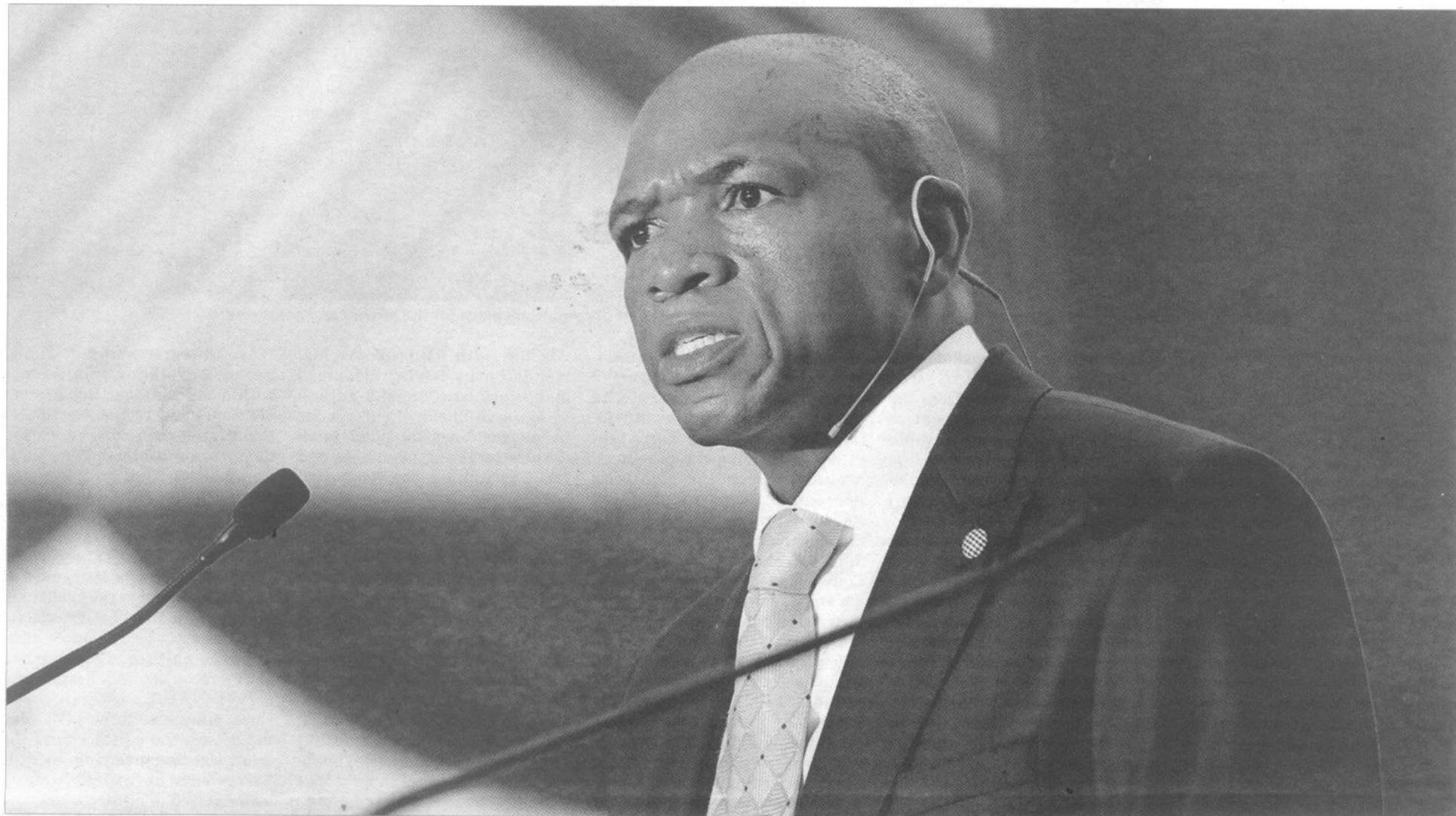


# BOKONE BOPHIRIMA SOPA 2017

Mail & Guardian  
Advertising supplement  
March 3 to 9 2017



Bokone Bophirima (North West) Premier Supra Mahumapelo delivered his State of the Province Address in Taung on Friday, February 24. Photo: Daylin Paul

## Bokone Bophirima comes alive

North West (Bokone Bophirima)

Rain brings drought relief, optimism and renewed work ethic to the North West province

Thebe Mabanga

In an occasion buoyed by optimism from the return of good rains after two years of drought, the premier of the North West (Bokone Bophirima), Ramoetsi Obakeng Supra Mahumapelo, delivered a State of the Province Address in which he declared that there shall be food, water and work for all in a delivery programme that is aimed at Villages Small Towns and Dorpies (VTSDs), on which government intends to spend about 70% of its budget.

The State of the Province Address (SOPA) was delivered at the Taung Old Sports Grounds on Friday February 24 in line with the provincial legislature resolutions to rotate the event to different regions of the province.

Mahumapelo told his gathered audience of the legislature and about 5 000 guests that the province is a moderately densely populated province with fragmented towns, villages, townships and small dorpies (VTSD). "This is one of the contributory factors to the high unemployment rate as it is expensive for job seekers to travel to meet potential employers to sell their labour." These villages and small towns form

the centre of almost everything the government does, receiving the bulk of government and procurement spending and targeted for upliftment.

According to Statistics South Africa, there are about 1.66 million or an estimated 475 000 households living in poverty in the province. The provincial population grew from 2.9 million in 1996 to 3.7 million in 2016 and is projected to reach 4-million in 2020. About 1.6 million people live in urban areas and 2.1 million in rural areas. In the province 228 000 out of 262 000, or 87%, of the white population, resides in urban areas, while only 1.3 million out of 3.2 million, or 40%, of the black population resides in urban areas.

The SOPA took place against the backdrop of the 20th anniversary of the South African Constitution. "This important document represents a formidable edifice grounding the foundation on which the new South Africa is built. It represents our collective aspirations and commitment to build a new society whose final realisation is a journey we must all contribute towards," said Mahumapelo.

The premier then picked up on President Jacob Zuma's theme of radical economic transformation. "More than 20 years since our democracy, black people and Africans in particular still carry the heaviest burden of exclusion from sharing in the wealth generated by our economy despite the fact that many of our people provide the labour that enriches a few minorities who control and exclusively enjoy the benefits of the wealth that has

been passed on from generations of colonial racist exploitation," he said.

Mahumapelo argued that that "this situation is not only unsustainable for the stability of our country, but also unconstitutional."

The premier notes that government has done its part to provide housing, food, water, social security and health care services among other rights, the time has now come for the government to use its legislative and regulatory authority as empowered by the Constitution and relevant legislation, to ensure that the majority of the people in this country who are black, and Africans in particular, are included and benefit from the wealth generated by the economy.

Mahumapelo says in sectors of the economy where government may not have direct fiscal control, such as retail, it should use legislation and regulations to ensure that private companies do not avoid their legal obligations in terms of transformation and preferential procurement. The premier notes that government will compel mining houses to spend more in the province.

The North West government is in the process of reviewing its relationship with one of the country's major banks, ABSA, in the wake of a looming probe by competition authorities for possible involvement in currency manipulation and is in negotiation with VBS Mutual Bank to spread its network and offer its services in the province.

The North West is already a leading producer of platinum — in which it accounts for 50% of global output — as well as chrome and coal, and

Mahumapelo notes that current geological information illuminates vast amounts of minerals that are yet to be quantified.

Mahumapelo notes that the challenge is to ensure that more people benefit from the wealth while reducing the province's dependency on the often volatile commodity prices. Working with the department of mineral resources, the premier's office will work to expand small-scale mining, mining beneficiation, mining procurement and new venture mining.

One of the areas that the premier has targeted for redirect spending is the supply of stationery, on which the province spends R500-million a year. Mahumapelo says he would like to see the company that supplies stationery set up a factory in the North West.

The North West government appears to be among the most rapid spenders on land transfer. Over the past year it has spent R26-million to benefit 200 families that were dispossessed about forty years ago and R19-million developing repossessed land for new beneficiaries.

The government says it has adopted a new approach to housing development — an incremental approach where developers are limited to delivering 50 units each, with material as well as labour sourced in local areas. On the infrastructure front, the province has successfully eradicated the bucket system where it has been reported.

The government has successfully implemented a phase of the Extended Public Works Programme and created

25 690 work opportunities, providing income support to poor and unemployed people through the labour-intensive delivery of public and community assets and services, thereby contributing to development in two ways.

The province has launched the ward-based Setsokotsane operation centres, which bring together community development workers, ward committee members, the extended public works programme and non-governmental organisations among a range of stakeholders to facilitate service delivery.

The premier says his government has made strides in fighting corruption, starting with blacklisting public servants who have been found guilty, implementing all public protector's recommendations, referring all Special Investigation Unit reports to the Hawks and opening an amnesty period for those who acquired state property illegally to come forward.

The premier did however sound a cautionary note in the fight against corruption, saying "we are making a plea to all people of Bokone Bophirima to desist from the culture of making damaging and libellous accusations against our fellow citizens without any shred of evidence to substantiate such."

Lastly, Mahumapelo says his government intends to engage unemployed graduates in the province as well as those who have migrated to other parts of the country in order to make them aware of the opportunities that exist in the province and a contribution they can make to its development.

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