



**RESPONSE ON**  
**SOPA**  
**DEBATE**

**By Honourable**  
**S.H Ntombela**

**Premier of the Free State**

**DATE: 05 MARCH 2021**

**VENUE: FOURTH RAADSAAL, FREE STATE LEGISLATURE**

**#BuildingTheFreeStateWeWant**

   Free State Provincial Government





**Honourable Speaker of the Legislature**  
**Honourable Members of the Legislature**  
**Honourable Members of the Executive Council**  
**Ladies and Gentleman**

**Honourable Speaker**

Allow me to take this time to thank all the members for the opportunity and support. When I say all the members, I mean all member of this house.

For we share the same aspirations of **#Building the Free State We Want**. We are joined by the unity of purpose to serve the people of the province.

This we can successfully achieve when we learn from each other and build on each other's strength. There is always strength in our diversity.

The debates yesterday were robust, positive and enriching. They provided us with the opportunity to highlight our most pressing development issues.

I am humbled, encouraged and feel energised by this collective wisdom.

Out of the debates and proposals you made yesterday, we will develop an **Action Plan** with targets and timelines for departments to implement. Disruptions caused by COVID-19 had taught us that life is too short. In the interests of our people, let us make every moment count.

At times like these, we need to put our differences aside and commit to the reconstruction of our country and province. The country needs us all.



## Honourable Speaker

As we move forward, we should never forget where we are coming from. We should remind ourselves that under the chains of apartheid, Africans received inferior education that condemned them to a life of suppression.

Our hopes and dreams of a better future were stolen from us. We were stripped of our humanity and dignity. This we changed after democracy.

Opening the doors of learning meant education for all. No one was to be left behind. We believe in a long-lasting opportunity for all to succeed.

Only the blind, misinformed and privileged will not take pride in our Grade 12 pass rate and that we achieved position **one** again in the entire country.

Under difficult COVID-19 conditions with many township schools struggling, **forty-one thousand, eight hundred and thirty-four** candidates sat for the 2020 **National Senior Certificate** examinations.

Of these, we achieved our target of Bachelor passes of **40.4 percent**. **Thirty-one percent** of the candidates qualified for entry to study for a Diploma and **13.4 percent** achieved entry to study for Higher Certificate.

We obtained **position 1** in **Accounting, Agricultural Science, Business Studies, Economics, Geography, Life Sciences** and **Maths Lit**.

Of the **four thousand, eight hundred and ninety** progressed learners who wrote their examination, **54.8 percent** passed.

We remain one of the provinces with the highest number of progressed learners. Your ability and living conditions should never determine whether you get education or not. Education is a human right.



Under the **National School Nutrition Programme**, **five hundred and ninety-six thousand, six hundred and seventy-four** learners in **nine hundred and one** schools were served with nutritious meals.

We are unlocking the potential of our children in farm schools. To enhance their education, we have **thirty-nine** farm school hostels where farm learners are accommodated across the province. Many of our children particularly in rural areas are also benefitting from the **Learner Transport**.

These are but few of the ingredients of our education success. Education is an instrument of social, political and economic transformation for us.

### **Honourable Speaker**

We have said and will continue to say that lives and livelihoods matter in our fight against COVID-19. No government wants to see job losses, increasing poverty, businesses closing down and people losing their lives.

We have seen the tragedy of COVID-19 and managing its impact has not been easy. When the risk was high, we introduced lockdown measures.

Equally, when the conditions were appropriate, we relaxed these measures to allow businesses to operate and people to go to work.

Informed by scientific evidence, all decisions we make and actions we take are influenced by the need to balance lives and livelihoods.

The fact that we provided **sixty-one million rands** to **six hundred and eighty-one** small and medium businesses with COVID-19 relief funds is a sign of our determination to save livelihoods.



**Sixty-two** percent of the enterprises that benefitted from **Personal Protective Equipment** procurement were also Black owned.

Even under these hard times, we want to protect jobs and build a resilient economy. We are a caring government.

The roll-out of the vaccine gives us hope that the end of the virus is near and the future looks bright. Each day brings with it hope of recovery.

We are working hard to ensure that we vaccinate **1.9 million** people over a **twelve**-month period to achieve population immunity. There will be challenges along the way including the supply of the vaccine.

Let us all play our part in getting the people of the Free State vaccinated.

Provision of comprehensive healthcare through the **National Health Insurance** remains high on our agenda. We are building, equipping and staffing our healthcare facilities to ensure universal access to healthcare.

So many lessons have been learnt from COVID-19 and the time to implement the **National Health Insurance** scheme is now.

### **Honourable Speaker**

I have said it over and over again that the future belongs to the youth.

We need to unlock their potential and help them achieve their dreams. We believe in the youth and what they have to offer in building the province.

It is rewarding to see young people taking control of their future destiny through education empowerment, jobs and business opportunities.



With the **one thousand and twenty-one** national and **five hundred and twenty-three** international bursary holders we are paving a solid foundation for the future growth and development of the province.

I repeat the fact that the **Expanded Public Works Programme** is a short-term intervention to create employment opportunities in the province and **48 percent** of the youth are benefitting from this **Programme**.

As we begin to turn the province into a construction site together with **Infrastructure South Africa** through projects in ICT, human settlements, water, rural roads and rural bridges infrastructure, many youth will benefit.

Already, **22 percent** of youth owned businesses benefited from the procurement of **Personal Protective Equipment**. We pledged to provide the support to businesses owned by young people in essential services.

We are getting the youth into the cargo industry through our **Truck Ownership Scheme**. Others are involved in the agriculture and mining.

Our youth continue to benefit from work experience opportunities offered in the public and private sector. We are serious about youth development.

These is evidence of how our words becomes our actions. And we know tomorrow will be better than today. We want our youth to have a positive outlook and be focused. Let's **#Build the Free State We Want**.

**Honourable Speaker**



We condemn all kinds of crime. The acts of gender-based violence that instil fear in our women and children to walk on the streets or live in their homes. The brutality that is unleashed on our farmers and farm workers.

We will be failing if we do not denounce the injustice that happened to Dimakatso Ratselane. We are saddened by the double tragedy of gender-based violence and the shameful acts of distributing her pictures on social media she suffered. This is heartless and invasion of her privacy.

We are appalled by the killing of **three** farm workers in Kroonstad just as much as we detest the killing of a farm manager in Senekal. Farm workers are vulnerable and deserve to be treated with dignity.

Crimes leave us vulnerable and insecure. Victims are robbed of their loved ones and communities are torn apart by these unfortunate activities.

Several crime prevention initiatives targeted at fighting all kinds of crime have proved successful. We undertook public education programmes that focuses on discouraging communities from committing crime.

Corruption is a crime. It erodes public trust in government. We are therefore working hard to root out corruption in all its manifestations.

We are strengthening our financial processes and implementing consequence management. No one should get away with crime.

Our crime prevention efforts will continue. We will work with all law enforcement agencies to intensify the fight against crime in the province.



### **Honourable Speaker**

The history of land in this country is painful and emotional. During apartheid, land was taken from people with no regard for their livelihood, dignity and future. Wars were fought and people died fighting for the land.

Land expropriation is therefore about redress and justice. It is about giving back to the dispossessed and restoring their dignity. Land expropriation is a must for economic empowerment and poverty reduction of the people.

I indicated in the speech that we will distribute the **four thousand, eight hundred and seventy-two** land parcels. This also includes distribution of farms to particularly youth and women.

### **Honourable Speaker**

Local government is at the heart of service delivery. It is the first point of contact for the people and their experience of a democratic government.

It worries us if people are not getting the kind of service they deserve. It is a problem when municipalities are broken by internal fights, poor capacity, lack of professionalism and maladministration.

We want to see transparent, effective and efficient municipalities. We want to see our municipalities at the forefront of service delivery. We want to see them thrive and lead local economic development for the benefit of our people.

Municipal infrastructure was meant to accommodate the few and as we roll-out basic services this has put pressure on bulk infrastructure.





We have made progress in some municipalities working with our national sister departments on water and electricity infrastructure upgrade. We are also assisting in maintaining road infrastructure.

We need to ensure that we clean our municipalities. We encourage our communities to pay for services they receive.

**Honourable Speaker**

I call on all of us to join hands and work together. Our challenges are huge and require that both the executive and all parties in the legislature work together to monitor the implementation of these commitments.

I thank you

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