, towering the town of Bethal standing at 221 metres high, demonstrating an engineering excellency and significant milestone in South Africa renewable energy journey. We are proud, as *the dedt* and MGCA family, for the contribution we made to enable this investment in our Province.
 - A **Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage Project** was launched by the Honourable Premier and the Minister of Minerals and Petroleum Resources in Leandra in 2024. The project is South Africa's first Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage Research Site.

- South Africa's cooperation with the government of the Netherlands has resulted in the construction of a high-tech **Horticulture Demonstration Centre** which will serve as a training facility and incubation centre. The facility, which is a partnership between the Dutch Embassy and Eskom and the Provincial government, represented by MGCA, is under construction at the Grootvlei Power Station, as part of the repurposing project. The facility is anticipated to be operational in January 2026, with direct long-term jobs for between **200 to 300 jobs** in its first phase. The project is intended to be replicated to other repurposing sites in the Province.
 - Engagements through *the dedt*, DARDLEA and MGCA has also resulted to mining houses agreeing to release rehabilitated land for repurposing and alternative land use opportunity. Seriti and Thungela mining companies are now willing to immediately release approximately 15 000 hectares of rehabilitated land, with a propensity to release more. The land is ideal for **agriculture, nature-based solutions and recreational use**. Accordingly, our Department is already engaging the private sector, for initiatives that will create employment through productive usage of rehabilitated land.
25. Madam Speaker, these catalytic projects will not only contribute to economic growth in the Province, but will also create the greener job opportunities, as well as assist in mitigating the impact of climate change and ultimately setting the Province on a path of driving a low carbon economy. The Department, in partnership with MGCA, will thus continue to lead innovative approaches to convert environmental challenges into developmental assets.
26. The achievements we have already recorded in the past year are just the beginning of a brighter, more sustainable future for Mpumalanga. With an unwavering commitment to a **Just Transition, green economy, and job creation**, we are shaping a prosperous future for all our citizens.

Re-igniting tourism: The Province's biodiversity gold mine!

27. Honourable Members, tourism remains a priority sector in Mpumalanga, with much potential to create the much-needed jobs. In this regard, our Department will continue to support strategic tourism initiatives that market the Mpumalanga Province as a tourism destination of choice.
28. As directed by the Honourable Premier, we are moving towards realising tourism growth game-changer projects in partnership with the private sector. In this regard, we have advertised Bids to do feasibility studies for the development of the **Mariepskop Cable Car Project** in the Bushbuckridge Municipality, and **the Water Waves Project around Hazyview in the City of Mbombela Local Municipality**. The introduction of these high impact tourism products to the existing tourism product offerings will surely increase the tourist's length of stay and tourism spend.
29. Honourable Members, the development of the Barberton Makhonjwa Mountain World Heritage Site remains the Department's priority. However, the existing impasse between the private landowners and the MTPA on the development of the Site is a cause for concern.
30. Whilst the parties are engaging to settle their differences out of court to cap the already high legal costs and the developments that was halted, the Department is initiating engagements with the South African Heritage Resource Agency and the South Africa Heritage Council for further intervention.
31. The Department also acknowledges the concerns raised by the tourism industry stakeholders about the poor condition of some of the tourism attraction sites, particularly, the Panorama Route in the Blyde River Canyon, which has a high volume of tourist numbers.

32. Accordingly, the MTPA has started to fix some of those amenities, to return them to their normal functionality and appearance, whilst planning to increase the capacity of the existing capital assets in the medium term. The Entity is also seized with the upgrade of all other aging infrastructure in its Nature Reserves.
33. To leverage on the expertise and financial capacity of the private sector, the Department through the MTPA, is outsourcing most hospitality tourism facilities in our Provincial Nature Reserves, which require a significant capital investment, such as the Zithabiseni Resort and the Conference Facility at the Mabusa Nature Reserve and the Humala Lodge in the Songimvelo Nature Reserve, to mention but a few.
34. The revitalisation of these tourism facilities will stimulate the domestic travel market. And since these facilities have been in the market for a while now, the MTPA has adopted a targeted marketing strategy by approaching prominent players in the tourism industry to invest in these business opportunities.
35. Madam Speaker, the safety of tourists on our roads and facilities remains high on our priority list. Accordingly, the MTPA, with the tourism industry stakeholders, the South African National Road Agency, municipalities, departments, community structures and the law enforcement agencies continuously hold meetings to discuss and improve tourism safety strategies. Furthermore, those tourists who are victims of crime are given assistance through the Victims Support Programme.
36. Let us further commend the Municipalities and the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport for **completing the rehabilitation of some of the key tourism roads in the Province, for example, the Belfast-Mashishing road and the Hazyview-Sabie-Graskop-Matibidi road.**
37. Tourism is a growing sector in our Province; hence Mpumalanga was rated the second largest Province in terms of international tourist arrivals in 2024, thus accounting for 23.8% share of international tourist arrivals to South Africa.

38. The Province received 2.1 million international tourist arrivals, which represented an increase of 15.6% compared to 2023. However, the spend by the international tourist remains low at 7.5 billion rands due to among others, limited or outdated tourism product offerings. On the other hand, we are not doing so well in terms of domestic trips, as Province generated only 3.2 million domestic trips, and is rated number 5 in terms of domestic trips.
39. As we continue to promote domestic tourism, I encourage South African citizens to visit Mpumalanga's tourist attraction sites to explore and experience the diverse tourism product offerings and continue to be the ambassadors of our own tourism and investment destination.

Strengthening support to small business development

40. Madam Speaker, the **Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path** – our economic blueprint enjoins us to place muscle behind our intention to support and develop **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**. Therefore, the Department in partnership with the private sector will continue to strengthen support to small enterprises, particularly those found in rural areas.
41. We believe that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises are the backbone of our economy. Accordingly, if this sector is supported meaningfully, we will be able to grow the economy, create the much-needed jobs for our people and dismantle the stubborn triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.
42. To this end, during the previous financial year, the Department **managed to support municipalities in the Green Economy initiatives to ensure access to landfill sites by MSMEs and Co-operatives**. This support was provided to ensure that small enterprises gain access to the waste to promote the recycling of waste products with a view to create the much-needed jobs.

43. In addition, as part of our continued support to MSMEs, we **provided equipment, tools of trade and aftercare services to women and youth owned businesses in the textile, automotive sector and green economy particularly in the township and rural areas.** Among others, we have been able to support businesses such as car washes, hair salon, spaza shops, and manufacturing businesses. Through this economic empowerment programme, **we were able to support more than 50 small enterprises.**
44. During the previous financial year, MEGA also provided financial support to MSMEs to the tune of **41 million, 936 thousand, and 850 rands** to 76 businesses across the Province. Of this, a total of **39 million, 290 thousand rand** was disbursed through the Premier's Youth Development Fund, wherein 76 youth owned businesses were funded.
45. MEGA has also continued with its programme to revitalise three of its Industrial Parks; namely, KaBokweni, Siyabuswa, and Ekundustria. The Entity will, in the current financial year, continue with building condition assessments to determine the value and revitalisation work to be carried out, which will then be followed by the implementation of the renovation and revitalisation programme.
46. We can also report that the occupancy rate at MEGA's 15 small industrial parks, with a total of 303 factory units, is now at 60% with 367 jobs created. In relation to the Ekandustria industrial Park, the occupancy rate is at 72% with 1795 jobs created, as at September 2024. The Siyabuswa Industrial Park has a total of 28 factory units, and is now sitting at 61% occupancy rate, with 136 jobs created. With regard to Kabokweni Industrial Park, which has 44 factory units, it is now sitting at an occupancy rate of 75% with 697 jobs created.

47. Honourable Members, in the current financial year, MEGA will continue to assist the previously disadvantaged individuals within the Province, with access to housing loans, especially those that are within the housing market gap, earning too much to qualify for government-subsidised housing but not enough to afford homes in the open market. To this end, the Entity has allocated **30 million rands** towards housing loan disbursements.
48. MEGA will also provide financial support to MSMEs and disburse a total of **11 million rands** to assist businesses owned by previously disadvantaged individuals. A total of at least 160 MSMEs will be provided with business support services, such as technical financial management support, reporting guidance and advice on access to Market.
49. Madam Speaker, for our economy to continue to grow, we need investment; hence **we will host an Investment Summit** during the current financial year, to solicit investment pledges from the private sector.
50. Additionally, the Department will also host a **Mining Indaba** to address the question of transformation in this important sector, especially focusing on opening opportunities for artisanal and junior miners through mine-rehabilitation. The Indaba will also focus on interventions, such as incubation, skills development and address other barriers of entry into this sector.
51. Strengthening support to MSMEs, with a bias to those owned by the youth and women, remains on our radar screen; hence we continue to partner with government's Development Finance Institutions, training and skills development institutions such as SEDFA and SETAs, including the South African Bureau of Standards. This has resulted in the in the Department, in collaboration with the National Youth Development Agency, disbursing funding worth **3.5 million rands to 23 tourism youth businesses** in Mpumalanga.

52. The Fund aims to empower young entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, by providing financial assistance and resources to help them grow and expand their businesses, ultimately stimulating innovation, creating jobs, and promoting sustainable business growth, especially in rural areas.
53. In addition, the Department will intensify its comprehensive support to MSMEs in the Green Economy, Agro-processing, Manufacturing and Tourism by providing them with tools of trade, such as equipment, for them to be competitive. The support to small enterprises will also target the township and rural areas with a special focus to the Spaza Shop programme.
54. Our Department will also continue to support municipalities in the implementation of the **Red Tape Reduction Strategy**, while easing the way of doing business by big business, MSME and the informal sector. Support will further be provided to municipalities on local economic development, in pursuit of the District Development Model to improve the lives of our people.

Business Regulation and Governance

55. Madam Speaker, in response to the outbreak of foodborne illnesses emanating from goods bought from spaza shops, our Department conducted a series of successful multi-disciplinary unannounced inspections of businesses across the Province.
56. I am pleased to inform the House that we were able to inspect at least 20 shops. Unfortunately, out of the 20 shops we inspected, only 12 of those shops had trading licenses. Consequently, Home Affairs Immigration Officers arrested one foreign national for being in the country illegally. This is a clear indication that from a business regulation and compliance point of view, a lot still needs to be done.

57. Government has since directed that all operating spaza shops must be duly registered within their local municipalities. I must, however, indicate that the end of the registration period does not in any way suggest that the foodborne illness challenge have been fully addressed, as more work still needs to be done to ensure that this sector is fully regulated, and that it adheres to applicable legislation and health regulation.
58. Our Department will further continue with the sustained campaign on multi-disciplinary enforcement interventions and awareness campaign, while also providing training to the business owners.
59. Honourable Members, as previously committed, the Mpumalanga Economic Regulator successfully hosted the inaugural **Provincial Liquor Indaba** in September last year. This key stakeholder engagement brought together industry players, government departments, law enforcement agencies, and community representatives to strengthen collaboration and address the harmful effects of alcohol abuse.
60. The Indaba laid a firm foundation for **policy alignment, enhanced enforcement**, and shared responsibility in tackling liquor-related social harm. A key outcome was the resolution for MER to intensify joint compliance inspections. In line with this, MER expanded its inspection programme in partnership with SAPS, Home Affairs, Agriculture, and Community Safety.
61. Despite budget limitations, MER conducted **6,726 liquor compliance inspections** during the 2024-2025 financial year. Encouragingly, **5,979 liquor outlets were compliant**, while enforcement action was taken against **747 non-compliant outlets**, resulting in **623 closures, 38 suspensions, 6 formal warnings**, and **80 remedial cases**. As we advance into 2025-2026 financial year, we are confident that **strengthened enforcement and sustained partnerships** will lead to improved compliance with liquor laws across the Province.

62. Pertaining to the gambling industry, in response to the directive by the Honourable Premier, I wish to confirm that the **feasibility study for the proposed fourth casino licence in Mpumalanga** has been prioritised for the current financial year. The study will re-assess the market viability and identify potential geographic areas of demand. This process is critical to ensuring that any potential expansion aligns with our developmental objectives and contributes meaningfully to local economic growth.
63. Honourable Members, during the previous financial year, our revenue collection efforts yielded remarkable success. Through the Mpumalanga Economic Regulator, **we collected 1.5 billion rands in gambling and liquor license fees and taxes**, representing a 70% increase from the previous financial year. This substantial growth reflects both improved compliance and the efficiency of our collection strategies.
64. A key contributor to this growth, is the Mpumalanga's proactive approach in leveraging regulatory opportunities and digital platforms. This approach has enabled gamblers from across the country, and even beyond our borders, to access gambling services through Mpumalanga-licensed operators operating via digital platforms. As a result, the Province now commands the largest market share in the digital gambling space.
65. It is important to clarify that this does not necessarily mean more people in Mpumalanga are gambling compared to other provinces, nor does it suggest that we are investing more than others. Rather, it **highlights the success of our licensing model and digital adoption**, which have enabled our licensees to attract and serve a broader, national market – expanding both our regulatory reach and revenue base.
66. As we look ahead to the new financial year, we will continue to regulate both the gambling and liquor industries effectively, while further improving revenue collection for the Province.

67. Working closely with the South African Police Service, we intensified **operations against illegal gambling** during the 2024-2025 financial year. Accordingly, a total of 180 illegal gambling devices were destroyed following the conclusion of legal proceedings. These efforts underscore our commitment to protecting vulnerable communities, particularly minors, from the harmful effects of illegal gambling activities.
68. Another key milestone during the year was the completion of the **provincial socio-economic impact assessment on gambling**. The study presented several critical recommendations, which have since been incorporated into the MER's Medium-Term Development Plan.
69. Among the key recommendations emerging from the **study are the establishment of a Gambling Barometer** to monitor emerging industry trends and behaviours, the **development of a Provincial Responsible Gambling Policy**, and the **rollout of community-based Corporate Social Investment programmes**.
70. These initiatives are aimed at mitigating the risks associated with excessive gambling, promoting responsible behaviour, and intensifying public education and awareness campaigns, particularly on issues of underage drinking, alcohol abuse, and problem gambling.
71. We will also host the **Provincial Gambling Indaba**, which is a high-level platform for engagement between government, industry players, and civil society. This forum will promote shared responsibility, knowledge exchange, and the collective shaping of a responsive and inclusive gambling industry.

Budget Allocation (per Programme)

72. Honourable Speaker; the planned targets we have just tabled require accompanying funding for them to be realised. In this regard, the six (6) Programmes of the Department are proposed to be funded as follows:
73. **Programme 1:** Administration will receive an amount of **131 million, 325 thousand rands** in order to enable effective operational support to the programmes of the Department and Public Entities.
74. **Programme 2:** Integrated Economic Development will receive **385 million, 764 thousand rands**. Included in this amount, is **270 million, 600 thousand rands** to fund the requirements of MEGA, **3 million rands** for the Mpumalanga Tourism Youth Fund; and **38 million, 53 thousand rands** to fund the Mpumalanga International Food Market (MIFM).
75. **Programme 3:** Trade and Sector Development will receive an amount of **97 million, 639 thousand rands**. Included in this amount, is **55 million, 451 thousand rands** for the Nkomazi SEZ, **2 million, 206 thousand rands** for the Mpumalanga Stainless Steel Initiative, **1 million, 240 thousand rands** for Furntech, and **10 million, 487 thousand rands** for the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency.
76. **Programme 4:** Business Regulation and Governance will receive **167 million, 461 thousand rands** which includes **139 million, 304 thousand rands** to fund the requirements of the MER.
77. **Programme 5:** Economic Planning will receive **23 million, 720 thousand rands**.
78. And lastly, **Programme 6: Tourism** is allocated **518 million, 352 thousand rands**, which includes **499 million, 461 thousand rands** to fund the requirements of the MTPA.

79. The total amount to be transferred by the Department to other entities, including its Public Entities, is **981 million, 749 thousand rands**, which is **74% of the total budget of the Department**.
80. As the Executive Authority of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, I now request the House to consider and appropriate the total allocation of **One billion, 324 million, 261 thousand rands** to fund the requirements of the Department (Vote 6), for the financial year ending March 2026.

Appreciation

81. Madam Speaker; let me extend my sincere gratitude to the African National Congress, the revolutionary movement of Oliver Reginald Tambo for entrusting us with the task of implementing the electoral mandate during the term of the 7th Administration.
82. I also wish to extend my gratitude to the Honourable Premier, Mr. Mandla Ndlovu, for entrusting me with this responsibility and his support and guidance.
83. My appreciation also goes to my colleagues in the Executive Council; the Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee on Economic Development and Tourism, for their support on our work.
84. Once more, my appreciation goes to my predecessor, Honourable Makhosazane Masilela and the entire *dedt* family, which incorporates our Public Entities, led by the Head of Department, Ms. Immy Serakalala, for their commitment towards realising the mandate given to us by the ANC-led government.
85. Let me also thank my family for allowing me to continue to serve our people.

86. Madam Speaker; let me end by thanking all our social partners, including organised labour, the private sector, and the people of our Province, for partnering with us in this noble crusade towards inclusive economic growth.

87. ***Mpumalanga – A Province That Works For All!***

I thank you





**economic development
& tourism**
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
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POLICY & BUDGET SPEECH

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