



nesburg political analyst Prof Mcebisi Ndletyana.

"It's only in their actions that we are able to tell whether they are living up to their promises," he says.

"Words alone don't mean much."

It may be early to offer such judgment on Mabuyane. It's a scant three months since he succeeded Phumulo Masualle as premier. And he still needs to make a number of key appointments, including of heads of various provincial departments.

But as a key ally of President Cyril Ramaphosa, he says he is intent on driving Ramaphosa's reform agenda in the province.

It's not a task he takes lightly. "The expectation is that a new broom sweeps clean," he says. "I'm assuming a huge responsibility."

Mabuyane says his administration will be doing its best to "fix the leakages" in governance and get the province back on track.

"We need to get the correct managers in place. This matter of employing a CFO but having to go to consultants because the person you appointed can't produce an annual statement when you want it has to stop," he says.

In his 2017/2018 provincial audit, for example, Makwetu noted that the provincial department of roads & public works alone had paid consultants R45m for assistance with financial reporting responsibilities – and on a contract awarded irregularly.

Mabuyane believes the ANC needs visionaries and doers if it is to achieve the goals set out in the National Development Plan, a blueprint to address SA's socio-economic challenges by 2030.

"But if the ANC [appoints] people who lack the vision to lead, people who can't dream, [that won't help]. For you to be a visionary you must dream."

In his June state of the nation address, Ramaphosa called on South Africans to dream big and participate in building an SA in which "the first entirely new city built in the democratic era rises, with skyscrapers, schools, universities, hospitals and factories".

Mabuyane seems to be taking Ramaphosa's cue.

First, he wants to revitalise provincial industrial parks to create more job opportunities "so that our people don't go to other provinces for better opportunities".

So far, industrial parks that have been earmarked include those in Dimbaza outside King William's Town, Fort Jackson near East London, as well as Mthatha and Butterworth.

The province also hopes to benefit from the work done by Ramaphosa's investment

envoys, and is embarking on efforts to lure investors from South Korea, Japan, Germany, Texas, Tunisia and Namibia.

"We are looking at the best models and how we can work together to grow our economies," says Mabuyane.

He is determined to diversify the Eastern Cape economy so it becomes less reliant on the automotive sector, which has sustained the province for six decades. Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz and Isuzu all have production plants in the province.

To that end, Mabuyane says he is looking to exploit opportunities in the ocean economy and the tourism, agriculture and information & communications technology sectors.

"We have set aside R1.1bn over three years to stimulate our economic potential. With an 800km coastline, we should be [investing in] tourism and the oceans economy.

"Our ocean belt should be of benefit to our people."

Mabuyane says his administration is looking at engaging Amazon Web Services, the company's cloud computing unit, to extend its data centre investment in SA to the province. The firm plans to open three data centres in Cape Town in the first half of 2020, reportedly to "enable customers to run workloads in SA and serve end users across the African continent with even lower latency".

And the administration is exploring value addition in the agricultural sector to create jobs, says Mabuyane, who laments the fact that the Eastern Cape is a huge deciduous fruit farming region but doesn't produce any fruit juice.

Regarding other economic opportunities, the premier says marijuana has huge economic spin-offs but has been largely overlooked.

"Cannabis can be quite catalytic, it's an economic game-changer.

"If you look at hemp, we are getting fibre from that," he says, pointing out that this is used in textile production, including in the manufacture of the new Mercedes-Benz C-class in East London, and by Volkswagen.

"But we are far behind, if you consider advanced countries such as Germany. This is a huge industry that we have overlooked."

Mabuyane stresses that "we are not talk-

ing about smoking [marijuana] here; we are talking about cannabis oils ... and other by-products that are of benefit to people".

There's also a third industrial development zone (IDZ) in the offing, in addition to the Coega IDZ near Port Elizabeth and the East London IDZ. The Wild Coast IDZ, Mabuyane says, will focus specifically on agriculture and agriparks.

But he is well aware that his grand plans could come to nought if he doesn't address the scourge of corruption in the province. He says consequence management will be the cornerstone of his administration in dealing with those guilty of wrongdoing.

Taking another leaf from Ramaphosa's book, he says he will use performance agreements to hold his officials to account. And he says he will be steadfast about having zero tolerance for poor audit outcomes.

"We are going to confront corruption and thwart it wherever it shows its ugly head [because] it's an impediment to any development. We won't tolerate corruption in the province."

Mabuyane says the Eastern Cape, dubbed the "Home of Legends", sacrificed a lot of human capital for SA to be where it is today. "It is an injustice to see the province on its current trajectory, but we are determined to change that. Nelson Mandela once said: 'It falls upon a generation to be great.' We can be that great generation."

Mabuyane's openness to input and his deliberate pursuit of stakeholders to take the province forward is "very commendable", says Nelson Mandela University political analyst Ongama Mtimka. It's an approach, he says, that stands Mabuyane in good stead.

However, Mtimka warns that ANC politicians often tend to be more sensitive to the power configurations at party level – and afraid of upsetting those – than in doing what's right to improve government performance. By way of example, he cites the case of eThekweni mayor Zandile Gumede, who was suspended from June until this week. She faces fraud and corruption charges relating to a solid waste tender of over R200m.

"That [was] a classic case," he says. "She is a powerful person; action against her is upsetting a powerful constituency." Gumede has since been fired.

Mtimka adds: "The acid test of ANC employees is whether they can continue to build an administration that is sensitive to public interest even at the risk of exposing themselves at party political level." x

Nelson Mandela once said: 'It falls upon a generation to be great.' We can be that great generation

Oscar Mabuyane

What it means:

The new premier wants to diversify the Eastern Cape economy so it becomes less reliant on the automotive sector