

The State of the Province Address by the Premier of the Western Cape, Alan Winde – 17 February 2021

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“The Western Cape will lead from the front to deliver jobs, safety and dignity”

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable members of the Provincial Cabinet,

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition,

Honourable members of provincial parliament,

The District Mayor and Mayors present here today,

Distinguished guests,

The People of Genadendal and the Overberg,

The People of the Western Cape:

It is a great honour for me to once again deliver my State of the Province Address to you in one of our communities, some distance away from our parliamentary chamber in central Cape Town.

It is an even greater honour for me to be able to do so before *this* community - in the town of Genadendal.

Our “Valley of Grace”.

To the residents of this historic place,

Thank you for welcoming us here today.

The work of this Parliament is your work.

Its debates are your debates.

The laws it passes are your laws.

And so, it is only right that you are part of this State of the Province Address too.

Speaker,

For most people in our province, travelling to Cape Town to observe our parliamentary sittings is not possible.

And so, bringing parliament to the people in this way is an expression of our commitment to sharing our plans with the people of the Western Cape, to democracy and to our Constitution.

I thank you and the members of the Provincial Parliament for affording me this opportunity today.

Genadendal is inspiration for courage

To the people of Genadendal,

While I was preparing for this address, I drew inspiration from your town, its people, and the remarkable resilience they have shown.

As the first missionary settlement in our country, this place not only has a rich history, but a painful one too.

It is where hundreds of freed slaves found sanctuary more than two hundred years ago.

It is a place that many Khoi people called home at a time when they faced oppression, contributing to the cultural and linguistic history of this area.

Like the rest of the country, its history has also been stitched together by the crimes of our past: of racism and Apartheid.

It had the pride of being home to the first teacher's college ever established in South Africa, but also the pain of seeing it closed in 1927 because of the ugly belief that the colour of someone's skin, and not the content of their character, should determine their future.

And so Genadendal's story has also been one of struggle, of standing up to hate and to overcoming adversity.

Speaker,

This is a place from which we can learn a great deal.

It is a place of pain and strife.

A place of diversity.

But also, of freedom and of courage.

Above all, as it still stands here today, it is a symbol of hope.

Hope that we can overcome some of our greatest challenges.

Hope that our past, no matter how difficult, will not determine our future.

This is an inspiration we all need to draw on - now more than ever.

Because the Western Cape will need to have both courage and hope in what will be a difficult year ahead.

Our three 'North Star' priorities

Honourable members,

In October last year, I delivered a special address to you at a sitting of our parliament.

I talked to you about the bravery and courage that is needed of each and every one of us - regardless of our political affiliation - as we make the bold choices necessary for our recovery.

I shared with you our plan to create jobs,

To ensure safer communities,

And above all to give effect to the dignity and well-being that every person in our province deserves.

And I explained that we now all face a mammoth challenge as we pursue these 'North Stars'.

The Covid-19 pandemic, and the consequences of nearly a year of constrained growth and various forms of restrictions, have cost both lives and livelihoods in the Western Cape.

The courage to get the job done is still what is needed by us all.

But, Speaker, I have realised more and more that it will require something else as well.

It will require that our province takes the lead in getting this job done.

It requires us leading from the front in South Africa: with new ideas; with better policies, and with good, clean and accountable government.

We will not hesitate to take the lead in the year ahead. Because a strong and successful Western Cape makes South Africa stronger too.

And while we will always respect and honour the constitutional principle of cooperative governance, we will not hesitate to tackle any obstacle that stands in the way of delivering jobs, safety and dignity in this province.

Speaker,

Today I will provide a report back to you on the progress of the plans that I announced to you in that special address.

While it has only been 4 months, it is important that we keep the momentum going, as we now land these interventions in our government.

They are, as I said then, our recipe for hope and a real change.

They are how we will lead from the front in delivering jobs, safety and dignity for our people.

Leading from the front on delivering a successful vaccination programme

Speaker, honourable members,

Before I share this update with you, I want to first address the single, most important 'moon-short' for our province in 2021:

The successful rollout of a Covid-19 vaccination programme in the Western Cape,

So that we vaccinate as many people as possible, as quickly as possible.

And why?

Because if we don't, we will continue to be held captive by Covid-19, watching as more of our family members die, or lose their jobs.

The second wave has shown us this clearly. Caused by a new, more infectious variant of the virus, many more people in South Africa have been infected, and at a faster rate, during this second wave.

We have now lost nearly 11 000 people in this province.

There are many husbands and wives, friends and children, who have not ushered in this new year with joy.

Instead, they have had to face the great sorrow of saying goodbye for the last time to someone they love dearly, or not being able to say goodbye properly at all.

They are all in our thoughts and our prayers.

At the same time, many more people across our province have lost their job or have had to close their small business.

They now face the indignity of not having the means to support themselves and their families.

This has indeed been a time of great loss.

A loss of life.

A loss of opportunity.

And a loss of dignity.

Honourable members,

There can therefore be no greater priority than ending this pandemic as soon as possible.

It should be energising each and every one of us.

It should force us to all be asking: what can I do to help?

That is why the Western Cape will not just be a spectator, especially when there are clear solutions that can bring back our freedom to live healthy lives, and our freedom to work.

That is why this province will also be leading from the front on delivering a successful vaccination programme.

The Western Cape's Covid-19 four-pronged vaccine strategy

Speaker,

Unfortunately, the centralised vaccines procurement process by the national government has not yet secured enough vaccines for the country to achieve the necessary population immunity this year.

Of those vaccines that it has been able to announce as secured, most will not be available before our winter.

This means that we will face another wave of Covid-19 infections and deaths in our country.

While this is heart-breaking, given all that we have been through already, the cold reality is that we must make sure we are fully prepared to save lives, to save jobs and to bring hope back in 2021.

To achieve this objective, the Western Cape Government has adopted a four-pronged strategy.

Firstly, we are doing whatever it takes to prepare for a successful roll-out of vaccines in the Western Cape, when they arrive.

Secondly, we are mitigating the risk that a centralised vaccine procurement process creates, by putting in place the necessary systems that will enable us to procure additional vaccines for our people.

Thirdly, we are making sure that we are fully prepared for the inevitable third wave of Covid-19 infections that will again bring loss to so many families in our province.

And lastly, we will support our world-class scientists here in the Western Cape in identifying safe and effective therapeutic treatments for those who are ill.

Given that this strategy will impact almost every other government priority this year, I want to spend a bit of time unpacking each of these pillars.

The Western Cape's plans for a successful Covid-19 vaccine rollout programme

Speaker,

It is the goal of this government to ensure that the Western Cape has the most efficient vaccine roll-out programme in South Africa.

And that we maintain our record as being a corruption-free government in doing so.

To ensure that this happens, we have established a Western Cape Covid-19 Vaccine Co-ordinating Committee, that will oversee three core work streams.

The first workstream will oversee the operational roll-out of vaccines by developing a service delivery and distribution model, ensuring cold chain management, and providing adequate human resources.

This programme also includes the development of the required information systems that will allow us to do targeted vaccination and to monitor the vaccine roll-out.

We will be leveraging our existing technology to reach those who fall under high-risk groups, such as the elderly and those with comorbidities, so that they can be targeted to achieve the greatest impact through the vaccine roll-out.

We have already proven our ability to do so through our now internationally acclaimed and award-winning VECTOR programme, that saw us identify, actively manage and monitor diabetics in the Western Cape who were infected with Covid-19, substantially reducing mortality in this high-risk group.

As part of this targeting, we will also adopt a decentralised approach as far as possible, so that especially those at higher risk of severe illness can access the vaccine close to where they live through a range of convenient options.

Speaker,

Because we also know that the operational roll-out of the approved Covid-19 vaccine will not be successful if residents decide not to get vaccinated, a fundamental part of this plan is to share as much information with the public as possible as to why vaccines are safe and effective.

We will therefore launch a major campaign in the Western Cape, using a variety of different media, as well as community voices, to share accurate and factual information with the public on the vaccines being used.

Finally, underpinning everything we do, will be our continued commitment to transparency in all vaccination related procurement by our government.

I can therefore confirm that we will be incorporating all vaccine related procurement in our Covid-19 Procurement Disclosure Report.

This will allow the public to scrutinise our payments and compare unit costs.

Honourable members,

I want to use this opportunity to issue a warning to anyone – in our government or outside of it – that thinks they can try and steal from the people of the Western Cape while we try and rollout vaccines:

Corruption is not tolerated in this province.

And I will personally lay charges against any person in our government that tries to steal from the people.

Provincial procurement of vaccines in the Western Cape

Speaker,

As it stands now, the centralised vaccine procurement process has not yet secured enough vaccines to prevent a third wave and to end this pandemic.

It is therefore the moral and ethical responsibility of this government to ensure it has done everything possible to secure an adequate supply of safe, approved and effective vaccines for the people of this province.

That is why we have also taken the decision to embark on a provincial procurement process to acquire additional vaccines for the Western Cape.

While it will not be easy, it is a necessary mitigation measure against the unquestionable risk of putting all our eggs in one basket.

To not do so would be an abdication of our responsibility as a provincial government and my own oath of office.

For this province has under the Constitution of the Republic a shared competency for health.

And we will not hesitate to take the lead if it means we can help save lives and jobs in South Africa.

But, Speaker, I also want to be crystal clear that this provincial procurement does not mean we are at odds with the national government.

It also does not mean that we will not work or align closely with them.

We have shown throughout this pandemic that we take the constitutionally enshrined principle of cooperative governance seriously.

More seriously than the national government itself does.

We are not about to stop now.

We will continue to assist the national government wherever we can, and we will ensure that any vaccines secured through centralised or provincial processes are efficiently rolled out in our province.

I can report back today that as part of this process, our Department of Health has started reaching out to manufacturers, in the first step towards procurement.

Our Provincial Treasury has also taken the necessary steps to budget for this contingency, and further announcements will be made in the budget speech next month.

We will continue to lead from the front on vaccines, and we will do so safely and responsibly.

The Western Cape's plans to respond to a 'third wave'

Speaker,

The third and equally important pillar of this strategy is ensuring that we continue to save lives in the Western Cape, especially during an inevitable third wave.

While it is not possible to know precisely when this third wave will start, a surge will likely take place in our winter.

To ensure we are prepared for this, we are developing a comprehensive response plan.

The first component of this plan is to ensure prevention behaviour continues in the Western Cape.

We will therefore continue to work with our communities so that they change the way they behave by wearing masks, social distancing, and avoiding the 3Cs of crowds, close contact and confined spaces.

This will be done through our tried-and-tested hotspot approach, partnering with key stakeholders, using our communication capacity and coordinating our responses through our Joint Operations Centres.

And we will focus on residents in our province who are at a higher risk of severe illness and death.

The second component of this plan is to rapidly upscale testing to ensure that we identify those with Covid-19. We will be shifting to rapid antigen testing to ensure that this happens, and the NHLS is currently procuring the supplies needed.

The third part of this response will be to retain a core field hospital capacity in the Western Cape, so that our health platform will have the ability to manage the increased pressure.

The Brackengate Hospital of Hope will therefore remain open into the foreseeable future as our main Covid-19 field hospital, with a 338-bed capacity.

And we will make use of all our infrastructure enhancements added during the first and second wave, including the Mitchells Plain Hospital of Hope, Ward 99, the Freesia Ward, as well as beds added across the province in places like Hermanus, George and Vredendal.

The fourth part of this plan includes making available additional acute care capacity at our hospitals, through repurposing beds for Covid-19 patients as the demand is required. We have done extensive planning during the first and second wave, and these plans will be refined further so it works even better.

Finally, the fifth component is to ensure that we have enough PPE, staff and oxygen.

Again, the work we have done during the second wave has put us in a strong position.

We currently have sufficient PPE and materials in storage, and we continue to add stock as required.

We have employed an additional 1044 healthcare workers, who will continue to assist us during this time.

And we have bulk stored oxygen at our facilities, as well as maintaining our contract with Afrox so that we can upscale supply if demand increases.

Taking the lead on therapeutic treatment of Covid-19

Speaker,

The final pillar of our strategy is to ensure that we leverage the Western Cape's world-class capacity for research by making available safe and approved therapeutic treatments at our hospitals.

We have done so already to date with Dexamethasone, as soon as the clinical data showed it was safe, effective and approved for use.

We also pioneered the use of high-flow oxygen in South Africa during the first wave, which assisted greatly in treating those who were critically ill.

I am confident that there are many more promising medical developments that we can lead on or assist with in the Western Cape.

In fact, I was informed this week that there are already hundreds of Covid-19 research studies underway at the University of Cape Town, the University of Stellenbosch, and the University of the Western Cape.

One of these, for example, is the planned Covid-19 clinical treatment trial on the effectiveness of Ivermectin in the treatment of Covid-19.

The Western Cape will continue to support new treatments such as these, by conducting trials at our health facilities in line with our stringent regulatory and ethics approval processes.

This will be particularly important over the next year, and until such a stage as the pandemic finally ends in this province.

Participation of Western Cape healthcare workers in Johnson & Johnson trial

Speaker,

The Western Cape's commitment to participate in approved medical trials will be evident again this very afternoon.

This afternoon Minister NomaFrench Mbombo will join President Ramaphosa at Khayelitsha District Hospital, as we administer the first Johnson & Johnson vaccine to healthcare workers as part of an approved trial.

I have no doubt that the reason the Western Cape was selected as the site for this launch today is because of our advanced planning for the roll-out of vaccines to date.

I want to thank every single healthcare worker involved in this approved trial.

Like the rest of South Africa, we are hopeful that it will provide us with the evidence we need to then roll-out vaccines effectively and in much larger numbers in the coming months.

The responsibility of citizens to stay safe

Honourable members,

At the moment, and until such stage as we achieve population immunity, the most important thing we can all do is ensure that we do not get infected by Covid-19, and do not spread Covid-19.

Every single person in our province has a responsibility to make sure we keep on saving lives in the Western Cape.

I know this is difficult.

I know you are tired, and frustrated. I am too.

I know the masks you wear are sometimes uncomfortable. I often find it is too.

But let's keep pushing ahead - there is hope on the horizon and we cannot afford to let our guard down now.

We must stay safe so that we can keep on moving forward in this province.

Leading from the front to create jobs

Speaker,

As we plan for what will no doubt be another challenging year for our province, we need to acknowledge upfront that we are not just facing a health crisis.

This pandemic is also a jobs crisis - with millions of South Africans losing their jobs in the last year alone.

It is a humanitarian crisis - as many more unemployed people are unable to put food on the table and feed their families.

And it is a dignity crisis - as the poor and most vulnerable in our society now face even greater obstacles to achieving their dreams.

That is why our government has from the very beginning argued that we must get the balance right in saving both lives and livelihoods in South Africa.

And it is the reason why I commit to continue fighting for the economy and for jobs in the Western Cape.

Because jobs help fight crime.

Jobs mean children stay in school.

Jobs mean people do not go hungry.

And ultimately, jobs mean dignity.

Speaker,

We must be under no illusion as to how serious this jobs emergency is.

While the Western Cape still has the lowest expanded unemployment rate in South Africa by some margin, over 270 000 people have lost their job in our province over the last year.

There was a bounce-back in the last quarter, with 37 000 new jobs created, but it is clearly not enough to get us back to pre-pandemic levels.

That is why the first priority of this government is to create jobs.

We must again take the lead in South Africa, by being a place of hope and opportunity for the people of the Western Cape.

In doing so I want to be clear that in this province, the private sector – and not the state – will deliver job creation.

The role of our government is to support the economy by creating an environment where the private sector thrives.

This was the approach that we adopted with our economic recovery interventions, which I announced in October.

Through coordinated action across government departments, its objective was to help businesses create or save jobs in the middle of this crisis.

On Monday, I shared some of the successes of this recovery plan, when I visited one of our pilot projects that supported township businesses in the Western Cape.

This Community Economic Recovery project, which was launched in partnership with the EDP, issued 1 357 vouchers for nutritious food products that could be redeemed at spaza shops.

This provided them with the opportunity to stay in business, while also helping those who are hungry.

Honourable members,

This recovery plan also helped create 7 493 job opportunities in the private sector as of December 2020, with R4 billion rand in investment secured over the last financial year.

And it assisted especially vulnerable communities by creating 27 148 job opportunities through our EPWP programme.

I want to use this opportunity to thank all the departments and entities involved in this plan.

This is how you lead from the front, with passion and innovation.

Infrastructure-led growth

Speaker,

To create the jobs that we need to recover from the pandemic over the long term, however, we need to invest more in infrastructure that stimulates economic growth in our province.

The bottom line is that we are not currently investing enough in infrastructure and this needs to change.

The challenge we face, however, is that we have very little fiscal room to manoeuvre.

We have already experienced R1,6 billion in cuts this financial year and almost all our current funding comes via the provincial equitable share.

Unless more money is allocated to provinces by the national government to stimulate infrastructure-led growth, we simply can't afford it currently.

It is for this reason that we have taken the decision to build up a portfolio of investment projects that can attract private finance where appropriate.

Borrowing for infrastructure investment makes sense, as the money goes to the creation of assets that will benefit future generations, and the burden of payment can be spread over time – much like many households do when they buy a house.

High quality project preparation is the key to effective and sustainable borrowing.

That is why once a project has been identified, it will undergo the necessary technical work, together with bankability and feasibility studies to investigate both the impact on our budgets and the alternative sources of financing required to supplement budgets.

This will enable our Provincial Treasury to then identify the form of financing that is required, and if borrowing is necessary.

It is our plan for this process to work hand-in-hand with a dedicated infrastructure agency that can contract and borrow money as a 3D entity under the PFMA.

We will therefore shortly be appointing a panel of infrastructure finance experts, who will take forward the technical work in establishing this infrastructure financing entity.

This is not a quick process, but our objective is to get it done in this current term of office.

A single Transport Authority for greater Cape Town

Speaker,

For someone to access a job opportunity, to get from work to home safely and to do so with dignity, they need a safe, reliable and working public transport system.

We currently do not have this in the Western Cape because of our failing train network - which has been a victim of years of mismanagement, looting and state capture at Prasa.

To address this, I announced last year that we will start an initial engagement with our partners and other stakeholders around the creation of a single transport authority for the greater Cape Town region – something which all modern cities have.

Since then, our Department of Transport and Public Works has hit the ground running and has already completed the first feasibility study that will now inform a business case proposal that will serve before our cabinet this year.

Sadly though, this is not a quick fix. It will take time, coordination and of course financing over the longer term.

That is why we simultaneously need to work with Prasa to get our public transport moving again.

Minister Bonginkosi Madikizela, understands this and has been leading from the front, in partnership with Prasa.

We have accordingly entered into a MOU to cooperate and coordinate our efforts for the purposes of improving the infrastructure, management, safety and operations of the rail network.

And have contributed towards this partnership with an initial amount of R10 million, to assist with vegetation control in rail reserves, yards and infrastructure assets within the Metrorail Western Cape region. Through this, 80 people have been employed.

Like with the successful Rail Enforcement Unit - which we are working on resurrecting when PRASA can confirm their financial contribution - this is essential for the functioning of the system, as was seen with the recommencement of the Cape Town to Langa route on Monday.

I would like to thank Prasa Western Cape and Minister Madikizela for embracing the spirit of cooperation, as we work together to fix our train network as a priority.

A 'Blue-dot' taxi service for the Western Cape

Speaker,

A key form of mobility in our province, and an important partner in our plans for job creation, safety and dignity, is the taxi industry.

Tens of thousands of residents are transported by this mode of transport every single day.

It is therefore important that we work together to ensure that we have a safe and efficient taxi network.

The Red-Dot transport service launched last year, is a shining beacon of what this kind of cooperation can achieve.

As part of this 'Red Dot' project, a fleet of over 100 minibus taxis undertook over 110 000 trips to get healthcare workers to and from work safely during curfew times.

This is clearly an approach that works and that is precisely why we are looking at ways to expand it.

As I announced in October, we will now look to pilot a 'Blue-Dot' transport service that will be a voluntary, rewards-based programme.

It will leverage technology and incentivise behaviour change to ensure a safe and efficient taxi service.

In order to do so, it will provide financial incentives or rewards for improved quality of service and safety and it will use a five-star rating system.

I am very pleased to reveal today that Minister Madikizela will launch the first phase of this new 'Blue-Dot' service pilot next month.

The Western Cape will be first province to beat load-shedding

Speaker,

Infrastructure-led growth and a well-run, reliable transport network will assist greatly in generating the economic growth that we need to fight the battle against unemployment.

But it will mean very little if our economy does not have the energy it needs to grow.

Eskom's load-shedding, which continues this year, cost the Western Cape's economy approximately R75 million per stage, per day in 2020.

If you combine this with the devastation that Covid-19 has wrought, on both lives and livelihoods, it is unfathomable to expect families and businesses to have to contend with this too.

Well, Speaker, this isn't acceptable to our government.

We don't want this for our residents.

We don't want this for our businesses.

And that is why, we must lead from the front in ensuring we are the first province to beat load shedding in South Africa.

We are already making progress in achieving this goal.

At the end of last year, we launched our Municipal Energy Resilience Project, which will assist municipalities in taking the necessary steps to generate, procure and sell their own power.

We have also committed R20 million per year over a two-year period to roll out this project.

As part of the first phase, DEDAT, in partnership with the Department of Local Government and Provincial Treasury, has already undertaken an assessment process with all municipalities to determine their readiness for and to select those that can be the initial drivers of new energy opportunities.

We have also now procured technical expertise that will help our municipalities become energy resilient.

I am very excited to note that Stellenbosch Municipality has already taken the lead, launching the first step in this project.

When you combine this with the extensive work done by the City of Cape Town, which continues to keep residents on a lower level of load shedding, it becomes clear that we are moving towards a load-shedding free future in the Western Cape.

I repeat again:

The Western Cape will be the first province to beat load shedding in South Africa.

The Western Cape will leverage innovation in agriculture to create jobs

Speaker,

Amidst the great losses that our economy experienced over the last year, there was one very notable exception that provided an important buffer, and that was Agriculture.

The Western Cape's good rain and pioneering work on agricultural technology has seen record-breaking harvests this past year, and this, in turn, is boosting exports from our province.

We congratulate the citrus industry for breaking records with the 146 million cartons exported last year.

When something is giving you a competitive advantage to this extent, it only makes sense to invest in it further.

And that is why leveraging our agricultural economy for growth and recovery is a key priority of the Western Cape in the year ahead.

To do so, we will continue to be the leaders of agricultural technology on the African continent.

Drone technology in particular is assisting the Western Cape increase both animal and crop production, as well as expertly monitoring crop and soil health across the province.

That is why I am personally very excited by the Department of Agriculture's plan to embrace drone technology to the benefit of the agricultural community through a training programme.

There are in fact already 13 drone pilots who have completed their training and a second group will also 'get their wings' by the end of March this year.

I have no doubt they are all going to be key drivers of our economic growth in the years to come.

I would like to give a 'shout out' to Herman Nkonyana, Chris Meintjies, Teneal Marthinus and Stefan Theron, as well as the rest of your classmates, and I wish you luck in applying this new technology to the benefit of the agricultural community.

Honourable members,

As new agricultural technology develops globally, we need to make sure our province stays competitive.

That is why researchers in the Department of Agriculture's Fourth Industrial Revolution programme will also fast track new technology development within their respective portfolios and pursue new technology available outside of the department.

This will then be made available to the sector.

The Western Cape will lead on creating green jobs, responding to climate change

Honourable members,

Our devastating drought has taught us that we also need to prepare for the increasingly erratic consequences of climate change.

This not only ensures a more resilient economy but can also help create many job opportunities in the new, green economy.

I am therefore very happy to announce that we will create 1000 green jobs in the year ahead through the rehabilitation of 15 000 hectares of agricultural land by clearing alien vegetation.

I am also excited to announce that the Western Cape has now appointed a Climate Change and Risk Assessment Scientist, Professor Stephanie Midgley, who joined our government last month.

This will help ensure that we build resilience in our agricultural economy on the basis of expert advice.

We warmly welcome the professor to our team.

Our plans for tourism recovery

Speaker, Honourable Members,

There is no better way to enable job creation through the private sector than by attracting new investment, growing exports, and stimulating travel to our province.

This brings foreign currency into South Africa, creates jobs and stimulates a value chain that also supports small business – creating a cycle of opportunity.

That is why I remain extremely concerned about the consequences of constrained tourism both domestically and globally.

International tourism will not recover to pre-Covid-19 levels this year, as the pandemic continues in many countries around the world.

There are also a growing number of restrictions being placed on travel to our country due to what I believe is unfair global reporting on the variant identified by scientists in South Africa.

Nevertheless, we need to prepare for what will be another difficult year for the tourism sector in our province.

Fortunately, through our world-class tourism promotion agency, Wesgro, we have developed the experience to respond to crises.

The key lesson we learnt during the drought is that partnerships between business and government are far more effective in coordinating responses that work.

We will be leveraging all these lessons learnt – and our valued existing partnerships, including the award-winning Air Access programme – to stimulate travel to our province.

The first critical step will be ensuring that our air network recovers after a number of routes were suspended or cancelled last year.

The bottom line is that if there is no connectivity, the long-haul travel to our province will be even more difficult to promote.

The Air Access team, housed at Wesgro, continues to engage with the aviation industry and there are some promising signs emerging.

Even in the current global climate, we have been able to secure a direct route from Cape Town to Atlanta on Delta Airlines, which plans to commence this year.

We have also secured TAP Portugal, with a direct flight to Lisbon, starting November 2021.

And given the importance of intra-African travel during this time, it is good news that Airlink has added a connection between Cape Town and Harare, as well as Cape Town to Walvis Bay, commencing next month.

Western Cape to lobby President to introduce 'Remote Working Visa'

Honourable members,

Helping tourism recover will also require that we innovate and embrace new forms of global travel that are emerging in this Covid-19 world.

I was excited to read that Cape Town has made the 2021 list for the 50 "Best Cities for Remote Working".

These 'digital nomads' are a new kind of tourist, who will stay in our province for 3 months instead of 3 weeks, enjoying our tourism offer while working on their laptops.

We have everything it takes to be the best remote working location in the world if we remove the red tape – and roll-out the red-carpet for these travellers.

To do so, South Africa urgently needs to introduce a 'Remote Working Visa'.

Most leading tourism destinations in the world have one already, and we should have one too.

The Western Cape Government will therefore lobby both the President and the Minister of Home Affairs, Aaron Motsoaledi, to introduce this visa as soon as possible.

Speaker,

However, we must acknowledge that in the short term the number one priority must be to maximize domestic travel to the Western Cape.

We must continue to be the leading tourism destination in South Africa, and we must encourage more of our fellow citizens to visit our province.

I am therefore happy to confirm that Wesgro will be continuing with its highly successful domestic tourism campaign - which has already secured 21 000 seat bookings through its microsite.

Western Cape's plans to grow exports

Speaker,

To grow the economy and create jobs, we will also focus on growing exports from the Western Cape.

Export growth, as we have seen in agriculture, has continued to buck the trend in our province, growing by 49% quarter-on-quarter.

To leverage this growth, we will continue with our now virtual trade missions to the rest of Africa and key export markets around the world, and seek to sign up to R4,25 billion in trade deals for our province.

We will continue with our strategic cooperation with the Port of Cape Town, as we seek to improve efficiency and turnaround times at terminals.

And we will leverage the Air Access programme, and the network it has created, to increase exports transported through the belly of aircraft currently flying from Cape Town International.

On this note, I am pleased to announce that the Air Access project has now signed another private sector partner, DHL, who shares our confidence in the potential of moving more cargo in our province.

The Western Cape's plans to attract investment

Honourable members,

South Africa's ability to attract foreign direct investment remains continually hindered by the national government's failing policies, unchecked corruption, indecision and divided leadership.

The Western Cape therefore remains a clear example of what is possible when you cut the red tape, have strong, well managed institutions and realise that it is the private sector's job to grow the economy.

It is because we understand this in the Western Cape that we will continue to lead from the front in attracting investments to our shores in 2021.

Through our economic growth agencies, Wesgro, the Saldanha Bay IDZ and the Atlantis SEZ for Green Technology, we have the right vehicles and expertise to make this happen.

Wesgro, through its investment facilitation services, collaborative partnerships, and the Invest SA One Stop Shop, will continue to attract investors, with the objective of securing up to R2,85 billion of investment over the next year.

The Atlantis SEZ company, has now been established and has secured investments totalling R680 million, covering 25 hectares of the 120-hectare economic zone.

And we will look to cement our position as the leading green economy in Africa by building on the billions of Rands worth of investments secured for the Western Cape last year as a result of Wesgro and GreenCape's collaboration.

By working as one team, I am confident that we will continue to compete with top emerging markets on the continent.

The Western Cape Safety Plan

Speaker,

I think it is very clear from these extensive plans that the Western Cape is serious when it says it will lead from the front to create jobs and opportunity.

Because a job is the single most powerful thing to change the course of someone's life.

But it is not enough for the thousands of people who are victims of crime in our province.

It is not enough for the millions more who live in fear in their own homes and streets.

And it is not enough for the many women and children in our province who continue to face violence at the hands of men.

That is why it is our priority to make the Western Cape a safer place for all who live here.

To achieve this, our government launched our most ambitious project to date: The Western Cape Safety Plan.

This plan is an evidence based, data-led, and all-of-government intervention that not only sees us taking up a policing function, but also smartly pursuing violence prevention strategies that will make a real difference in our communities.

Its objective is to halve the Western Cape's murder rate in ten years, and in doing so, to fundamentally change the lives of millions of people for the better.

Honourable members, this plan embodies exactly what we mean when we say we are going to lead from the front in the Western Cape.

And it demonstrates the ambition and the courage of this government to get things done.

To date, we have already introduced 500 'boots on the ground' in key violence hotspots in the Metro.

And we are going to increase this by another 500 LEAP officers by the end of this year, with the last group of officers deployed by October 2021.

This means that by the end of this year, the Western Cape's crime fighting capacity will have been boosted by 1000 of our own officers.

This will make a real difference in our fight against gang violence, which continues to be a key driver of murder in our province.

Speaker,

To further boost our crime fighting capacity across the Western Cape we have committed to recruit an additional 120 peace officers for 6 vulnerable municipalities.

This project has now commenced, and a total of 56 peace officers have been trained and placed in Laingsburg, Prins Albert and Beaufort West.

We have also launched, through our Department of Transport and Public Works, a specialised interception unit and highway patrol to respond to high risk events.

69 vehicles in the existing fleet have been repurposed for this crime-fighting initiative, and they are already patrolling our highways.

Fighting crime by creating opportunities for the youth

Speaker,

If we are to win the battle against crime, we need to be able to work with and provide opportunities for young people in the Western Cape.

I therefore take great pride in announcing the launch of the Youth Safety Ambassador Programme in April, under the leadership of Minister Fritz and the Department of Community Safety.

This initiative will see the recruitment, selection and deployment of 1000 young people as violence prevention facilitators in selected communities across the province.

The Safety Ambassadors will play an important role within the Area Based Teams in assisting with the combatting of youth violence and murder at local community levels. They will also receive a monthly stipend and training opportunities to better their job prospects.

As part of this commitment to support our young residents, the Department of Agriculture will also provide information sessions for rural youth, that will assist with job-readiness, entrepreneurship, internships and bursary opportunities.

Our plans to change the Western Cape's deadly relationship with alcohol

Speaker, Honourable members,

There can be no doubt that there is a clear, causal relationship between alcohol abuse in our communities and violence

We saw this again in December, when the most recent alcohol ban drastically reduced the number of people reporting to Western Cape Emergency Centres over the festive period.

The Western Cape is the only province which tracks this relationship at five hospitals, most in the metro, and one in George.

This is the data we need to understand the challenge and to find sustainable solutions to deal with it.

I can announce today that in order to better understand alcohol-related harms and to have even more, real-time data, the Western Cape Department of Health will expand this project to include monitoring at 20 hospitals across the Western Cape.

This forms part of our plans to develop a Safety Data Surveillance System that will integrate data across our facilities so that we have the intelligence to fight crime more effectively.

Honourable members,

We cannot allow the status quo regarding alcohol and violence to continue in the Western Cape. But we also cannot continue banning alcohol either.

Bans are unsustainable and will increase the unemployment that ultimately feeds crime in our communities.

That is why we are instead pursuing more targeted interventions by amending the Western Cape Liquor Act.

These amendments will directly and indirectly reduce alcohol harms, as well improve the efficiency of the Western Cape Liquor Authority.

I can confirm today that a series of these first amendments will be presented to the Regulatory Impact Assessment committee next week, and a formal submission to cabinet will happen by the end of next month.

Our intention remains to have this amendment bill published for public comment in the next few months.

In addressing this major problem in our communities, I am also committed to working with the industry and consumers to find new and innovative solutions to reduce alcohol related harms in the Western Cape.

The Western Cape's response to GBV

Speaker,

Like it did with alcohol, the Covid-19 pandemic made clear the violence and abuse that women experience at the hands of men in the Western Cape

We are determined to do more as a province to address this major challenge, using our all of society approach.

That is why I am pleased to announce today that after an initial delay in the signing of the MOU with the National Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, we are now on course for the final handover of 6 brand new GBV shelters this month.

The necessary allocations to the NGOs that will manage the facilities have taken place, and the buildings have been repurposed by our department and are ready to open.

I can confirm too, that the strengthening of our GBV after-hours response has been finalised, and all 30 additional GBV social worker posts have been filled to help us in hotspot areas.

These social workers will now be available to assist women in need in the evenings and on weekends – when support is often needed the most.

Finally, our GBV implementation plan is on track to be finalised by April, providing valuable indicators that will guide our government in responding to this crisis.

The Western Cape to expand powers of Western Cape Police Ombudsman

Speaker,

The Western Cape was the first province to lead from the front in our fight against crime when we passed the Western Cape Community Safety Act in 2013.

This enabled provincial oversight over the South African Police Services, through the establishment of the Office of the Western Cape Police Ombudsman.

This demonstrated our commitment to using our constitutionally enshrined powers to ensure a safer community for all who call this province their home.

I can announce today that we intend to introduce an amendment to this Act that will expand the power of the Ombudsman further, to also include oversight over law enforcement officials – and not just the SAPS and municipal

police as is currently the case. We will also empower the Ombudsman to initiate investigations.

Policing inefficiencies at any level of government should be investigated – and not just at the national government level. This is especially the case as we expand our own law enforcement capability through the LEAP programme over the coming year.

Because when you have an efficient, accountable law enforcement – the people get better services, incidents are handled better, and cases get prosecuted more successfully.

We will not stop taking the lead in ensuring effective provincial oversight over policing in the Western Cape.

Dignity and Well-being in the Western Cape - the First 1000 Days

Speaker, Honourable Members,

When we lead from the front to create jobs and safety in our communities, we contribute in a fundamental way towards achieving the dignity that each person in the Western Cape is entitled to.

These two ‘North Stars’ are both interlinked in this way, contributing to a society of opportunity and hope.

But this will not be enough to secure the Western Cape of our dreams, if we don’t consistently realise the well-being that every person deserves – and at every step of their life journey.

Every life must matter, honourable members.

From the moment we are born, to the moment we die, and every day in between.

That is why in the year ahead, our government will continue with its First 1000 days programme that provides coordinated maternal, neonatal and child services.

International research has shown that children who are provided with love, care, nutrition and healthcare during their first 1000 days are more successful and will contribute more to society as adults.

This will be even more important in the year ahead, due to the negative consequences that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the provision of comprehensive healthcare services at our facilities.

The inevitable consequences of limiting mobility during the Hard Lockdown has meant that some critical health services did not reach as many people as they should have last year.

For example, in 2020, the number of children immunised under the age of 1 in the Western Cape dropped marginally, when it should have in fact grown.

This was largely due to a major drop in immunisations in two particular months - both of which were during the Hard Lockdown in early 2020.

It is however promising that a notable recovery in numbers was recorded since May last year, and that more children under 1 were immunised this December - during the surge of our second wave - than in the previous 2 Decembers.

This recovery was because of a concerted effort by Western Cape Health after the end of the first wave.

But we still have more work to do, and that is why in the year ahead a key priority will be to identify and immunise any child who did not get immunised in 2020.

Our response to stunting in children and the humanitarian crisis

Speaker,

If a child is to prosper in their life journey, it is essential that they get the good nutrition they need during their childhood. The consequences of not having this are extremely detrimental.

Stunting, due a lack of nutrition, is therefore a major risk to the dignity and well-being of our people, made worse by the humanitarian crisis that the Covid-19 pandemic has created.

If we are to meaningfully intervene as a government, we need the data and evidence to design programmes that can work and make a difference.

It is for this reason that the Department of Health will commission a stunting survey - to determine the prevalence as well as the drivers of stunting in our province.

Since my address in October, the Department has drafted, shared and approved this baseline survey and we are now in the process of financing it.

I am looking forward to having even more data that will enable us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our youngest residents.

Because, Speaker, we must not underestimate the serious impact that the ongoing humanitarian crisis has had on our children.

We understand this in the Western Cape and that is why we also took the lead to ensure that our children got nutritious food during the lockdown last year, through the introduction of an Emergency School Nutrition Programme.

And, honourable members, Minister Schafer didn't need a court order to convince her that it was the right thing to do.

We know that feeding children who are hungry is *always* the right thing to do.

I am glad we led from the front even after we were initially told not to do so by the national government and by the official opposition.

Because as a result of this emergency programme, funded by our government, we delivered 1,6 million meals to learners across the Western Cape.

For many of these young people, it was their only meal for the day.

It would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of our officials, school staff, external donors and many, many volunteers.

We thank you for being the heroes our children needed last year.

Honourable members,

As part of this commitment to fight hunger in our communities, the Department of Agriculture will also be continuing with its successful 'One Home, One Garden' Campaign, with a target of creating 1800 additional food gardens in hotspots across the Western Cape.

This is in addition to the over 5000 rolled out in the last year.

Early Childhood Development

Speaker,

As part of this First 1000 days focus, it is important that our children get the development they need to take advantage of the many opportunities to learn and grow in the future.

Early Childhood Development centres therefore provide an essential service that makes a very meaningful contribution to dignity and well-being in our province.

They are in effect a rocket booster, that if properly fuelled, can propel our children onto a pathway of growth and success.

That is precisely why I announced last year that in the eyes of the Western Cape Government, ECDs are now a critical service that we must passionately pursue for our people.

As the first step in our plans to achieve this 'moon-shot' for the Western Cape, I also announced that we will be convening a special consultative forum with key stakeholders that are already doing excellent work in this space.

I can confirm that the budget to convene and host this forum - which will plot a way forward for the ECD sector in the Western Cape - has now been made available in the Department of the Premier, and we aim to host this exciting engagement in the new financial year.

Honourable members,

In the meantime, the Western Cape has been doing all it can to help registered ECDs reopen as soon as possible, after what was a very difficult year.

For this to happen, they have needed the PPE and cleaning materials to ensure the safety of both the children and the staff.

We have done extensive work to ensure that this happens.

We have now assisted 3 801 registered ECDs to reopen in the Western Cape through the provision of PPE and other materials.

This is over 95% of registered ECDs in the province.

I would like to thank Minister Fernandez and the Department of Social Development for their ethical leadership when they ensured that the Western Cape continued to provide a full subsidy to funded ECD facilities throughout the Lockdown.

We were the only province in South Africa to do so.

Primary and secondary school education

Speaker, Honourable Members,

The next critical step in a life journey that leads to opportunity and well-being is the education that our children receive at primary and secondary schools.

And that is why everyone should be concerned about the double blow that education has experienced over the last year.

The first blow is that Covid-19 has interrupted whole weeks of teaching, increasing the chances of students dropping out of the education system, and causing large gaps in education which will take years to eradicate.

These interruptions are particularly devastating for children from poor families, because they do not have adequate internet access, and so would not be able to fully utilise the online resources that are available.

With the second blow, there have been extreme budget cuts to both the provincial equitable share and the Education Infrastructure Grant, resulting in the Western Cape having less money for education despite the growing demand in our province.

We have done whatever we can to protect our critical education budgets, but the bottom line is that we have less money to educate our children at a time when we need to do more.

I can give the assurance to every child and every parent in the Western Cape that this will not stop us.

We are going to give it everything we have to ensure that we continue to provide the best education in South Africa.

Our priority is to ensure that learning continues during Covid-19 pandemic

Speaker,

I believe that when the story of the Western Cape's Covid-19 response is told in the future, one of our greatest achievements will be our commitment to ensuring that learning continues in this province.

Throughout this time, we have continued to lobby for schools to reopen based on the sound scientific evidence that children are at low risk for severe Covid-19 infection and low risk spreaders to adults and are in fact safer at school because of our protocols.

We have procured millions of masks and hundreds of thousands of litres of sanitiser for every school in the province, to ensure that every child, teacher, and admin official is safe.

We have employed 1 953 teacher assistants between July and the end of September, to ensure that learning could continue during this pandemic.

We have introduced weekly interactive lessons in all grades based on self-directed learning, so that our learners could stay up to date with the syllabus.

And we have launched a #CommitToFinish campaign that encouraged our Matriculants to finish their school year, providing them with dedicated resources that allow them to do so.

I know that across the Western Cape teachers and officials have helped their communities in many more ways.

Despite the anxiety created by this pandemic, thousands of teachers and admin staff have gone to school because they love our children as much as we do. And they want them to succeed too.

Innovation in delivering education in Western Cape

Honourable members,

As we now look to the year ahead, we will continue to provide quality education to every learner in our province - no matter where they live, or what their parents earn.

To do this, we have commenced design or construction work on 6 new or replacement schools in the Western Cape.

We have also put in place the necessary plans to ensure that we can cope with the growing demand for public education, through expanding capacity at existing schools - and especially those that are performing well.

To ensure the safety of our learners, as part of the Western Cape Safety Plan, we have fenced 27 schools in high-risk areas in the last financial year alone.

As we look to meet the demands on our education system, we will also continue to embrace innovation and the new, future digital world.

We have already launched a pilot project with 16 schools, testing classroom-to-classroom virtual streaming to enable teachers from one school to teach at a school in another area too.

To date, this has been expanded to 58 schools across all 8 school districts.

We have also connected 1 297 of the 1 523 public schools in our province to broadband. This forms part of the Western Cape's broadband network connectivity initiative.

And we are in fact here today at one of the very schools that have been connected, Emil Weder Secondary School.

As part of this commitment to innovation in education, two additional collaboration schools - which will allow for the partnering between schools serving disadvantaged communities with a non-profit partner - will be added to the 13 that already exist in the Western Cape.

The Western Cape's School Evaluation Authority

Speaker,

The Western Cape has not only been taking the lead in public schooling innovation, but also in ensuring that schools across the Western Cape are assisted in improving their performance.

That is why the Western Cape is the only province in South Africa to have created a Schools Evaluation Authority under the Western Cape Provincial Schools Education Act.

Last year, Minister Schafer appointed Ms Karen Bydell as the Chief Evaluator of this authority, and ahead of the Lockdown, she and her team of 4 evaluators completed reviews at 8 schools.

Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, when schooling was interrupted, the SEA continued its work, tasked with assessing the responsiveness of schools to Covid-19 challenges. In total, 54 of these evaluations were completed by the end of last year. Their website was recently launched, and the first eight school reports have been uploaded. This is a crucial step in accountability.

In the year ahead, this team will continue to provide a critical, independent service to our residents, by ensuring that we get better results, at more schools in the Western Cape.

Housing opportunities in the Western Cape

Speaker,

For many people in our country, the consequences of the cruel system of Apartheid has meant that how we live and where we live can also deny us the dignity that we deserve.

That is why it remains a priority that residents have access to the basic services they need for their well-being, including access to sanitation, clean running water, and proper shelter - which is safe, and close to economic opportunities.

To achieve this goal, we have embarked on a province wide drive to update our housing demand database, with the objective of ultimately ensuring that we have an accurate, transparent and comprehensive database of all citizens who still require housing assistance.

We have embraced technology as we seek to address this challenge, by developing a mobile Housing App that allows citizens to register and update their housing demand themselves.

We have also acquired 130 hectares of land already – despite serious financial constraints - that in the end will have the potential to create over 13 000 housing opportunities in our province.

And we will increasingly incorporate sustainable building technology as an alternative to brick and mortar, which is more affordable with a lower impact on the environment.

Speaker,

As the budget cuts start to pinch, we will have to continuously find new ways to deliver as many housing opportunities as possible.

We will therefore continue to enable home ownership by assisting municipalities in the Western Cape to unlock title deeds, even after the national government funding for this project was cut.

We will also establish a revolving fund that will allow the Department of Human Settlements to augment its financing, given the latest cuts. This funding will assist in providing the financing needed to facilitate bulk infrastructure development over the medium term.

We will continue our focus on providing housing subsidies to first time home buyers, through our Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme, and the linked Housing Voucher Programme.

A deferred ownership programme has also been launched in Cape Agulhas. This will enable a prospective homeowner who is unable to get a bond through a bank to enter into a rent to buy contract with a willing seller, with the department's support.

Housing opportunities close to economic activity

Speaker, Honourable members,

It remains my commitment to also ensure that these opportunities are close to areas of economic activity.

This is important to ensure that all residents are able to leverage the exciting economic opportunities that exist in our province.

That is why our Department of Transport and Public Works has undertaken an initial assessment of the property portfolio for well-located pockets of land across our province that can be used for this purpose. We are now carefully considering the potential and prioritising which may be focused on so that it is a sustainable programme.

As a result, this Department has also granted Power of Attorney to the Department of Human Settlements, making available a number of properties close to or in the CBD of Cape Town. All these potential sites have now been scoped in detail, and the potential for each project - including financing - is now being considered.

Honourable members,

It is also why a new Western Cape Inclusionary Housing Policy Framework will soon serve before our cabinet for consideration, and which will enable us to pursue our objectives of achieving integrated housing through land use planning permissions given by municipalities in the Western Cape.

And it is why it remains our commitment to develop affordable housing within the Somerset Precinct next to the V&A Waterfront - one of the richest areas in Africa.

That is, of course, if the illegal occupation of the previous Helen Bowden Nursing Home ends.

Speaker, I remain flabbergasted as to how this government can be attacked for not delivering housing close to the centre of Cape Town by the very same organisations that have either directly encouraged, or silently supported, the occupation of the previous Helen Bowden Nursing Home.

And it makes me wonder if they are in fact really serious about our poorest residents.

Because if they were: they should get out of the way, stop jumping the queue, and work with us to ensure that the Somerset Precinct is developed as soon as possible.

The Western Cape's court action on illegal invasion of land

Speaker,

This leads to the other major obstacle to many of these plans: illegal land invasions which continue across our province.

I want to call it what it really is, honourable members: corruption that steals from the poor.

Much of the land that is being occupied (and which is often then sold through coordinated action of 'ring leaders') is state land meant to uplift the lives of our poorest residents.

Land invasions are therefore a corrupt, illegal, and frankly immoral way to jump the queue, and is a slap in the face for the tens of thousands of people in our province who are patiently waiting on housing lists.

That is why we will continue with our participation in the court application before the Western Cape High Court to allow property owners to apply the long-standing common law of counter-spoliation to protect property, so that we can prevent invasions as they happen.

Return of comprehensive health services and responding to TB

Speaker, Honourable members,

The dignity and well-being that every person in our province deserves cannot be achieved if our people do not have access to quality health services across the province.

No matter who you are. No matter where you live. Your life is the most precious thing in the world, and you must always matter.

That is why we are committed to using our over 400 primary healthcare facilities, 50 hospitals, 250 ambulances, 13 000 nurses, and 3 800 community healthcare workers to deliver dignity in the Western Cape.

In the year ahead, the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to be our biggest challenge to achieving this objective, and I have already set out earlier some of our plans to address this.

But we must also, in addition, ensure that we again reintroduce comprehensive health services so that our people get treated for the many other serious ailments too.

A key focus of this health recovery plan is to respond to the Tuberculosis epidemic in our province with the same determination and passion as we have Covid-19.

In my special address to you in October, I committed our government to the 90-90-90 strategy. This in effect means we will look to ensure that 90% of all TB positive residents are identified, and 90% are then put on the correct medication.

Honourable members,

As part of our data-led, evidence-based approach, I can give feedback today that 89% of people confirmed to have TB in the Western Cape are now on medication, resulting in a successful treatment outcome in 77% of cases.

While there are some promising developments in treatment, I am very concerned by the growing TB test positivity rate in the Western Cape, which indicates that we are not testing enough people to pick up new TB cases.

It has increased notably from 13% in March 2020 to 18% in May 2020, leading to a peak of 21% in September last year.

There is no doubt that the second wave of Covid-19 infections has dealt a devastating blow to our efforts to ensure a return of comprehensive healthcare services to every person in the Western Cape.

That is why in the year ahead, our Department of Health will be pursuing every single person who might have TB and ensuring that they get tested and put on treatment - as a matter of priority. We will also ensure that our HIV testing and treatment increases to pre-Covid-19 levels.

New health infrastructure planned for Western Cape

Speaker,

Finally, as part of this focus on delivering dignity through healthcare, I am also pleased to announce that we will complete 5 major health infrastructure projects in the 2021/2022 financial year.

This includes:

- The Helderberg Hospital Emergency Centre

- Gansbaai Clinic
- Laingsburg Clinic
- Victoria Hospital Emergency Centre, and the
- Observatory Forensic Pathology Institute

Together with the numerous investments in infrastructure added during Covid-19 pandemic, we are taking the lead in delivering quality health services to the people in the Western Cape.

A leaner, more agile government

Speaker,

As we now move forward to land these ambitious plans to deliver jobs, safety and dignity in the Western Cape, we must also reflect on how we should be doing things differently ourselves.

We will have less budget in the years ahead, and so we will have to be leaner, smarter, more innovative, and more citizen focussed.

Our cabinet and top management has therefore resolved to begin work on the 'case for change' that will fashion a Western Cape Government designed to deliver what our citizens need in the years to come.

In a comprehensive and consultative fashion, we will investigate new service delivery models that are best suited to achieve this objective.

To encourage this smarter way of doing things, we have also already established a Fiscal Transition Support Facility in the Provincial Treasury.

Our departments can apply for funding with projects that deliver services in new and more innovative ways - thereby incentivising change.

To break down silos in government and to solve societal problems more effectively, we will continue to land the 'War Room' approach in our government, using the Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation model to problem solve.

And, finally, we will make sure that it becomes easier to work with us as a government.

This means not only cutting red tape through our dedicated Ease of Doing Business Unit, but in getting every department to find ways - on an ongoing basis - to remove hurdles that stand in the way of doing business in the Western Cape.

Because, in the end, a leaner, smarter and more agile government that is easier to work with will be a better and more successful vehicle to deliver the change we need.

Federalism and the Constitution

Speaker,

Our approach to delivering this change is also underpinned by our government's commitment to federalism, as envisaged in our country's Constitution.

I must admit, on this point, that I am baffled as to why some in this house remain opposed to the Western Cape using its lawful powers to save both lives and jobs.

We are an elected government, under the Constitution, with a clear mandate from the people of this province to implement our policies.

We are going to act on that mandate, using all the powers available to us in doing so.

We have done this countless times before and we will continue to do so in the future.

That is why I will also request that our policy unit undertakes a strategic review to determine even more ways that we can deliver in new, bold and innovative ways under the Constitution.

A stronger, more successful Western Cape means a stronger, more successful South Africa.

And I, honourable members, am a proud South African.

These plans are our blueprint for hope and a real change

Speaker,

Together, these plans to deliver jobs, safety and dignity are a blueprint for hope and for a real change.

They are how we will not only recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, but also move forward with passion.

They are how we will take the lead to improve the lives of every person who calls the Western Cape their home.

As we pursue these plans, I again ask that you hold us accountable so that we deliver on them.

Because, honourable members, if it is not working, we must change it.

If there is a better idea, we must adopt it.

And if we have failed, we must acknowledge it, get up and try again.

To the staff of the Western Cape Government,

I cannot mention all the innovations and selfless hours of dedication you have put in over the last year. There are thousands of stories I wish I could tell today.

To each and every one of you, you have played a leading and pivotal role in saving both lives and livelihoods in the Western Cape - I thank you and your families.

To the people of the Western Cape,

Let us be reminded that there is one thing we are not short of in South Africa, and that is courage.

Our people lead from the front each and every day.

We have shown it throughout our difficult and often painful history.

We have shown it throughout this pandemic.

Our healthcare workers have shown us.

Our teachers, and our law enforcement offices have shown us.

And ultimately you, wherever you live in this beautiful province, have demonstrated what it means to take the lead and to be strong.

You are our inspiration.

So, wherever you may be right now, be it in a city or village, from Cape Town to the Karoo, let us all bravely stand together now.

To beat Covid-19.

To create jobs

To build safer communities.

To ensure dignity.

And to deliver the hope that we all need.

I thank you.