

DEBATE ON THE STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS
AT
FOURTH RADZAAL
DATE: 02 JULY 2014

Madam Speaker
Deputy Speaker
Honourable Members and
The People of the Beloved Free State

The Free State that has been the bastion of oppression and segregation over many years is finally becoming a beacon of hope to its many citizens. The dark cloud of insecurity and intolerance is gradually lifting and our people have regained their voice and are able to articulate freely what is needed to change their lives for the better.

Our agenda of the radical transformation of the economy is already in full throttle. As we celebrate 20 years of our Freedom and Democracy, we look back with pride and say we have made commendable progress towards ensuring a better life for all our people.

There was never an argument that rolling back the devastation of colonialism and apartheid that has created rampant poverty, unemployment and inequality among our people was going to be an easy task. Difficult as it might have seemed, the African National Congress has been up to the task and in only 20 years have dealt a telling blow to the legacy of more than 300 years.

Madam Speaker, we know that at the height of discrimination and segregation, the Nationalist Government established 'employment sanctuaries' for poor white workers. To mitigate against the ravages of the second world war which landed majority of whites in poverty, the Nationalist Government developed racially divisive policies geared at bringing poor Afrikaaner whites of the time into civil service and other government related occupations.

These often lucrative employment positions were largely found in ports, railways, postal and telecommunication services, police and security establishments and other Afrikaaner Government brotherhood created other vehicles like banks and cooperatives that would shield these whites against the strong grip of poverty.

Speaker, what we know is that educational requirements for these positions were at the time very minimal, while perks including subsidized housing, health and pension contributions complemented basic salaries to allow for reasonably comfortable lifestyle. These employees, honourable members, were protected from competition from the nation's majority of blacks through loyalty to the conservative National Party of the time coupled with a range of legislation further protecting their employment and securing their services through to retirement.

This situation, coupled with inferior education designed specifically for black people and the “Master Race philosophy” underpinned by a notion of racial supremacy brought disastrous consequences to what otherwise could have been a great nation of the world today.

Madam Speaker, all this notwithstanding South Africa and by extension the Free State is a better place to live in today. Even to those who have basked in the glory of discrimination and domination, the Free State is a better place than it was 20 years ago.

The African National Congress and its leaders have condemned the situation long before it became fashionable to do so. In one of his unpublished manuscripts written in prison, Nelson Mandela said, “The wheel of life is there and national heroes throughout our history from Aushumayo to Chief Albert Luthuli, in fact the entire people of our country have been working for it for more than three centuries, It is clogged with dry wax and rust but we have managed to make it creak and move backwards and forwards and we live in the hope and confidence that one day we’ll be able to turn it full circle so that the exalted will crumble and the despised be exalted, no – so that all men- exalted and the wretched of the earth can live as equals” .

Ke ka lona lebaka lena ditho tse kgabane rona re reng, Jwale ke Nako ya Kotulo.
There is no better time for the black and poor majority of the Free State to harvest the produce of their own soil than now!!! There is no looking back.

The Premier’s State of the Province address calls for a decisive action to effect economic transformation and democratic consolidation. The Introduction of the Small Business Development as part of Economic Development in the Free State is one such decisive action.

Our small business could not until now escape the stranglehold of the big business and onerous regulations and requirements. We will not win the battle against the high mortality rate of Small businesses if we are not going to take bold steps to ease access to the markets and finance. Speaker, we should not be ashamed to create an environment conducive to thriving SMMEs in the Free State.

The traditional township commercial sector has collapsed under the pressure of modern and giant shopping malls and the ‘gung ho’ approach of the foreign traders from Bangladesh, Somali and elsewhere in the world which have sprung up throughout our townships.

The Competition Commission regularly charges big companies for harmful business practices like collusion and price fixing which muscle out small businesses and send them to extinction.

Madam Speaker, radical transformation is not a slogan, it is a programme of action that will shake the foundations of entitlement and flush out people from their comfort zones. It means getting our people to the main table of economic development rather than only being the servants of those who have enjoyed a serving after a serving of the wealth of the country of our birth.

Ha re dumele hore Setjhaba sa bo rona se lokelwa feela ke makumane a wang tafelang ya marena ha a ja difannora ba ipholla dimpa ba bang ba bolawa ke tlala.

The Premier could not have captured it any better when he said, “It is our belief that the potential of the Small Business Sector must be unlocked in order to stimulate economic growth and job creation”, who else can do that, than the African National Congress Government.

Honourable members, we are committing ourselves that during this term of government, radical economic transformation is a reality. We will bring the private sector on board to make a meaningful contribution towards;

- A sustainable inclusive economic growth rate for the Free State;
- Much higher levels of employment creation and
- A more rapid reduction of inequality, including de-racialization of the economy.

Together we will move the Free State Forward. We call on the captains of industry to join us in pushing the frontiers of unemployment, poverty and inequality by making meaningful investment in manufacturing, agro-processing, mining, tourism and waste beneficiation.

Madam Speaker, more than ever before, we are convinced that working together we can build a inclusive economy, which draws from the skills of all the people of the Free State, affirms our people and reduce income inequality as we undo the legacy of discrimination at work on the grounds of race, gender and disability.

We therefore call on everybody in this house and elsewhere in the Free State and South Africa to focus their energies in making the Free State a winning Province. We believe that we have ability, audacity, expertise and excellence to execute the mega projects announced by the Premier during the State of the Province Address.

They include;

- The KwaZulu-Natal – Free State – Gauteng Development Corridor and the development of the Special Economic Zone;
- Energy projects such as the Ingula Pumped Storage Scheme Project of Eskom and various Independent Power Producers projects;
- Water supply infrastructure projects and interventions
- The Mangaung Airport Development Node and the N8 Corridor Development
- The Maseru – Kimberley rail revitalization project
- Infrastructure development

Honourable Members, we mean it when we say the Free State has become a better place than it was 20 years ago and it continues to look better. Indeed we have a good story to tell. Big business has demonstrated confidence in the Free State economy in the recent past.

Few of the projects that gave the Free State economy a facelift in the recent past include the following;

- Toyota Dealership in Langehovan Park
- The New Lindsaysaker Service and dealership in Zastron Street
- Makro in Bloemfontei
- Refurbishment of Mimosa Mall and Lochlogan Waterfront Mall
- The new restaurant at Naval Hill
- The Aeroplane Restaurant at Emoya Estate
- The New Mall in Dihlabeng
- Expansions at Setsing in Phuthaditjhaba
- And many others

Madam Speaker, the Free State belongs to all who live in it, black and white, together let us move it forward.

“Jwale ke nako ya Kotulo; Re a Kubeletsa!!!”