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UNEMPLOYMENT

'Where are the jobs?' Unions unconvinced by WC stats

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ALTHOUGH the Western Cape government is celebrating a decrease in the unemployment rate in the province from 25.2% in quarter one of 2022 to 21.6% in quarter one of 2023, unions say they are yet to see the figures translate into real jobs.

The statistics in the latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey published by Stats SA also revealed that the expanded unemployment rate in the Western Cape had decreased from 29.0% in quarter one of 2022, to 25.9% in quarter one of 2023.

However, Western Cape National Public Service Workers Union spokesperson Zolisa Menze, said the figures did not reflect the reality on the ground.

"It is very interesting to hear such news in the wake of what we experience on the ground. We have not seen any industry grow to the point where new jobs are created. We do know that during this time, it is not unusual for politicians to claim easy victories since we are closer to elections. We, therefore, challenge the Western Cape government to give us concrete evidence of such claims," said Menze.

Responding to this, the MEC for

Finance and Economic Opportunities, Mireille Wenger, said between the first quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of this year, 360 000 jobs were created in the Western Cape.

"This is an increase of 15.7% year-on-year and is the highest percentage increase in employment in South Africa. Between quarter four of 2022 and quarter one of 2023, 62 000 jobs were created in the Western Cape," said Wenger.

Cosatu's Western Cape secretary, Malvern de Bruyn, also said unemployment remained high in the province and that they didn't see plans to create "real" jobs.

"I think the provincial government is referring to participants in the Expanded Public Works Programme jobs, and these are not real jobs. As Cosatu, we say we want real, sustainable, and decent jobs. We don't see any jobs being created; they must tell us where these jobs are," said De Bruyn.

Wenger said the top three sectors in the Western Cape that contributed to the increase in employment were community and social services, which created 117 900 jobs; trade, which created 113 200 jobs; and finance, with 64 900 jobs created between quarter one 2022 and quarter one 2023.

She said the Department of Eco-

nomics Development and Tourism (Dedat) had allocated R99.19 million towards skills priority in the 2023/24 financial year, with a strong focus on experiential learning initiatives.

"One of the examples of the programmes run by Dedat to create opportunities for youth employment is the 'Day of 1 000 Opportunities' hosted earlier this month.

"Dedat, together with 12 employers in the BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) sector, hosted a recruitment drive at the Athlone Stadium, specifically to bring employment opportunities closer to where young job seekers live," said Wenger.