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Department:
Economic Development, Environment,
Conservation and Tourism
North West Provincial Government
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEC BITSA LENKOPANE

BUDGET SPEECH 2026/27

BUILDING A
NORTH WEST PROVINCE
THAT WORKS FOR ALL



**ADDRESS BY MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
ENVIRONMENT, CONSERVATION AND TOURISM BITSA
LENKOPANE BUDGET VOTE 2026-27**

Honorable Speaker,

Honorable Premier,

Members of the Executive Council,

Honorable Chief Whip

Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee,

Honorable Members of the Provincial Legislature,

House of Traditional Leaders,

Captains of Industry, Representatives of Business, Labour, Civil Society,
Comrades and friends, baagi ba rona ba bokone Bophirima.

Honorable Speaker, it is a privilege to rise before this August House to table the 2026/27 Budget Vote for the Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism. We do so at a time when the global economy continues to navigate uncertainty arising from geo-political tensions, changing trade patterns, inflationary pressures and intensified competition for investment. Across the world, governments are confronted with the challenge of stimulating growth, creating jobs and building resilient economies capable of adapting to rapidly changing global conditions.

National and Provincial outlook

South Africa is not immune to the above-mentioned realities. While the economy recorded modest growth during the third quarter of 2025, with real Gross Domestic Product expanding by 0.5 per cent for a third consecutive

quarter, driven largely by mining, agriculture and trade, these gains proved difficult to sustain as economic conditions weakened during the early months of 2026.

According to the First Quarter Labour Force Survey of 2026, national unemployment increased from 31.4 per cent to 32.7 per cent, with approximately 345 000 jobs lost across the country. Despite the creation of 42 000 jobs during the third quarter of 2025, unemployment in the North West Province remains critically high at 54.8 per cent, hence poverty, inequality and exclusion continue to limit opportunities for many of our people.

These challenges compel us to act with greater urgency, innovation and determination. They require us to strengthen partnerships, unlock investment, stimulate enterprise development and position the North-West Province as an active participant in shaping its own economic future.

Honorable Speaker, despite these challenges, our province remains richly endowed with opportunities. The province possesses abundant mineral wealth, fertile agricultural land, world-class tourism assets, a growing biodiversity economy and a strategic location linking South Africa to the broader SADC region. Our Province is home to globally significant deposits of platinum group metals, chrome, gold, vanadium and other strategic minerals. It is a major agricultural producer and hosts some of the country's most important conservation and tourism destinations.

Equally important is our strategic location along key regional trade corridors. The Ramatlabama Border Post, the Skilpadshek Corridor and the Bray–Makgobistad Border Post provide significant opportunities for logistics, trade, agro-processing, investment attraction and regional economic integration.

Mmusakgotla, The Provincial Growth and Development Strategy remain an important compass for our developmental agenda. It identifies strategic sectors that will drive growth and transformation, including mining and mineral beneficiation, agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, tourism, the biodiversity economy, logistics, renewable energy, digital innovation and infrastructure development.

The Seventh Administration has complemented these priorities through a programme of economic diplomacy and international engagement aimed at attracting investment, facilitating technology transfer, expanding market access and building industrial partnerships with strategic partners, including China, South Korea, Russia and other global economies.

Honorable Speaker, the economy of the Province is built on the strengths of all four districts. The Bojanala Platinum District remains a powerhouse of mining, tourism, hospitality, agriculture and energy development. The Dr Kenneth Kaunda District continues to provide opportunities in mining, manufacturing, logistics, services and industrial development. The Ngaka Modiri Molema District offers significant potential in agriculture, tourism, logistics and cross-border trade. The Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District presents vast opportunities in agriculture, renewable energy, wildlife, biodiversity economy initiatives and rural industrialization.

These opportunities are further strengthened by our institutions of higher learning, innovation centres, TVET colleges and entrepreneurship support programmes that continue to build the skills required for a competitive provincial economy.

Honorable Speaker, the challenge before us is not whether opportunities exist. The challenge is whether we can unlock them at the scale and pace required to transform the lives of our people.

The North-West Province therefore stands at an important juncture.

We are a mining province, but we must become a beneficiation province.

We are an agricultural province, but we must become an agro-processing province.

We are a tourism province, but we must become a tourism investment province.

We are a transit province, but we must become a logistics and trade province.

We are a conservation province, but we must also become a biodiversity economy province.

The budget before this House is not merely an allocation of resources. It is an investment in economic growth, environmental sustainability, tourism development, enterprise support and institutional reform. It is a budget designed to unlock investment, create jobs, strengthen governance and expand opportunities for the people of the Province. At the center of this Budget Vote is a message of hope and determination.

BUDGET APPROPRIATION

Honorable Speaker, having outlined both the challenges and opportunities before us, I now table the Budget Allocation of the Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism for the 2026/27 financial year. The Department is allocated a budget of One Billion and Fifty-Six Million Rand (R1.056 billion) allocated per programme as follows:

Programme	Amounts	Words
Administration	R225 002 000	Two Hundred and Twenty-Five Million and Two Thousand Rand
Integrated Economic Development Services	R67 698 000	Sixty-Seven Million, Six Hundred and Ninety-Eight Thousand Rand
Trade and Sector Development	R94 892 000	Ninety-Four Million, Eight Hundred and Ninety-Two Thousand Rand
Business Regulation and Governance	R140 639 000	One Hundred and Forty Million, Six Hundred and Thirty-Nine Thousand Rand
Economic Planning	R17 031 000	Seventeen Million and Thirty-One Thousand Rand
Environmental Services	R440 406 000	Four Hundred and Forty Million, Four Hundred and Six Thousand Rand
Tourism	R70 335 000	Seventy Million, Three Hundred and Thirty-Five Thousand Rand
Total	R1.056 003	One Billion and Fifty-Six Million Rand

SOE Reform, Financial Sustainability and Governance Renewal

Honorable Speaker, as we table this budget, it is important that we reflect honestly on the condition of our State-Owned Entities, not only where they are today, but where they come from and the difficult journey that lies ahead.

When the Seventh Administration assumed responsibility, several of our

entities were facing deep-rooted governance, financial and operational challenges that had accumulated over more than a decade. Some of these challenges date back ten to fifteen years and continue to manifest themselves in audit findings, material irregularities, litigation, debt obligations, ageing infrastructure, unfunded mandates and institutional instability. The reality is that many of these entities had become trapped in a cycle where resources intended for development were increasingly diverted towards debt servicing, legal disputes, compensation obligations and the maintenance of deteriorating assets.

One of the most significant governance challenges we inherited was the prolonged absence of substantive boards in some entities. Without stable governance structures, accountability weakened, strategic direction became uncertain and critical decisions were often delayed. Today, we are pleased to report that substantive boards have been appointed across our entities. These boards are now providing the governance oversight, accountability and strategic leadership required to drive institutional recovery and long-term sustainability.

The North West Development Corporation remains the most financially distressed entity within our portfolio. The Corporation continues to carry historical municipal debt obligations exceeding R212 million, together with significant contingent liabilities arising from litigation and contractual disputes. The entity's annual compensation budget is almost equivalent to, and in some instances exceeds, the level of operational funding available to support its developmental mandate. This means that a significant portion of resources is consumed by compensation costs before the Corporation can fully invest in industrialisation, investment promotion, infrastructure development and economic transformation programmes. In addition, the

Corporation carries more than 100 unlettable properties that have suffered years of vandalism, illegal occupation, infrastructure decay and underinvestment. Instead of generating revenue, these assets have become a financial burden that continues to weaken the balance sheet of the institution.

Similarly, the North West Parks and Tourism Board inherited legacy liabilities, governance weaknesses, merger-related challenges and operational inefficiencies that constrained its ability to maximise revenue and unlock the full economic value of our tourism and conservation assets. Yet through decisive intervention, strengthened governance and improved financial controls, the entity has begun to demonstrate measurable improvements in revenue generation, commercialisation and operational performance.

The North West Gambling Board has remained relatively stable and continues to be one of the strongest performing entities within our portfolio. Through sound governance, improved regulatory systems and stronger financial management, the Board continues to generate substantial revenue for the Provincial Fiscus while maintaining clean audit outcomes and strengthening regulatory enforcement.

The appointment of substantive boards was only the first step. We have now embarked on a broader programme of institutional reform across our entities. These reforms include the implementation of turnaround strategies, organisational reviews, service delivery improvement plans, revenue enhancement programmes and governance strengthening initiatives. We are reviewing organisational structures to ensure that they respond to the current economic realities and developmental priorities of

our province rather than the conditions that existed many years ago.

We have further engaged the Honourable Premier and the Executive Council on the need to undertake a broader review of the mandates, funding models and future sustainability of provincial State-Owned Entities. This process will assist government in determining whether current institutional arrangements remain appropriate, whether mandates require refinement and how best these entities can be positioned to contribute to the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy.

At the same time, we continue to work with boards, management and oversight institutions to address historical material irregularities identified by the Auditor-General, some of which originated many years before the current administration. Systems are being strengthened, consequence management processes are being pursued where necessary, and governance controls are being enhanced to ensure that such weaknesses are not repeated.

Madam Speaker, the reforms we are implementing will not produce overnight results. Years of institutional decline cannot be reversed in a single financial year. Rome was not built in a day, and neither will the rebuilding of our State-Owned Entities be achieved in a day. What is important, however, is that we now have stable governance structures, clear turnaround strategies, committed boards, supportive oversight institutions and a shared determination to place these entities on a sustainable path.

We therefore wish to express our appreciation to the Honorable Premier, the Executive Council and the Portfolio Committee for their continued

support of the difficult but necessary reforms that are being implemented. Their support gives us confidence that together we can rebuild these institutions into credible instruments of development, investment attraction, tourism growth, industrialization and job creation.

To the people of the North-West, our message is simple: remain hopeful. All is not lost. The challenges are real, but so too is our determination to confront them. We are rebuilding institutions, strengthening governance, restoring accountability and laying the foundation for a new era of sustainability and growth. This budget is not merely a budget for administration; it is a budget for reform, renewal and the future prosperity of our province.

North-West Parks and Tourism Turnaround strategy

Honorable Speaker, out of the environmental services budget of **R440.406 million**, the department will transfer **R242.491 million** to the North-West Parks and Tourism Board, of which approximately 80% is directed towards the compensation of employees due to the current wage bill and the bloated structure. A central pillar of our turnaround strategy for the NWPTB has been the restoration of financial sustainability through strengthened governance, improved financial controls, technology-driven revenue management and the commercialization of our conservation assets.

Honorable Speaker, worth noting is that when the 7th administration took over, it discovered that GLR was transferred from NWDC to NWPTB without accompanying financial resources resulting in it being unfunded mandate with a historical debt of R54 651 524. To date Parks Board has inherited about 300 GLR employees costing the entity R37 million for remuneration of employees.

When this administration assumed responsibility, the Board faced significant financial pressures, constrained revenue streams and operational inefficiencies that limited its ability to fulfil both its conservation and tourism promotion mandates. Through decisive intervention, we focused on rebuilding institutional capacity, improving accountability and introducing systems that enhance revenue generation while safeguarding our biodiversity assets.

One of the most significant achievements has been the implementation of revised gate tariffs and the introduction of an automated gate management system across our reserves. These reforms have strengthened revenue collection, improved visitor management and reduced opportunities for revenue leakages.

As a result, revenue collected through gate entrance fees increased from R14.8 million in 2024/25 to R23.6 million in 2025/26, representing an increase of R8.8 million, or approximately 59 per cent growth in a single financial year. Equally encouraging is the growth recorded in concession revenue.

Revenue generated from concessions increased from R56.9 million in 2024/25 to R75.2 million in 2025/26, reflecting an increase of R18.3 million. Combined, gate fees and concession revenues generate an additional R27.1 million during the year under review. Also worth celebrating is the fact that through these reforms, we have successfully increased the salaries of employees at the NWPTB and the GLR without requesting a bailout from government. This achievement was made possible through improved revenue collection, stronger financial management, and enhanced operational efficiency.

To our game rangers, who continue to serve on the frontline in protecting our biodiversity and natural heritage, we acknowledge that we have not done enough to address the living conditions in some of our conservation areas. We sincerely appreciate your dedication and sacrifices under often challenging circumstances. As part of this budget, the MEC has already directed the Board to prioritize an assessment and improvement of ranger accommodation and related living conditions. We remain committed to ensuring that those entrusted with protecting our environmental assets are provided with safe, dignified, and suitable working and living conditions.

Your contribution to conservation, tourism development, and the protection of our province's natural resources does not go unnoticed, and this administration is determined to respond to your concerns with urgency and care.

Honorable Speaker, our vision is clear: to build a conservation economy that generates sustainable revenue, creates employment opportunities, supports emerging enterprises, attracts domestic and international investment, and ensures that communities living adjacent to protected areas become direct beneficiaries of the province's natural heritage

Environmental and waste management

Honorable Speaker, in his State of the Province Address, the Premier directed the Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism to move with speed in addressing environmental management challenges confronting municipalities, particularly those relating to waste management, environmental compliance and concerns raised through various oversight reports. A portion of the R197.915 million remaining within Environmental Services, after the transfer to the North-West Parks and Tourism Board, will respond directly to that directive.

The Department's assessment indicates that of the eighteen municipalities within the province, only three are currently compliant with key requirements relating to Integrated Waste Management Plans and waste management by-laws. This situation requires urgent intervention and a coordinated response from all spheres of government. While the Department remains the competent authority responsible for environmental compliance, issuing directives and enforcing environmental legislation, we recognize that compliance cannot be achieved through enforcement alone. In the spirit of cooperative governance and the collective effort to strengthen local government, the Department has adopted a support-oriented intervention strategy aimed at assisting municipalities to build the systems, capacity and planning tools necessary for long-term compliance.

Honorable Speaker, the MEC has already agreed with the Head of Department to redefine and strengthen the responsibilities of specialized environmental officials who will work closely with municipalities across the province. These officials will provide technical support, intensify compliance monitoring, strengthen environmental governance and assist municipalities in addressing waste management challenges before they escalate into environmental crises. Part of this budget will therefore be utilized to support municipalities in developing and reviewing Integrated Waste Management Plans, strengthening waste management by-laws, planning compliant landfill facilities and improving waste management systems.

Honorable Speaker, the Department has also launched #Matlakala Ka Zaka Programme, a provincial initiative aimed at changing the way communities view waste and demonstrate that waste is not merely a service delivery challenge, but also a significant economic opportunity. Through this programme, we are educating communities that waste has value; that

waste can create jobs; that waste can support businesses; and that waste can become a catalyst for sustainable local economic development.

The programme has already been rolled out across districts of the province, with schools serving as centers of awareness, education and community mobilization around environmental responsibility and waste management. Working together with schools, municipalities, environmental clubs and local communities, the Department has established waste awareness and waste separation initiatives, including the provision of wheelie bins to support sorting and recycling activities. The Department continues to invest in both in-school and out-of-school environmental clubs, recognizing the important role that young people play in driving environmental stewardship and behavioral change within communities. We are encouraged by the commitment demonstrated by learners, environmental clubs and young environmental ambassadors who continue to champion environmental awareness and responsible waste management practices throughout the province.

Honorable Speaker, this Budget Vote is not only about environmental compliance. It is also about building the skills, institutions and economic opportunities required to sustain a circular economy. Through this budget, the Department will intensify skills development programmes in waste management, waste handling, waste processing and recycling. These interventions are aimed at equipping young people, cooperatives, community organizations and emerging entrepreneurs with the practical knowledge and technical skills required to participate meaningfully in the waste economy.

This budget will also support the strengthening and revitalization of government-owned buy-back centers and drop-off centers as critical

components of the recycling value chain. These facilities will unlock opportunities for waste reclaimers, cooperatives, women, young people and small enterprises seeking to participate in the green economy. Training and capacity-building programmes will be expanded to ensure that participants understand the full value chain of the waste economy, including waste collection, sorting, processing, recycling, beneficiation, business development and market access opportunities.

Honorable Speaker, our objective is clear, *we want municipalities to become compliant.*

We want communities to become environmentally responsible.

We want young people to acquire practical skills.

We want cooperatives and small enterprises to participate in the recycling value chain.

We want waste to become a source of income, employment and economic opportunity.

Through these interventions, waste management will become an instrument of environmental protection, economic inclusion, youth empowerment and community development.

This is how we will strengthen local government.

This is how we will improve environmental compliance.

This is how we will unlock the waste economy.

This is how we will build a cleaner, greener and economically inclusive North-West Province.

Biodiversity Economy

Honorable speaker, the annual hunting season which commenced on 01 May to 31 July, has been extended to 31 August 2026, and the wildlife quota allocations finalized for 66 tribal authorities to promote sustainable conservation and community-led natural resource management.

The department has also launched the new electronic permit system to process and issue biodiversity permits. Since its inception, hunting licenses and permits have generated R700 000 whilst 1500 hunting permits were issued for dangerous game such as Lion, Crocodile, Hippo, and rhinoceros hunting.

This year's frameworks are heavily fortified by a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with Safari Club International (SCI) which will bring critical financial investment and technical expertise directly to tribal lands and provincial parks, ensuring that hunting quotas are backed by robust ecological data

The Department is at the final stages of consultations on the North West Biodiversity Management Regulations which are expected to be published for public comment during the third quarter of the 2026/27 financial year.

Tourism commercialization model

Honorable Speaker, one of the most significant interventions undertaken by this administration has been the introduction of a structured tourism commercialization programme aimed at unlocking the economic value of provincial tourism and conservation assets. For many years, several tourism facilities and infrastructure assets remained underutilized, deteriorated over time, and were unable to generate the level of economic

returns required to support conservation, tourism growth and local development. As a result, these assets increasingly became liabilities rather than drivers of economic opportunity.

Guided by our commitment to building a sustainable conservation economy, we adopted a decisive approach to commercialization by inviting private-sector participation in the development and operation of selected tourism assets, while ensuring that ownership remains vested in the people of the North-West Province.

As a result of this intervention, investment proposals amounting to approximately R2.2 billion have been received. Of this amount, proposals valued at approximately R1.8 billion have successfully progressed through investor capability assessments, affordability evaluations, compliance verification and due diligence processes, and are now advancing towards implementation.

What distinguishes this model from traditional concession arrangements is its structure. It is built around ring-fenced Special Purpose Vehicles operating within a Build-Operate-Transfer framework, ensuring that provincial assets remain protected while private-sector investment is mobilized to develop, maintain and operate these facilities. Most importantly, this model recognizes communities as direct participants in the tourism economy.

For the first time, communities residing around our reserves and protected areas are not merely spectators in tourism development. They are recognized as strategic partners and beneficiaries. Through community shareholding arrangements embedded within the commercialization framework, landowners are positioned to participate directly in the value

generated from tourism activities taking place on land to which they have historical, cultural and developmental ties.

This means that tourism development will no longer be measured solely through visitor numbers and occupancy rates. It will also be measured through jobs created for local residents, opportunities for emerging enterprises, procurement from community-owned businesses, skills development, enterprise growth and the financial returns that flow back into communities.

Tourism Performance Summary (2025/26)

Tourism continues to be a major contributor to the economy of the North West Province, generating an estimated R10.9 billion in tourism revenue, supporting approximately 9,242 jobs, and benefiting 344 tourism enterprises across the province. During the year under review, the province attracted approximately 462,463 international tourists and more than 4.17 million domestic tourists. Domestic tourism has fully recovered and surpassed pre-pandemic levels, while international tourism continues its gradual recovery. Tourism activity remains concentrated in the eastern corridor of the province, particularly in Bojanala.

Bojanala Platinum District Municipality

Bojanala remains the economic engine of tourism in the North West Province. The district attracted approximately 253,902 international tourists and 2.3 million domestic tourists, generating an estimated R6.9 billion in tourism revenue. Tourism activities supported 5,614 jobs and benefited 174 tourism businesses.

Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality

The district recorded approximately 136,019 international tourists and 1.2 million domestic tourists, generating an estimated R1.9 billion in tourism

revenue. Tourism supported 2,247 jobs and benefited 64 tourism businesses.

Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality

Ngaka Modiri Molema attracted approximately 54,407 international tourists and 504,000 domestic tourists, generating approximately R1.65 billion in tourism revenue. The district supported 1,003 tourism-related jobs and assisted 59 tourism businesses.

Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality

The district recorded approximately 18,135 international tourists and 168,000 domestic tourists, generating R519.6 million in tourism revenue. Tourism activities supported 378 jobs and benefited 47 tourism businesses.

Overall Observation

The tourism sector continues to stimulate economic growth, create employment opportunities and support local enterprises. Greater investment in tourism infrastructure, destination development, product diversification and accessibility is required to unlock growth across all districts.

Tourism Collaboration

Honorable Speaker, another area that has historically presented challenges to government is the optimal utilization of our hospitality and training infrastructure, including the Mahikeng Hotel School, the Taung Hotel School and associated training facilities. To address this challenge, the Department has initiated advanced engagements with North-West University aimed at establishing a strategic collaboration that will reposition these facilities as integrated centers for accredited hospitality and tourism skills development.

The proposed partnership seeks to leverage the strengths of the University in curriculum development, accreditation, academic governance and operational management, while enabling government to retain ownership of the assets through a ring-fenced commercialization framework. Through this approach, young people will gain access to recognized qualifications, improved training opportunities and enhanced pathways into the economy.

Beyond skills development, this initiative presents an opportunity to deepen the developmental role of the University as an anchor institution within our Province. It advances the vision of higher education institutions serving not only as centers of learning, but also as catalysts for community development, economic participation and social transformation.

While discussions are still being finalized, we are encouraged by the progress made thus far and remain confident that this partnership will unlock new opportunities for our youth, strengthen skills development in the tourism and hospitality sector, improve the utilization of public assets and contribute meaningfully to the growth of the provincial economy. We acknowledge the delays and stoppage on Taung Hotel due to Auditor General findings. However, we are marching forward towards the implementation of the project through the implementing agent, the Independent Development Trust.

Honorable Speaker, in the same spirit of collaboration and innovation, the Department has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Sun City as part of our broader strategy to strengthen the tourism and hospitality value chain in the North-West Province.

Sun City remains one of the largest tourism destinations and employer in our Province and continues to be a strategic partner in advancing tourism growth, skills development and economic inclusion.

Through our engagements with Sun City, we are exploring opportunities to establish a structured pipeline through which graduates emerging from our hospitality and tourism training programmes can access experiential learning, internships, mentorship programmes and employment opportunities within one of Africa's leading tourism establishments.

Discussions are also focused on positioning the North-West Province as a premier center for hospitality excellence, capable of hosting world-class hospitality training programmes, international industry exchanges and specialized skills development initiatives that expose our young people to global standards and best practices.

The combined impact of collaboration between government, North-West University and Sun City has the potential to create a seamless pathway from education and training to employment, entrepreneurship and international opportunities.

Honorable Speaker, this approach is not merely about filling jobs. It is about building careers, nurturing entrepreneurs, expanding opportunities and ensuring that young people from the North-West are equipped to compete successfully in both national and international tourism markets. By bringing together academia, industry and government, we are creating a platform that broadens access to opportunity, expands markets for our people and unlocks the full economic potential of the tourism and hospitality sector.

Honorable Speaker, the Department is engaging Sun City for placement of 81 hospitality and tourism graduates to support youth development.

Promotion of destination North-West

Mmusakgotla, an amount of R70 million has been allocated to Tourism Development and Promotion during the 2026/27 financial year. This

allocation will support destination marketing, tourism investment promotion, visitor safety, heritage tourism, youth employment, enterprise development and the transformation of the tourism economy across the North-West Province.

The Department has successfully profiled 562 accommodation establishments across the province, confirming a tourism accommodation inventory of 6 614 rooms and 12 676 beds, with an annual accommodation capacity exceeding 4.1 million visitors.

This profiling exercise provides a critical foundation for investment promotion, destination planning and tourism growth. To improve visitor safety and enhance the visitor experience, the Department has deployed 70 Tourism Monitors, including 45 Tourism Monitors stationed at the Ramatlabama, Kopfontein and Skilpadshek Border Posts. These deployments contribute to improved tourism safety, information services and destination management.

During our recent engagement with Kgosi Montshioa of Barolong Boo Ratshidi Traditional Council, the MEC noted preparations towards the celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the Barolong Boo Ratshidi Kingdom, which will take place during Tourism Month in September 2026. This historic milestone presents a unique opportunity to showcase the rich cultural heritage, traditions, history and indigenous knowledge systems of the Barolong.

The Department will collaborate closely with the Traditional Council to position the Silver Jubilee celebrations as a flagship cultural and heritage tourism event within the province. In addition, the Department will work with the Traditional Council and other stakeholders to explore the formal

recognition and promotion of the Barolong cultural landscape and corridor as a tourism destination.

Through these partnerships, we will expand heritage routes, cultural profiling initiatives, Tourism Month activities and community-led tourism opportunities that celebrate the rich history, culture and traditions of the people of the Province.

Tourism infrastructure

Honorable Speaker, we will provide support to Haartebeespoort Heritage Trail as a catalyst project that is creating unique tourism attraction to strengthen the Haartebeespoort corridor.

Through this intervention, tourism will continue to serve as a powerful catalyst for economic growth, investment attraction, skills development, transformation and job creation, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared more broadly among the people of the North-West Province.

As part of our commitment to working closely with traditional leaders and communities, the Department continues to support strategic tourism infrastructure projects that contribute to local economic development and create opportunities in areas under traditional authority.

One such project is the Lehurutshe Bird and Trophy Hunting Project, funded by the National Department of Tourism. The project created 40 work opportunities for local community members during the construction phase, as well as 9 local subcontracting opportunities. We are currently awaiting finalization by the National Department of Tourism before operations can commence.

MSME Development

Mmusakgotla, for the 2026/27 financial year, an amount of R67 million has been allocated for Integrated Economic Development Services. This allocation will support enterprise development, innovation, incubation, township economy development, market access, skills development and local economic development interventions across the province. A portion of this allocation will be implemented through the North-West Development Corporation (NWDC) as part of our broader economic reform agenda.

Through the MEC Business Colloquium and Sectoral Engagement Programme, the Department engaged more than 1 170 stakeholders. These engagements included SAWIC, NAFCO, Gatvol, the Ngaka Modiri Molema Women in Business Forum, youth formations, faith-based organizations and organized business structures. The outcomes of these engagements now guide our priorities and investment decisions.

In line with the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy, future support interventions will prioritize agriculture and agro-processing, tourism and hospitality, logistics, manufacturing, processing and related sectors. Close to 200 SMMEs benefited from support across all 18 municipalities. The Department facilitated B2B engagements involving 166 enterprises and trained 153 beneficiaries in Matlosana. A portion of the allocation will support commodity-based opportunities identified through engagements with organized business, women-owned enterprises and youth formations.

The Department will work with the University's Innovation Hub and the Young African Entrepreneur Institute(YAEI) to identify and support 36 young entrepreneurs from municipalities across the province. This programme will provide incubation, mentorship, machinery and equipment support, business development services and market readiness

interventions. It will be implemented in partnership with ABSA, Old Mutual and other strategic partners.

The Department will also revisit previously supported enterprises and undertake performance assessments to identify gaps, strengthen sustainability and provide targeted aftercare support.

The department will also support municipalities through these interventions:

- JB Marks Local Municipality – Dunlop partnership and taxi-rank economy support for 54 SMMEs.
- In Moretele Local Municipality, the Department is supporting the establishment of Shop Ya Batho as an anchor retail and enterprise development hub where 25 businesses across 25 wards in Moretele will be supported. The department has set aside R9.8 million for this initiative. Over the next ten months, the Department will provide intensive skills development and aftercare support to ensure the sustainability and growth of beneficiary enterprises.
- Matlosana Local Municipality – Majakathata Development Programme in partnership with mining houses and the municipality.
- Naledi Local Municipality – innovation and entrepreneurship support for young women and LGBTQI+ beneficiaries.
- Mahikeng Local Municipality – innovation, incubation and prototype development.
- Kagisano-Molopo Local Municipality – brick-making and manufacturing development programme.
- Greater Taung Local Municipality – hawker and informal trader support.

Working with the MEC for Education, the Department will intensify support for informal traders operating around schools. This intervention seeks to

eliminate food poisoning incidents, improve hygiene standards and formalize township economy activities around schools. Informal traders across all 18 municipalities will be prioritized for support in food safety and hygiene, licensing and permitting, entrepreneurship development, and machinery and equipment grants.

The Department will also unlock opportunities through the productive utilization of public assets. Focus will be placed on enterprise development opportunities linked to Kgosi Mabalane and Kgosi Zibi through start-up support and enterprise development interventions. We are encouraged by growing investment activity across the province, including retail developments, commercial investments and the commercialization of NWDC assets. However, every investment must create opportunities for local suppliers, local farmers, local manufacturers and local entrepreneurs.

The Department has already established a strong working relationship with Sibanye-Stillwater. Through this partnership, we will intensify MSME development, supplier readiness, incubation and market access opportunities within the Rustenburg and Marikana economic corridor. This collaboration seeks to ensure that mining communities benefit not only through extraction but also through enterprise ownership and participation in value chains.

The Department will also engage faith-based organisations, including the Church of Christ Assembly in Ledig and St John's Apostolic Faith Mission in Moretele, to support informal traders and community enterprises operating around major church gatherings and activities. Through NWDC, four bakery enterprises will be incubated and supported in Mahikeng, Ratlou, Mamusa and Naledi Local Municipalities. This bakery recovery model responds to lessons from previous interventions and combines

equipment support with incubation, mentorship, skills development and market access.

The Department has agreed to undertake a comprehensive review of empowerment policies and support instruments to align them with current economic realities. We are also implementing organizational renewal, service delivery improvement measures and supporting the repositioning of NWDC to strengthen investment promotion, project preparation and enterprise development.

Honourable Speaker,

We listened.

We have learned.

And we are reforming.

The resources allocated to this Programme will be used to build stronger enterprises, stronger local economies and stronger communities.

We are not only creating beneficiaries.

We are building MSMEs that can supply.

We are building MSMEs that can employ others.

We are building MSMEs that can compete confidently in the marketplace.

When local enterprises become stronger, jobs are created.

When entrepreneurs succeed, communities prosper.

When township economies grow, poverty declines.

Trade and sector

Honorable Speaker, economic growth remains one of the defining priorities of the 7th Administration. It is through Programme 3: Trade and Sector Development and Programme 5: Economic Planning and Research that we seek to unlock investment, grow productive sectors, support enterprise development and position the North-West Province as a competitive destination for investment and industrialization. Programme 3 is allocated R98 million, while Programme 5: Economic Planning and Research receives an allocation of R17.031 million.

Mmusakgotla, out of R94 892 million allocation under Trade and Sector Development, R79 781 million is transferred to the North-West Development Corporation. Of the amount transferred, 104% is overwhelmingly absorbed by compensation of employees. This reality places a responsibility on us, to ensure that the Corporation is repositioned to become a catalyst for economic development, investment mobilization and industrialization.

Our people have consistently heard government speak about the establishment of a Special Economic Zone. The reality, however, is that the full benefits associated with a Special Economic Zone, including investor incentives, investment guarantees and sustainability mechanisms, can only be realized once the Province secures formal designation status.

The Executive Council has endorsed a process through which the Province, working closely with the Premier and the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, will strengthen efforts towards achieving Special Economic Zone designation. We have further agreed on a Special Purpose Vehicle model that will broaden participation and unlock investment. This model will

bring together government, mining houses, tourism operators, biodiversity economy participants, private investors and communities as partners in development.

Part of SEZ intervention includes working with the Project Management Unit of the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition to strengthen technical capacity, improve compliance with designation requirements and ensure that all regulatory, planning and infrastructure obligations are fully addressed.

Mining companies led by Sibanye have already demonstrated their willingness to participate in this initiative. Additional commitments have been secured through engagements undertaken during the Mining Indaba and through ongoing discussions around energy development, mineral beneficiation, localization and industrial expansion.

The future of mining in the North West Province cannot be confined to extraction alone. Working under the guidance of the Premiers of North West and Limpopo, the two provinces have initiated a collaborative framework aimed at strengthening cooperation in the mining economy.

Honorable Speaker, Economic Planning and Research provides the foundation upon which these interventions are built. Through partnerships with the University of Pretoria, the University of Johannesburg, the University of South Africa and the North-West University, we are strengthening the role of research in guiding policy, investment attraction and economic development interventions.

Among the strategic studies that will be undertaken are investigations into

the economic viability and inclusiveness of the Hartbeespoort Dam economy, feasibility studies around Madikwe and other strategic biodiversity assets.

Research will also be undertaken around the development potential of the Taung Skull Heritage Corridor and the broader heritage economy associated with the Taung Archaeological and paleontological landscape. This work seeks to strengthen the tourism and heritage corridor linking Taung, the N18 route and the broader Trans-Kalahari Corridor.

Business Regulations

Honorable Speaker, Business Regulation and Governance is allocated R140 million for the 2026/27 financial year. Of this amount, R83 million is transferred to the North West Gambling Board to execute its regulatory mandate, while R57 million is allocated to support liquor regulation, business licensing, consumer protection services, consumer court operations and public awareness programmes across the Province.

At the centre of this programme is our commitment to creating a business environment that is fair, transparent, compliant and supportive of economic growth. Economic development cannot flourish without regulatory certainty, consumer confidence and adherence to the rule of law.

In the midst of uncertainty, we choose the law.

Strengthening consumer protection and regulatory governance

The Department continues to intensify consumer protection interventions

aimed at safeguarding citizens against unfair business practices, exploitation, fraud and unethical trading conduct.

Through consumer awareness campaigns, complaint resolution mechanisms and the work of the Consumer Affairs Office and Consumer Court, we are ensuring that citizens have access to redress while strengthening confidence in the marketplace.

We are also strengthening collaboration with municipalities, law enforcement agencies, regulatory authorities and business formations to improve compliance and ensure that economic activity takes place within the framework of the law.

Business licensing and regulatory reform

The Department continues to strengthen the Business Licensing function to ensure that enterprises operate within a predictable, transparent and enabling regulatory environment.

Liquor industry: supporting enterprise development and employment

The Province currently has more than 7 000 licensed liquor outlets operating across all four districts. Collectively, these businesses sustain an estimated 21 000 employment opportunities throughout the Province. The liquor sector stimulates activity across agriculture, manufacturing, logistics, retail, tourism, entertainment and hospitality value chains.

Gambling sector: a strategic economic contributor

The gambling industry remains a significant contributor to the economy of the North West Province and a strategic source of provincial revenue. Today, the Province is home to 253 active licensed gambling operators across various gambling modes. Licensed gambling operators generate Gross Gambling Revenue of R2.38 billion, from which R164.5 million in taxes and levies is collected and transferred directly into the Provincial Fiscus.

The sector sustains 1 641 direct jobs and contributes R7.6 million towards programmes that support community development, youth empowerment, sports development, education and social upliftment across the Province.

Economic impact of programme 4

- More than 7 000 licensed liquor outlets.
- 253 active licensed gambling operators.
- More than 22 600 direct employment opportunities.
- R2.38 billion Gross Gambling Revenue.
- R164.5 million transferred to the Provincial Fiscus.
- R7.6 million invested in socio-economic development initiatives.

Honorable Speaker, as I conclude this Budget Vote, let me state unequivocally that this is a budget for the people of the Province. It is a budget that recognises that government cannot deliver services without a growing economy. It is through economic growth, investment attraction, revenue generation and job creation that we are able to strengthen the

capacity of the state and improve the quality of life of our people.

The journey has not been easy. The challenges have been many. Yet, through determination, partnership and leadership, we have continued to move forward. We have done it. We continue to do it. And we are confident that, with the foundation we have laid and the standards we have set for ourselves, the future remains bright. The projections before us are positive, the opportunities are real and the commitment of this administration remains unwavering.

Conclusion

Honorable Speaker, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to this August House and to the Portfolio Committee for Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism. To the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Honorable Mpho Khunou, thank you for your firm oversight, your principled leadership and your unwavering commitment to accountability.

To the African National Congress and Provincial Chairperson, Cde. Nono Maloyi, thank you for your leadership, guidance and continued confidence. We trust that the work we present today reflects the vision, values and developmental agenda that you continue to champion for the people of the North-West Province.

To the Honorable Premier, Lazarus Kagiso Mokgosi, thank you for your leadership, comradeship and unwavering support. Your consistency, honesty and commitment to the development of our Province continue to inspire us.

Allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Head of Department, Mr. Relebohile Mofokane, the management team, all employees of the Department, our public entities, boards, stakeholders and social partners. To Bishop Duncan Shoke, thank you for your special prayers as a leader of our congregation.

To my husband, thank you for your patience, encouragement and unwavering support. To my children, thank you for your understanding, your love and the sacrifices you make as I serve the people of this Province.

Ke a leboga!

I thank you



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