



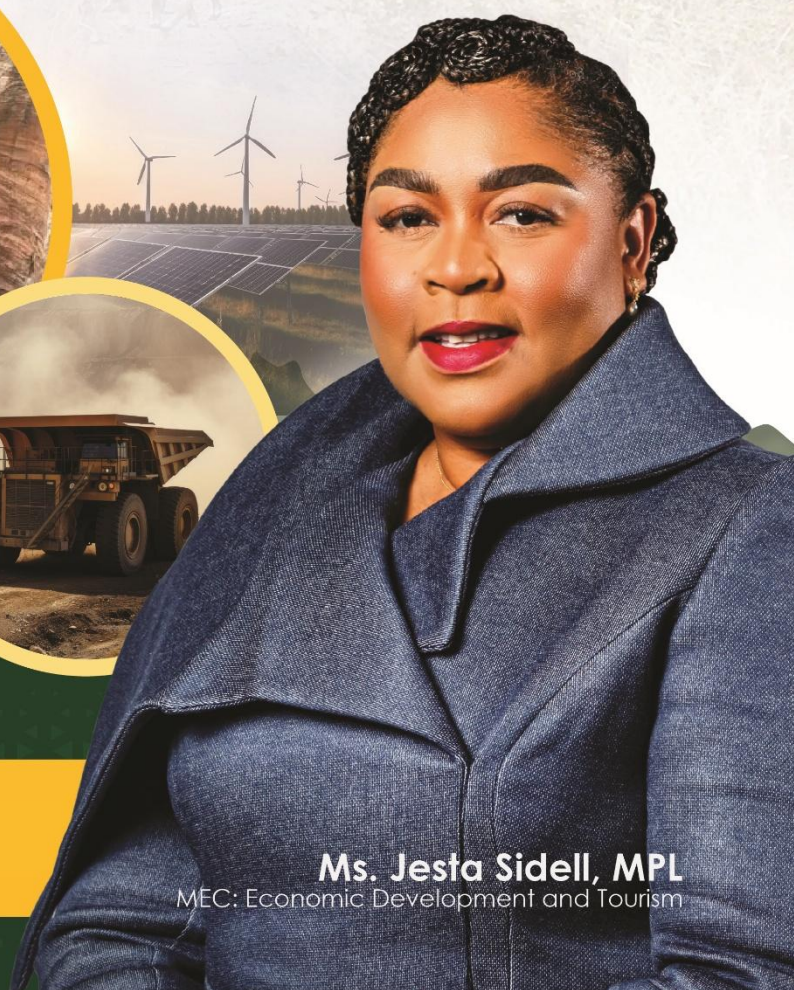
economic development & tourism

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



POLICY & BUDGET SPEECH

2026/2027



11 JUNE 2025



Time: 14:15

Ms. Jesta Sidell, MPL
MEC: Economic Development and Tourism





VOTE 6: DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM – POLICY AND BUDGET SPEECH 2026-2027 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

Thursday, 11 June 2026

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 this August House;

Chairperson of the Mpumalanga House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, and National President of Contralesa, Kgoshi **Mathupa Lameck Mokoena**;

Director-General in the Office of the Premier, **Ms. Margaret Skosana**;

Head of Department, **Ms. Immy Serakalala** and other HODs present;

Chairpersons of the Boards and CEOs of our Public Entities;

Leaders of Business, Labour and Civil Society;

The Resilient People of Mpumalanga – “*the Place of the Rising Sun*,”

Esteemed guests;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and gentlemen.

Sanibonani, Dumelani, Avuxeni, Lotjhani

Introduction

1. ***Somlomo lohloniphekile*** – I stand before this House today with a profound sense of humility and absolute responsibility to table the **Policy and Budget Speech for Vote 6: Department of Economic Development and Tourism** for the 2026-2027 financial year.
2. We gather at a time of distinct transition; just three months ago, our Provincial Budget laid bare the socio-economic tightrope we walk. Globally and nationally, we face volatile commodity markets and structural economic headwinds. Locally, we look at a **provincial poverty rate affecting 52.5% of our citizens, and youth unemployment rate sitting at an alarming staggering 47.3%**.
3. While global geo-political tensions, especially supply chain disruptions in the Middle-East pose risks to our agricultural export markets and local farmers, our domestic metrics are highly encouraging.
4. These are not mere statistics; they are a clear call to action. They tell us that our public resources cannot simply maintain status quo bureaucracy; they must work to **disrupt poverty, restore human dignity, and transform “The Place of the Rising Sun” into a self-sustaining, globally competitive powerhouse**.
5. Our work remains anchored by the **Mpumalanga Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (MERRP)** and our **Vision 2030** employment targets. Our mandate is unambiguous; we must catalyse our high-absorption sectors to **add at least 60,000 sustainable jobs annually** to our provincial ledger.
6. We're happy that the tide is beginning to turn. Backed by a stabilising national economy showing signs of restored credibility, our Provincial growth is **projected to steady at 1.3% this year, with an upward trajectory toward 1.9% by 2027**. Agriculture, finance, transport, and tourism are anchoring this defense, and today, we allocate the ammunition to accelerate that momentum.

7. **Madam Speaker**, let me borrow from our revered revolutionary and visionary leader, *iSithwalandwe, Tat' uNelson Mandela*, who once posited that, and I quote: ***“It always seems impossible until it's done”***, unquote. This statement serves as a profound reminder that daunting challenges often look insurmountable until we act, commit to the work and push past the fear of the unknown.
8. I am of a firm view that these wise words are thought-provoking; they inspire hope and most importantly, resonate deeply with our conviction as a Department.
9. We believe that it is, indeed, possible through our collective efforts and commitment, to change the lives of our people for the better, as envisioned by our forebears.
10. **Madam Speaker**, to breathe life into our economic mandate, we are presenting this Policy and Budget Speech at a decisive moment for the country. Earlier this year, during the January 8th Statement, the governing party, the African National Congress (ANC) declared 2026 as ***“The Year of decisive action to fix local government and transform the economy”***.
11. The ANC, as the leader of society, understands that it will be practically impossible to attain the aspirations espoused by the **National Democratic Revolution (NDR)**, without efficient and proper functioning local government. Local government is a critical sphere of government, which serves as the proverbial engine room and the heartbeat of service delivery.
12. It is a worrisome historical fact that **our economy has not transformed**; it remains skewed and in the hands of the minority. The current economic trajectory continues to deepen and entrench high level of inequalities we are experiencing as country.
13. Therefore, we require a radical paradigm shift to change the economic landscape, so as to bolster our arsenal in the fight against the stubborn triple challenges of unprecedented level of unemployment, inequality and poverty.

14. As a Department, we have a unique responsibility to ensure that we contribute meaningfully to the project of fixing local government, by **fulfilling our legislative mandate of championing local economic development through strengthening our support to the informal sector of our economy**, leveraging on the **District Development Model (DDM)**.
15. **Madam Speaker**, in tabling our Department's budget, we do so on the precipice of profound milestones in our nation's history. In exactly five days from today, South Africa will **commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the June 16 Soweto Uprisings**.
16. Half a century ago, the youth of 1976 laid down their lives, marching against an oppressive system **to demand a fundamental right; a dignified, equitable education**. They fought for the right to choose their future. Today, the class of 2026 inherits that legacy, but their battlefield has shifted. Their struggle is no longer against forced language policies in classrooms; it is against the structural chokeholds of poverty, inequality, and unemployment.
17. As a Department tasked with steering the economic ship of the Province, we recognise that political freedom without economic freedom is an incomplete victory. We cannot honour the sacrifices of 1976 while 52.5% of our people live below the poverty line, and our youth remaining on the margins of economic participation.
18. Therefore, this budget framework is not just a ledger of numbers; it is a **direct response to the economic aspirations of our youth**. It is a tool for transformation designed to move our young people from being mere spectators of economic growth, to being its primary drivers.
19. We table this Budget as a declaration that this government will continue to dismantle the shackles of economic exclusion. We are investing in our youth, restoring dignity to our communities, and ensure that the rising sun shines brightly on every young entrepreneur trying to build a better future.

Mpumalanga's Economic Landscape

20. **Honourable Speaker**, the predicted economic landscape up to 2029-2030 foresees the highest economic industry growth in agriculture, finance, the transport and communication industry, as well as construction.
21. Our Provincial priority sectors or industries will continue to be **agriculture and agro-processing, mining, manufacturing, tourism and the green economy**, as per the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (MEGDP).
22. And in our quest to turn the tide on the Provincial economy, our Department is currently busy reviewing the **MEGDP** to incorporate economic plans and interventions. The review of this economic blueprint will be crucial to also address the growth and employment challenges of especially a key industry such as manufacturing.
23. In addition, our Department is also currently reviewing its **Provincial Trade and Investment Strategy**, to also include the identification of new export opportunities and markets, for our Province.

Growing the economy through re-industrialisation and localisation

24. **Madam Speaker**, when we stood before this August house last year, we pointed out that the Department has already developed a **Provincial Industrial Development Plan** that seeks to increase the industrial base in the Province, with a view to creating jobs opportunities for our people.
25. We further indicated that there are few initiatives that are already being rolled out in this regard, namely, the **Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (SEZ)** in the Nkomazi Local Municipality. and the **Petro-Chemical Industrial Park** in Secunda, in the Govan Mbeki Local Municipality.

26. In this regard, I must say that I am pleased with the progress made at SEZ, as the project has now gained significant traction. The infrastructure development programme continues to make measurable progress, particularly in the advancement of bulk water, roads, and electrical infrastructure. However, key challenges such as scope changes in sewer infrastructure and gaps in Professional Service Provider appointments require focused attention.
27. Overall, the project remains on track towards achieving infrastructure readiness, with milestones achieved in Bulk Roads Infrastructure, Bulk Electricity Infrastructure and internal Electrical Services.
28. Undoubtedly, the Nkomazi SEZ is a vital catalyst for the Province's economic transformation, job creation and poverty reduction. The Entity is the axis of economic integration, linking Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Limpopo with the neighbouring Kingdom of Eswatini and the Republic of Mozambique.
29. The attainment of the key milestones in the implementation of the Entity's strategic goals is testament to the commitment of the Provincial Government **to position the NSEZ as a catalytic project to stimulate economic growth, reduction of unemployment and poverty.**
30. And in line with its crusade to strengthen partnerships and collaborations with key strategic sectors of our economy, the Nkomazi SEZ has **signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Mpumalanga to promote innovation, research and development.**
31. At the heart of this MoU, is the drive to ensure that local communities benefit from the Nkomazi SEZ's industrialisation and investment opportunities. This partnership is also aimed at aligning academic expertise with the Entity's operational objectives.

32. Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, the Nkomazi SEZ has, to-date, signed an investment agreement with **DP World**, and there are other several investment engagements that are advanced and have reached critical stages with **Vutomi Energy, Lebombo Cotton Gin, Salamax Pty Ltd and Innotegy Renewable Fuels Solution**.
33. With regards to the envisaged **Energy SEZ**, to be located within the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, we can confirm that **a feasibility study has been finalised, and the project has been found to be both technically and financially viable**.
34. With regard to the **Petro-Chemical Industrial Technology Park**, we are pleased to report that the necessary conveyancing processes and the Township Register have been successfully completed, marking a significant milestone in the implementation of this strategic project.
35. During the current financial year, the Department will focus on the development of Terms of Reference for the appointment of engineering service providers to undertake the required technical and engineering services. Furthermore, a funding application will be submitted to **Infrastructure South Africa** to secure financial support for the detailed design phase of the project.
36. This initiative represents a significant step towards positioning Mpumalanga as a competitive petrochemical and industrial hub, while creating opportunities for investment attraction, enterprise development, industrial diversification, and sustainable job creation.

Investing in the Green Economy

37. **Madam Speaker**, our Department continues **to place the green economy at the centre of Mpumalanga's economic diversification agenda**. This must not be viewed as a departure from the Province's industrial base. This is a practical response to the changing structure of the economy which propels us to invest in new areas, and the need to ensure that communities, workers and enterprises are not left behind as the transition unfolds.

38. During the 2026 **State of the Province Address (SOPA)**, the Honourable Premier, Mr. Mandla Ndlovu, acknowledged the role of the **Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency (MGCA)** in facilitating the transition of the Provincial economy towards the green economy.
39. **Honourable Members**, when we tabled the 2025/2026 Policy and Budget Speech last year, we highlighted some catalytic projects in the green economy space which have the potential to create job opportunities and propel inclusive growth in the province. Therefore, allow me to report on the progress recorded thus far on the realization of these high impact projects:
- **The Umbila Emoyeni Wind Energy Project** continues to make significant progress and remains one of the province's flagship renewable energy investments. We are pleased to report that **Phase 1 and 2**, with an estimated generation capacity of approximately 155 MW, is at an advanced stage of construction and is nearing completion. Notable progress has been achieved on site, with more **than 25 wind turbines already erected**.
 - Furthermore, **Phase 3**, of the project has successfully reached financial close and construction activities have commenced, alongside the earlier phases, demonstrating continued momentum in the rollout of this strategic development. A major milestone has also been achieved with the completion and handover of the **400/132 kV Vunumoya Main Transmission Substation to Eskom**. The substation has been energised and is now facilitating grid integration, which is critical for the successful operation of the project and the delivery of electricity into the national grid.
 - Construction is actively underway across both the wind generation facilities and the associated transmission infrastructure, positioning the project to make a substantial contribution to energy security, economic growth, investment attraction, and job creation within the province.

- Furthermore, I am pleased to report to this House that the **Grootvlei Climate-Smart Horticulture Centre** located within the Dipaliseng Local Municipality has been officially launched as a strategic partnership between **Eskom and the Kingdom of the Netherlands**, aimed at advancing climate-smart agriculture and creating sustainable economic opportunities for local communities.
- The initiative is expected to contribute significantly to job creation and agricultural development over the next five years, while promoting environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices. A key milestone has been the implementation of the training and skills development programme, which is already empowering participants from Dipaleseng with practical agricultural and agribusiness skills.
- Without a doubt, the Centre stands as an important example of how strategic partnerships can drive innovation in agriculture, enhance food security, create sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to inclusive economic growth in our province.
- As part of the progress made on investment commitments secured through the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency (MGCA) during the Mining and Investment Summit held in October 2025, I am pleased to report significant developments regarding the **Highveld Solar Power Plant**, a 240 MW solar photovoltaic (PV) project being developed in eMalahleni by **Pele Green Energy**. This strategic investment is valued at approximately **R4.3 billion**.
- The project is expected to make a meaningful contribution to the local economy through the creation of an estimated **179 employment opportunities** during both the construction and operational phases. We are encouraged by the progress achieved to date, with the project having advanced into the development stage.
- This project demonstrates the province's growing attractiveness as a destination for renewable energy investment and underscores our commitment to energy security, economic growth, industrial development, and sustainable job creation for the people of Mpumalanga.

40. **Honourable Members**, we are forging ahead with our plans to host the much-anticipated **Mpumalanga Energy Investment Roundtable**. The envisaged Roundtable will bring together industry associations, developers, national and provincial departments, regulatory authorities and other key stakeholders to deliberate on strategies geared towards unlocking barriers affecting the roll-out of renewable energy and just energy transition related infrastructure in Mpumalanga.
41. Accordingly, through the MGCA, the Department will continue to support a transition that is coordinated, inclusive and investment-led.

Revitalising Tourism and Conservation!

42. **Honourable Members**, tourism remains one of the strategic sectors for economic growth and transformation, massive job creation and inclusive development in our province. **Tourism is, undoubtedly, the goose that continues to lay the golden egg** for our Province.
43. And for our Province to retain its second spot in terms of international tourist arrivals, the Department will continue to strengthen its support to the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) on its programme **to revitalise ageing infrastructure and the introduction of new tourism products**.
44. We are fully aware that if we are to remain one of the biggest powerhouses in the tourism sector, we need to go beyond relying solely on the beauty of Mpumalanga; hence we are **committed to work with the private sector to introduce new catalytic tourism products** to attract more tourists to the Province.
45. It was unfortunate that the severe flooding disasters of the recent past has dealt our flagship nature reserves and access networks a painful blow. This financial year, through our allocation to the MTPA, we are moving directly into aggressive rehabilitation mode.

46. Our focus will squarely be on **restoring access roads, repairing damaged perimeter fencing, and radically improving internal security systems** at our high-volume attraction sites. Furthermore, we are actively unlocking public-private partnerships to breathe new life into multi-million Rand impact projects, including the **long-awaited Blyde River Canyon Cable Car and the God's Window Skywalk**. These flagship assets will elevate tourist spend, lengthen stays, and directly incorporate local communities into the lucrative tourism value chain.
47. With regards to stabilising governance and the senior management leadership of the Entity, I am pleased to report that the recruitment drive to appoint a **Chief Executive Officer** for the MTPA is nearing its finalisation.
48. In our quest to position Mpumalanga as the prime tourist destination of choice, the MTPA has significantly strengthened the visibility of the **Place of the Rising Sun** in both domestic and international markets through participation in strategic tourism marketing platforms such as the **World Travel Market Africa, Meetings Africa, Africa's Travel Indaba, Tourism Month activations and G20 activities**. Our participation at the recent Africa's Travel Indaba was a success, given the level of engagements and agreements which are on the pipeline, with strategic tourism stakeholders.
49. Among other engagements, we met with the **Indian Consulate, the delegations from the Republic of Mozambique, and the Kingdom of Eswatini, as well as neighbouring provinces of Gauteng, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal**, with the objective of strengthening partnerships and promoting tourism collaboration.
50. Whilst at the Indaba, we also convened a successful high-level **Mpumalanga Tourism Investment Dialogue** with potential investors, to engage on various investment opportunities Mpumalanga tourism has and can offer. These efforts have been complemented by expanded marketing campaigns, strengthened tourism safety initiatives, and support to local events and sports tourism.
51. Importantly, we have continued to support emerging tourism enterprises, particularly those owned by historically disadvantaged individuals and the youth, ensuring that tourism growth is inclusive and broad-based.

52. Madam Speaker, we are delighted that the transformation of the **Bourke's Luck Potholes** facilities into tourist accommodation is nearing completion, while hospitality facilities across several reserves have been awarded star grading to improve quality standards.
53. We have also successfully appointed a concessionaire for the development of **Mtomeni Camp in the Mahushe Shongwe Nature Reserve**. The appointment of the concessionaire is yet another clearest indication that we are committed to leverage private sector collaboration and investment.
54. It is encouraging to also highlight that the refurbishment of the **Swadini Entrance Gate** has been completed, thus improving access control, revenue collection and visitor management. Likewise, the development of the **Barberton Makhonjwa Mountains World Heritage Site** remains a priority, and engagements are ongoing to resolve stakeholder issues and unlock its full tourism and heritage potential.
55. Evidently, the investments already made in the tourism sector are beginning to yield value through improved visitor experiences and increased revenue generation.

Strengthening support for small business development

56. Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, for us to change the economic landscape of the Province for the better, we have continued to focus our energies on **strengthening our support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**.
57. Our economic development blueprint, the Mpumalanga Economic Growth and Development Path (MEGDP), thus remains a crucial document in this regard, as it propels us to intensify our support to MSMEs so as to eradicate poverty and create massive sustainable jobs. This sector is crucial as it is, in fact, the one that creates more jobs.
58. Therefore, our Department **remains committed to strengthen support to MSMEs**, as critical drivers of economic development, job creation, and inclusive growth.

59. Accordingly, we have scaled up our support to MSMEs by providing **equipment, tools of trade and aftercare services to women and youth-owned businesses in the textile, automotive industry and green economy particularly in the township and rural areas.**
60. We have also been able to support small enterprises such as **Car Washes, Hair Salons, Spaza Shops and Manufacturing businesses.** Coupled with that, we have successfully onboarded **50 MSMEs onto the *Takealot.com* platform.**
61. Our support for these small enterprises is not just a box-tick exercise; but rather a clear testament that we are intentional in our resolve to reposition the township and rural economy, as the central pillar of inclusive economic growth, employment creation, and spatial redress.
62. In addition, as we continue to leverage and embrace the **District Development Model (DDM) by** collaborating with municipalities across the Province to create awareness about the **Spaza Shop Support Fund Stimulus Package**, as part of our unprecedented drive to provide support to the informal and township economy.
63. Madam Speaker, in our appreciation of the structural barriers that continue to limit the participation of youth and women entrepreneurs in the mainstream economy, our Entity, **the Mpumalanga Economic Growth Agency (MEGA) is intensifying its interventions** to ensure that these groups receive targeted and meaningful support.
64. This includes expanding access to development finance, enterprise development programmes, mentorship, and market opportunities that enable MSMEs to grow and become sustainable contributors to the provincial economy.
65. We are placing special focus on youth and women-owned businesses, as these segments often face challenges such as limited collateral, access to networks, and business development resources.

66. Through dedicated funding instruments, capacity-building initiatives, and partnerships with both public and private sector stakeholders, MEGA seeks to remove these barriers and create a more enabling environment for entrepreneurship.
67. In addition, MEGA will continue to align its MSME Support Programme with national transformation priorities, as articulated by the **Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (*the dtic*) and the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA)**, to ensure that provincial initiatives contribute meaningfully to broader economic transformation and empowerment objectives.
68. Going forward, as part of our agenda of strengthening support to MSMEs, we aim to **stimulate innovation, local economic participation, and sustainable job creation**, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and resilient provincial economy.
69. Through its development finance mandate, **MEGA will continue to offer accessible funding solutions**, including loans and blended finance instruments, aimed at enabling MSMEs to start, sustain, and expand their business operations. These financial interventions are designed to address the financing gaps often experienced by small businesses, particularly those that may not easily access funding from traditional financial institutions.
70. **Madam Speaker**, the **shortage of skilled youth and women remains a major concern**. This has created a situation where the lack of skills has become a constraint limiting MSME participation in the Provincial economy. And to address this, the Department will leverage on the Incubation Programme, as a strategic vehicle to equip MSMEs with both technical and business skills, thereby enabling their integration into the mainstream economy.
71. Our focus areas also include stainless and carbon steel fabrication, which will benefit **20 young people**, as well as **wood and furniture manufacturing**, which will train a **further 30 young people**.

72. Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, our **Industrial Parks Revitalisation Programme** is gaining momentum. I am particularly pleased that the fencing of the entire Ekandustria Industrial Park, as well as the refurbishment and commissioning of the Waste-water Treatment Works, was completed in the first quarter of the 2025-2026 financial year.
73. The perimeter fencing for both **Kabokweni and Siyabuswa Industrial Parks** has also been identified as a priority. To this end, MEGA has appointed a contractor to start fencing Industrial Cluster 1 of the Kabokweni Industrial Park, and I am encouraged that the project is at 90%; it is expected to be completed by the end of June 2026.
74. I am further delighted that our programme for **revitalising Small Industrial Parks** has received a shot in the arm, as MEGA has received the much-needed cash injection of an additional amount of 15 million Rands (R15 million), from the **Department of Small Business Development**, to complete the refurbishment of the following small industrial parks within the current financial year:
- **Kabokweni and Kanyamazane Small Industrial Parks** (in the City of Mbombela);
 - **Siyabuswa and Kameelrivier Small Industrial Parks** (in the Dr JS Moroka Local Municipality);
 - **Verena Small Industrial Park** (in the Thembisile Hani Local Municipality); and the
 - **Dundonald Small Industrial Park** (in the Chief Albert Luthuli Municipality).
75. **Honourable Speaker**, we need more investment to support economic growth in our Province. And in our quest to achieve this, we managed to raise **238-billion Rands in investment pledges during the two-day Investment and Mining Conference held in Middelburg in the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality in October last year.**

Business Regulation and Governance

76. With regards to regulating and governing business operations, **the Mpumalanga Economic Regulator (MER) continues to do a sterling and flawless oversight of the liquor and gambling industries** of our Province. The Regulator remains one of our Province's most vital financial contributor, optimising provincial own-revenue collections to ensure we can fund critical social services.
77. In this regard, the MER has successfully **generated approximately R2 billion** in revenue, representing a significant increase from the previous year's **R1.5 billion** and demonstrating improved efficiency, compliance, and growth within the sectors.
78. Evidently, this growth reflects not only improved efficiency, but also the success of positioning Mpumalanga as a leader in gambling and liquor regulation, enabling our licensees to participate competitively in a broader national market.
79. We, however, note with deep concern recent developments regarding national tax proposals in the concurrent regulatory space, specifically relating to online bookmakers. Our analysis indicates that these measures could skyrocket the effective burden on licensed operators to over 42.5% of Gross Gambling Revenue before operating costs.
80. Accordingly, we firmly concur with the view **that such national duplication risks crowding our Provincial collections, and severely weakening our capacity to fund local socio-economic programmes**. We, thus, commit to continue engaging our national counterparts to vigorously defend our Provincial fiscal base.
81. **Madam Speaker**, modern economies and societies need effective regulations to support growth, investment, innovation, market openness and upholding of the rule of law. To realise this, the Department **continues to work with municipalities and key stakeholders** to enforce business compliance with relevant business regulations and legislations.

82. During the previous financial year, we hosted a number of business licensing workshops across key local municipalities to ensure proper coordination and support for the development of the informal sector.
83. These interventions were not isolated engagements, but part of a deliberate strategy to strengthen municipal capacity and ensure effective implementation of business licensing frameworks. As a result, **10 municipalities** across the three Districts were capacitated and we were also able to train **over 367 officials and stakeholders**.
84. What is encouraging is that most participating municipalities have fully operational and enforceable by-laws, while others are actively reviewing and strengthening their regulatory frameworks. Municipalities were also guided to enforce regulations in a manner that avoids unnecessary Red Tape while promoting economic participation.
85. We have also **intensified joint inspections with law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance with business legislation**. This has resulted in **66 business inspections across the Province**, resulting in quite a number of shops being closed due to non-compliance. This ranged from operating without valid licenses and failure to meet health and safety standards.
86. In terms of safeguarding the rights of citizens, consumer protection remains central to our mandate of ensuring fair, safe, and transparent market practices. In this regard, during the 2025-2026 financial year, a total of **159 consumer cases were received**. **Of these cases, 128 cases were successfully resolved**, reflecting a strong resolution rate and effective dispute management. This has resulted in the recovery of **808 thousand, 4-hundred-and-84 and 88 cents** on behalf of consumers.
87. **Madam Speaker**, the Mpumalanga Economic Regulator (MER) continues to play a critical role in ensuring that our liquor and gambling sectors contribute meaningfully to economic growth, while protecting our communities from social harm.

88. During the previous financial year, MER **intensified compliance and enforcement** across the Province. Working together with law enforcement and key stakeholders, the Entity conducted more than **6,800 liquor inspections**, with the majority of establishments found to be compliant. Where there were violations, decisive action was taken, including closures and suspensions, sending a clear message that non-compliance will not be tolerated.
89. We have also taken firm action against illegal gambling activities, removing harmful and unregulated operations from our communities. This work is critical in protecting vulnerable groups, particularly young people.
90. As a responsible government, through initiatives like the **Miss Mpumalanga Pageant**, we have and will aggressively continue to **educate our youth about the deep dangers of irresponsible gambling and substance abuse**.
91. The MER is also prioritizing the commissioning of a feasibility study for the proposed **Fourth Casino License** during the previous financial year, in line with the commitments made in the previous Policy and Budget Speech. The study is currently underway.

Budget Allocation per Programme

92. **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:
93. **Programme 1:** Administration will receive an amount of **146 million, 928 thousand Rands** to enable effective operational support to the programmes of the Department and its Public Entities.
94. **Programme 2:** Integrated Economic Development will receive **358 million, 585 thousand rands**. Included in this amount, is **281 million, 598 thousand Rands** to fund the requirements of MEGA, and **3 million, 138 thousand Rands** for the Mpumalanga Tourism Youth Fund.

95. **Programme 3:** Trade and Sector Development will receive an amount of **135 million, 545 thousand Rands**. Included in this amount, is **80 million, 439 thousand Rands** for the Nkomazi SEZ; **2 million, 307 thousand Rands** for the Mpumalanga Stainless Steel Initiative; **743 thousand Rands** for the Furntech, and 21 million for the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency.
96. **Programme 4:** Business Regulation and Governance will receive **165 million, 17 thousand Rands** which includes **136 million, 728 thousand Rands** to fund the requirements of the MER.
97. **Programme 5:** Economic Planning will receive **25 million, 564 thousand Rands**.
98. And lastly, **Programme 6:** Tourism is allocated **574 million, 996 thousand Rands**, which includes **563 million, 560 thousand Rands** to fund the requirements of the MTPA.
99. The total amount to be transferred by the Department to its Public Entities is **981 million, 886 thousand Rands**.
100. **Honourable Speaker**, this Policy and Budget Speech is not an exercise in optimism; it is a meticulously calculated roadmap engineered for economic execution. We have aligned every single Rand for structural transformation, job creation, and spatial equality.
101. 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, 406 million, 635 thousand Rands** to fund the requirements of the Department (Vote 6), for the financial year ending March 2027.

Appreciation

102. **Madam Speaker**, allow me to extend my profound gratitude to my political home, the **African National Congress**, the liberation movement of *Imbokodo*, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela for entrusting us with the task of implementing the electoral mandate during the term of the 7th Administration.

103. I also wish to extend my deepest gratitude to the Honourable Premier, Mr. Mandla Ndlovu, for his unyielding strategic leadership; the members of the Portfolio Committee for keeping our pencils sharp through rigorous oversight, and to the tireless staff of the Department and our Public Entities.
104. To the people of Mpumalanga, ***“The Place of The Rising sun,”*** the sun is rising once more. We are reconstructing; we are recovering; and we are opening the doors of economic participation wide enough for everyone to walk through.
105. Madam Speaker, let me conclude by also extending my gratitude to my family for allowing me to continue to serve our people; to 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.

Indeed, Mpumalanga Is a Province That Works for All!

I thank you!





POLICY & BUDGET SPEECH

2026/2027



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