



GAUTENG
LEGISLATURE

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Gauteng Provincial Legislature

Private Bag X52, Johannesburg, 2000

Cnr. President and City Hall Streets,
Johannesburg (CBD)

Tel: +27 (11) 498 5555

Fax: +27 (11) 498 5999

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FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATURE

Not every man is an abuser or rapist, but every man needs to take a stand against gender-based violence because Women and Children's lives matter.

Any harm or suffering that is perpetrated against a woman or girl, man or boy and that has a negative impact on the physical, sexual or psychological health, development or identity of the person amounts to abuse. Gender-based violence can be emotional, financial or structural, and can be perpetrated by intimate partners, acquaintances, strangers and institutions. Violence against Women and Children is arguably one of the most critical challenges facing South African society today.

In 2009, research undertaken by the Medical Research Council (MRC), in three provinces, revealed that 25% of women had experienced physical violence at some point in their lives. Other studies estimate that between 43% and 56% of women in South Africa have experienced intimate partner violence, and 42% of men report perpetrating it. Even before Covid-19 existed, domestic violence was already one of the greatest human rights violations.

In the previous 12 months, 243 million women and girls (aged 15 to 49) across the world have been subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner. And as the Covid-19 pandemic continues, this number is likely to grow with multiple impacts on women's wellbeing, their sexual and reproductive health, their mental health, and their ability to participate and lead in the recovery of our societies and economy.

Less than 10% of those women seeking help go to the police. Furthermore, current circumstances make reporting abuse cases even harder, including limitations on women's and girls' access to phones and help lines and disrupted public services such as police, justice, and social services.

These disruptions may also be compromising the care and support needed by the survivors, such as clinical management of rape, and mental health and psycho-social support. They also fuel

impunity for the perpetrators. In many countries the law is not on women's side; one (1) in four (4) countries have no laws specifically protecting women from domestic violence.

Wide under-reporting of domestic and other forms of violence has previously made response and data gathering a challenge, with less than 40% of women who experience violence seeking help of any sort or reporting the crime.

This shadow pandemic is already adding to the economic impact of Covid-19. The global cost of violence against women had previously been estimated at approximately USD 1.5 trillion. This figure can only be rising as violence increases, and will continue in the aftermath of the pandemic.

A 2014 study by KPMG also estimated that GBV, and in particular violence against women, cost the South African economy a minimum of between R28.4 billion and

R42.4 billion, or between 0.9% and 1.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) in the year 2012/2013.

At an individual level, we all have a role to play in the fight against gender-based violence. We must encourage all Gauteng men to be ambassadors of gender-based violence, and mentor boy children in the Province. I wish to commend the GPL Men's Forum for ongoing work in this regard.

To victims of abuse, witnesses as well as those affected by it in any way – please speak out!

To all men of our society – stop the dirty naked jokes about women! Stop the WhatsApp groups that share naked pictures of women! Stop imposing yourself over a woman based on your manhood!

Hon. Lentheng Mekgwe

Speaker: Gauteng Provincial Legislature

RIFE GBV, TEENAGE

PREGNANCIES, LGBTIQ+ ATTACKS: A CALL FOR ACTIVE CITIZENRY

Gauteng is said to have the most reported physical abuse and sexual offence cases in South Africa. Statistics by the Police Minister Mr Bheki Cele, revealed that the province had the most reported sexual assaults and rapes over the three-month period between January and March 2021. Some of these cases, included 2031 reported rape and 60 attempted sexual assault cases. These reported cases are only related to rape and sexual assault, and do not include other forms of violence. Furthermore, these numbers do not represent many incidents which go unreported.

Speaker of the Gauteng Legislature, Honourable Ntombi Mekgwe, said, "The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns further worsened this grim reality for women. Although lockdowns were instituted as a measure to curb the spread of Covid-19, this became a trap for many women.

"Minister of Social Development appeared before the Committee of Social Development on 04 June 2020 at National Parliament. She reported that prior to the 2020 lockdown, call centres had received nearly 5000 calls. During the lockdown period and as reported in 2020, over 40 000 calls had been received. This means that, whatever government actions takes, additional considerations needed to be made regarding women's socio-economic condition," she added.

Ironically, a sharp increase was reported in cases of violence against women, girls, and the LGBTIQ+ community during Women's month – a time dedicated to preaching women emancipation and rallying up society behind the protection and regard of basic human rights of all genders and

sexualities. Meanwhile, the Gauteng Health Department recently reported that over 23 000 teenagers were impregnated between April 2020 and March 2021, with 934 being girls aged between 10 and 14.

"These pregnancies took place during the first intense lockdown and learners were not at school. Somehow this shows that school does provide a safe space to shield learners from unprotected sex and other non-educational activities," said Speaker.

She continued, "It is important to correctly label the pre-teens and early teenagers who become pregnant: they are victims. Pre-teens are victims of sexual assault because they are children who cannot give consent. There is also a need to look closely into mid-teens' first encounter with sexual intercourse being out of coercion and force.

Despite having policies in place, learner pregnancies are still on the rise. Adequate sexual and reproductive education could

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Mr. Peter Skosana
Secretary to the Gauteng Legislature

FROM THE SECRETARY TO THE LEGISLATURE

multi-pronged Voter Education campaign – usually in the year of the forthcoming elections.

Educating society on the subject of voting and elections – through targeted awareness campaigns – forms an integral part of the Legislature's constitutional mandate as a non-partisan institution of State that exists to oversee government efficiency.

Our voter education campaign is premised on the undeniable fact that voting is the cornerstone of our democracy.


In the recent years, we have observed the need to gear our campaigns in a manner that prioritizes the youth – noting the high voter apathy among young people. The youth of South Africa make up a majority of the population, however, youth turnout in previous elections has been low. Emerging studies show that although young people do take a keen interest in socio-political matters of the country, and keenly engage in debates, when election day come, they choose not to cast their vote. Sadly, affects the working of our democracy; and to make changes, it is essential for young people

to vote. It is important that all citizens, young and old, are made conscious of the fact that when they choose not to vote, effectively they concede to having decisions that affect their daily lives taken by people that they themselves did not authorize to do so. The ignorance of one voter in a democracy compromises the security of all. Therefore no vote is wasted – voting is not only our right—it is our power to drive change.

We are all aware of the dire need for change in our municipalities to accelerate effective service delivery. Poor performance, poor service delivery, maladministration, alleged corrupt and unethical officials are amongst some of the challenges we all observe in various municipalities. Therefore, participating in Local Government elections empowers communities to elect their own representatives and contribute towards changing this negative narrative.

Bad officials are elected by good Citizens who choose not to vote; therefore, when we choose to vote, we express our commitment to ourselves, one another, and our country. Furthermore, in addition to merely driving educational messages

and information, the multi-pronged approach that we have adopted to-date has allowed platforms for citizens to express their views and raise arguments about the voting process. Our campaigns continue to feature debates, dialogue(s), live Q&A sessions with key role-players, bodies, and relevant institutions to ensure that engagements are meaningful and pertinent concerns are taken on board for future campaigns.

Another aspect of the voter education campaign that is often taken for granted is that everyone knows what to do when they get to the voting station. This unfortunately is not always true. Some citizens, particularly first-time voters, aren't sure of what happens at the voting stations. In this regard, part of the role of a comprehensive education campaign then becomes to ensure that there are less spoiled ballot papers, and that Citizens with special needs are duly prepared for the voting experience. Essentially, the campaign reinforces that for our democracy to be truly representative, all members of society must vote – provided they are of an eligible age. 

With the 1 November 2021 Local Elections now behind us, our focus will soon be on kicking off a comprehensive awareness campaign for the 2024 General Elections, to ensure that the people of Gauteng are well-educated and equipped to participate in the election.

In this regard, the Legislature partners with the Electoral Commission (IEC), the Gauteng Government's Departments of Education, Home Affairs, and CoGTA, as well as local municipalities to drive a

'COVID-19 VACCINE OUR ONLY HOPE OF SEEING MORE RELAXED LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS'

Chairperson of Gauteng Legislature's Portfolio Committee on Health, Dr Rebecca Phaladi-Digamela, has extended a call to the people of Gauteng to continue visiting their nearest Covid-19 vaccination sites to get vaccinated, to "assist in bolstering the province's fight against the pandemic".

Dr Phaladi-Digamela said Gauteng (and South Africa) now faced an unforeseen challenge of some Citizens who are reluctant to take the vaccine, due to uncertainties propagated by misinformation and conspiracies surrounding it.

She said, "Though some regions are doing better than others, our general observation is that a lower-than-desirable number of Gauteng men are making their way to vaccination sites for a jab." She further commended the younger vaccinators who were now bringing their elderly parents and grandparents to vaccinate alongside them.

"In the earlier stages of the rollout programme a handful of challenges were

experienced in vaccination efforts for persons of 60 years of age and above, due to a lack of transportation for them. However, this has now been resolved partly since the intake of the 40-to-49-year-olds' cohort. And we hope this will continue encouraging more elderly Citizens to take the vaccine and be protected from the virus," she continued.

She commended efforts by the Gauteng Department of Health in "ramping up" its plans to drive awareness and open more vaccination sites for the people of Gauteng.

"We are seeing impressive awareness campaigns on traditional media platforms and social media, as well as some critical partnerships with faith-based organisations and other critical stakeholders to encourage and urge more people to get vaccinated," she added.


In Sedibeng two additional vaccination sites have been opened, where support staff from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the National Department of Health are

on hand to assist. This, according to the Department, has seen a huge improvement in the vaccination programme in the region over the past weeks.

She said the Committee would continue strengthening oversight on the Department's vaccine rollout and awareness campaigns – to help the province "get more and more of its Citizens vaccinated".

She added, "Although every single Covid-19 related death and hospital admission is one-too-many, the country is currently recording lesser cases than we were seeing over a month ago. This is the best time for us to maximise our awareness efforts and the vaccination drive. It's our

only hope at continuing to see the country move to less-strict lockdown regulations, and hopefully get closer to some semblance of normalcy."

Encouraging the people of Gauteng, Dr Phaladi-Digamela continued, "We cannot forget where we have been as the country – where we watched the pandemic ravage through our families and claimed the lives of our loved ones and friends, took away jobs and caused businesses to shut down. We have watched our economy and our livelihoods crumble to the ground because of Covid-19. Now that we have a chance to get vaccinated and be safe from the worst possible effects of the pandemic we cannot allow apathy to set in." 

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RIFE GBV, TEENAGE PREGNANCIES, LGBTIQ+ ATTACKS: A CALL FOR ACTIVE CITIZENRY

help reduce unplanned pregnancies and HIV infections among learners. Speaker said, "Some teachers are not comfortable to teach comprehensive sex education, making the environment not conducive enough for learners. Research has also showed that sexual reproductive health services are not available to learners at their local clinics. The lack of adequate sexual and reproductive health services and education are also listed among main drivers of teenage pregnancies in South Africa."

JUSTICE SYSTEM

"Girls are also victims of processes and systems that fail them. Society at large and the justice system, are falling short and enabling the rape culture to thrive. Therefore, men who violate girls, get away, in many instances scot-free, without facing any punishment. Girls cannot be held responsible for a socio- economically driven problems," Speaker continued. She said the Legislature and other oversight bodies would "intensify our scrutiny work to hold accountable those entrusted with the responsibility of providing services to women and girls".

UNICEF reported that early pregnancy and delivery can have a negative impact on the overall health, education, livelihoods of girls, as they are forced to drop out of school. This impacts their educational and employment prospects and opportunities. Girls and young teenagers are admonished for being pregnant, and face stigmatization,

rejection – sometimes premature and forced marriages.

"It is important that governance institutions form strong partnerships with such organisation as the Soul City Institute for Social Justice, which has been working girls and children on a variety of areas including safety of children," she added.

Department of Health's Chief Director for Women's Maternal Health and Health, Dr Manala Makua, said, "Diet and evolution are some of the factors that contribute to early puberty development and sexual desires. Improving access to the sexual reproductive health services and skilled health care workers to respond to the sexual reproductive health needs of young people will go a long way in the fight against teenage pregnancy and unsafe abortions," she said. According to Hon. Mekgwe, it will take more than strategies to overcome these challenges.

"The success and failure of all these efforts depend on our active citizenry. Women, Children, and the LGBTIQ+ community have a Constitutional right to life, as well as all the freedoms that everyone else enjoys.

"The LGBTIQ+ community remain amongst the most marginalised in society, contrary to our country's world-renowned Constitution, which was the first in the world to prohibit unfair discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and guarantees equality.

"As a community and society members, every time we choose to stand back when an incident of this nature occurs, and the offenders are known to us, we are choosing to be a part of the problem not the solution. Effectively we are endorsing the crime and telling the perpetrator that it is okay for them to abuse and kill a fellow Citizen. For this we can be ashamed of ourselves," Hon. Mekgwe concluded. **■**

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES (NCOP)?

Parliament consists of two houses – the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). The NCOP represents provinces to ensure that provincial interests are considered in Parliament and national government. It does this mainly by participating in the national legislative process, and by providing a national forum for public debate of important issues affecting provinces. The NCOP also ensures that local government concerns are represented at National level.

COMPOSITION

The NCOP consists of nine provincial delegations nominated by the provincial legislatures, and a delegation from the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Each provincial delegation has ten (10) members made up of:

- Four special delegates drawn from the provincial legislature, including the Premier of the province or a person designated by the Premier as head of the delegation. These delegates change from time to time.
- Six permanent delegates.

This means every province is equally represented in the NCOP. Political parties in each provincial legislature are entitled to be proportionally represented in that province's NCOP delegation. The

SALGA delegation comes from the nine provincial local government associations to represent local government.

MEMBERSHIP OF PERMANENT DELEGATIONS

Every citizen who may be a member of a provincial legislature may be a permanent member of that province's NCOP delegation except:

- People employed or appointed by the State who are paid for this work, although that province's Premier, members of the Executive Council (provincial cabinet), and certain other provincial office bearers may become members.
- Members of the National Assembly, the provincial legislature, or a municipal council.
- Insolvent people (people declared bankrupt) who have not been rehabilitated.
- People declared by a court to be mentally unsound.
- People convicted of an offence and sentenced to more than a year in prison without the option of a fine. This disqualification ends five years after the sentence has been completed.

Political parties hold the seats in the NCOP, not individuals. If a member of the NCOP resigns, dies, or is expelled from the party, the party that holds that seat chooses another party member to take up the seat. The party's choice has to be endorsed by the relevant provincial legislature.

NCOP OFFICE BEARERS

The NCOP elects presiding officers from amongst its members – a Chairperson and two Deputy Chairpersons. These officers manage the work of the NCOP and preside over debates, making sure that delegates can speak freely while remaining within the rules. The permanent Deputy Chairperson is elected for five years while provincial Premiers take turns to be rotating Deputy Chairpersons for a year. A provincial Whip organises the work of each provincial delegation. Parties with at least seven permanent delegates, and who do not have members functioning as provincial Whips, are also entitled to a party Whip. A programming Whip helps the Chief Whip schedule the work of the NCOP.

LAW-MAKING ROLE

The NCOP considers, passes, amends, propose amendments to, or rejects legislation. It must consider all national bills. It may also initiate or prepare bills falling within Schedule 4 of the Constitution (matters over which national and provincial legislatures jointly have the power to make laws) and certain bills affecting provinces. However, only the Minister of Finance may introduce a bill to do with finance. Most of this law-making work is done in Committees, but all bills must be referred to a Sitting of the NCOP for debate and for a vote on whether to accept or reject the bill.

DEBATES AND QUESTIONS

Issues of provincial importance are debated in the national forum of the NCOP. Members may ask Cabinet ministers questions which must be answered in the NCOP. The NCOP may require a member of the Cabinet, a Deputy Minister or an Executive Official in national or provincial government to

attend a meeting or Committee meeting. A verbatim (word-for-word) record of all debates and questions is published in the parliamentary publication Hansard.

COMMITTEES

The NCOP's Committees are called Select Committees, e.g.: the Select Committee on Housing, Public Works, and Transport. Each Committee shadows the work of some government departments, debates and amends bills, and organises public hearings if an issue is of great public interest. Committees may summon any person to give evidence or to produce documents, and they may require any person or institution to report to them. Once a bill has been debated by a committee, it is submitted to the NCOP for a vote.

OVERSIGHT OF THE EXECUTIVE

The NCOP has oversight of the executive within its role as the representative of the provinces.

- In certain situations, the national executive may intervene in the affairs of a province, and a provincial executive may intervene in the affairs of a local authority. Interventions like these must be approved by the NCOP, and they must be regularly reviewed by the NCOP
- A national government decision to stop the transfer of funds to a province must be approved by both houses of Parliament
- Provinces have certain executive powers under the Constitution, as long as they have the capacity to do what needs to be done. The NCOP must resolve any dispute between national and provincial government over the capacity of a province to do this work
- Both houses of Parliament must approve the declaration of a state of national defence. **■**

GPL REMAINS THE CHAMPION OF THE RIGHTS OF GAUTENG YOUTH

Ensuring Citizen participation in the making of decisions concerning service delivery and the development of policies that address challenges faced by the people of Gauteng is a high-ranking responsibility of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature (GPL). The GPL pulls out all the stops to deliver on this mandate in a manner that impacts on all generations, genders, and society classes – thus ensuring that all people of Gauteng can experience a Legislature that cares about their needs.

The National Development Plan (NDP) of South Africa defines a desired destination and identifies the role that different sectors of society must play towards eliminating poverty and reducing inequality by 2030. According to the plan, South Africa can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the State, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society.

The GPL remains aligned to this vision by exercising its duties as a lawmaker (for the Province) and a service delivery watchdog, to constantly create opportunities that see youth contribution to decision-making.

This acknowledges that when the youth is actively involved in processes that are aimed at improving their living conditions – they are empowered to, themselves, lobby their elected Members of the Provincial Legislature (MPLs) to initiate legislation that is in their best interest. It is an opportunity for them to partner with GPL to ensure that Government Departments in the Province prioritize the youth in their employment policies and procurement spend. This effort is also being bolstered by the increasing number of young Members of the Provincial

Legislature (MPLs) joining the GPL as elected public representatives. These are sub-35-years-old men and women who are in various positions of leadership in Committees of the House as well as other structures. According to Speaker of the Legislature, Ntombi Mkgwe, this has “injected fresh energy into the Legislature, with young Parliamentarians themselves driving change and providing today’s youth solutions to today’s youth challenges”. She adds that this change augurs well the Legislature’s goal “to remain a dynamic and relevant legislature”.

Among the platforms created by the legislative system to elevate issues facing various sectors of society are and place them firmly at the centre of the Legislature’s business are Sector Parliament. These are Women’s; Youth, Senior Citizens; Children’s; Workers; Commercial Sex Workers; People with Disabilities; and the LGBTQIA+ sector parliaments. Through these Sittings, challenges facing these sectors are debated and corrective measures recommended by sector role-players themselves. Sector Parliaments also strengthen interaction between the people of Gauteng and policy makers – for a policy regime that is responsive to real issues facing the province.

Other mass public participation processes include Committee hearings on law-making, oversight and a range of programmes with direct impact on the livelihoods of the people of Gauteng. These create space for the involvement of Citizens in legislative business, while establishing a process by which Citizens can petition the GPL to put systems in place for the province to function as expected.

Speaker said, “There can never be effective Executive oversight without input from the population of the province. By enabling Citizens to participate, a foundation has been laid for better legislative oversight; a fundamental contribution to social stability, as well as the use of political processes to resolve problems related to

building a democratic society in Gauteng. “It is through continuous interaction with the public that we get to know what the electorate expects from the government – and identify areas where implementation of policy and legislation are inadequate, and remedy them as necessary,” she added.

Meanwhile, Speaker urged the people of Gauteng to get vaccinated in numbers and continue encouraging those around them to do the same. “The impact of Covid-19 on our lives and livelihoods cannot be denied. But we now have an opportunity to turn a new leaf and write our story anew. Let us go out in numbers to take the Covid-19 vaccination and give ourselves a chance to survive the deadly virus.”¹



EFFORTS TO INVEST IN GROWTH OF GP'S ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR

Led by Chairperson, Honourable William Matsheke, the Legislature’s Portfolio Committee on Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation recently concluded an investigation into the impact of Grant-In-Aid funding in helping Gauteng’s sporting organizations pay for their programmes.

The fund was established to assist struggling organizations whose philosophy promotes the province’s strategic direction in the

field of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture. According to Hon. Matsheke, “Preferred applicants include non-governmental and non-profit organisations, federations, cultural and arts institutes, companies, and public institutions in general.” The investigation looked into whether the Gauteng Department Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation follows up on the use of funds, by benefitting organizations, to ascertain accountable spending.

Hon. Matsheke said, “We wanted to determine the kind of support organizations receive from the Department, examine the extent to which they contribute to communities, verify their sustainability after the funding, and get acquainted with challenges facing the entire system.”

Over the years the Department has supported many Gauteng-based organizations that rollout sports, recreation, arts and culture

initiatives to build communities, create employment, empower the youth and transform the province’s economy.

“Whether the impact of this support has ever been evaluated in the past is not clear from the Departmental documents at the Committee’s disposal,” Hon. Matsheke continued.

Honourable William Matsheke

Chairperson: Portfolio Committee on Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation



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EFFORTS TO INVEST IN GROWTH OF GP'S ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR

During the 2019/20 financial year, R8 000 000 was given out in support of 60 Gauteng sports, arts, and culture organisations.

The Department acknowledged that understaffing and poor capacity made it hard to monitor and evaluate all funded projects.

On engaging with the supported organizations, the Committee learned that funding received from the Department was both insufficient and biased to certain organizations, which resulted in unsustainability.

Other reported challenges included strict requirements, delayed adjudications and not capacity training to empower disqualifying organisations for re-application.

"As the Committee, we view the allegations of unfair practice in a very serious light as they impeded the success of the arts and culture community organisations," he continued.

Some theatre production organisations use public halls for rehearsals, which are currently closed due to Covid-19 regulations.


The Committee also learned that there was no collaboration between organisations and municipalities, which meant that – apart from Grant-in-aid – there was no support of any other form received from local municipalities.

The Committee is now concerned that budgets earmarked for Grant-in-aid were not translating into a growing arts and culture sector in Gauteng.

"There is also no monitoring and evaluation of the programme, which leaves room for major losses to the Department," Hon. Matsheke added.

He said there needed to be service level agreements between the Department and municipalities on areas of cooperation – to ensure the availability of facilities and other support to organisations.

The Committee has called for a revision of the funding model to ensure the sustainability of supported organisations.

"It is also necessary that the Grant-in-aid Policy be reviewed to respond to current challenges," said Hon. Matsheke. The Committee will exercise strict oversight over the Department to ensure a turnaround. 

BIG MOVES TO ADDRESS GP'S LICENSE RENEWAL BACKLOGS, TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

Chairperson of the Legislature's Portfolio Committee on Roads & Transport, Honourable Gregory Schneemann, has called on the people of Gauteng to "take advantage the quick and improve methods" of renewing drivers' licenses, which were recently introduced to tackle backlogs facing the Province.

This comes after the Committee received a presentation from Gauteng MEC for Roads and Transport, Hon. Jacob Mamabolo, on the Department's 'Request A Slot' campaign that is currently underway in Gauteng – and will continue until 31 March 2022.

The committee is optimistic that the initiative will be of great assistance to motorists in renewing their driver's licenses. The Department shared detailed plans to deal with the backlog following the announcement by the Minister of Transport Fikile Mbalula on the extension of drivers' license renewals to 31 March 2022.

These include, amongst others, renewal facilities at selected Gautrain stations and more Driver License and Traffic Centres (DTLC) with extended operating days and hours from 7 am to 9 pm at some, with the introduction of biometric systems to accelerate efficiency in service delivery.

"We are pleased with what seems to be efficient and innovative plans that will address the demand for renewals," Hon. Schneemann said, adding that the Committee would exercise its oversight role and demand regular reports on the implementation of the different initiatives.

Motorists can request a slot online on: <https://online.natis.gov.za> and Android APP: RenewOnline_GP Alternatively, a license renewal slot can be requested by sending an email to: requestaslot@gauteng.gov.za or requestaslot@rtmc.co.za

Meanwhile, the Committee also recently received presentations from different Gauteng municipalities – all aimed at contributing to the newly established Transport Authority Gauteng (TAG).

The establishment of TAG means that Gauteng public transport users can now expect changes in their travel experience as public transport systems across the province and its city regions are integrated.

Hon. Schneemann said, "The establishment of TAG through resolutions from municipal councils paves the way for a cross-municipal boundary integration of public transport that promises modern, reliable, affordable, and efficient solutions in the Gauteng Global Region by 2030." The authority introduces a system that enable those who travel by bus, taxi, train (including the Gautrain), and other

transport can move from one part of the province to the other using a single ticket. This new system forms part of the Gauteng Development Strategy which emphasises the need for a provincial public transport system to facilitate easy movement of commuters, goods and services, as a critical component to grow Gauteng's economy.

TAG will integrate various public transport modes and systems in Gauteng, and encourage partnerships between operators of public transportation. It will comprise a board of 12 members serving as the accounting body that reports to Gauteng MEC for Transport.

Hon. Schneemann continued: "Transport challenges facing Gauteng are due to the absence of cross-municipal boundary integration of public transport services. Improved public transport accessibility, affordability, reliability, and safety is required to give effect to redressing apartheid spatial planning, allowing economic growth, and reducing economic and social opportunity costs for communities to access economic opportunities."

The Committee has urged TAG to speed up the process of appointing board members who will ensure governance and accountability.

The Committee has urged the Department to ensure TAG is considered for adequate



Honourable Gregory Schneemann
Chairperson: Portfolio Committee on Roads & Transport


funding in the next financial periods for the Authority to fully execute its mandates.

The Committee has also welcomed the R900 million investment to PRASA by National Treasury.

"The investment to improve security and protect the infrastructure of rail is long overdue and had it happened when signs where there, the current fiasco would have been avoided – given the huge backlog.

"We also are pleased with the approach to adopt the fourth industrial revolution security measures which will, among others, entail surveillance of the rail network, armed response, piloted aircraft, virtual patrol and drones," Hon. Schneemann said.

The multi-disciplinary approach which involves collaborations with SAPS, Intelligence and State Security will go a long way to clamp the criminal syndicate operating in the space.


The Committee urged PRASA to consider the involvement of commuter organizations and communities in the defense of the rail infrastructure. Hon. Schneemann further appealed for ethical and transparent procurement processes that stimulate the country's economic growth and the good intentions of government to poverty reduction, inequality and unemployment. 

LEGISLATURE DECLARES WAR ON PETITIONS IN SEDIBENG

The Legislature's Standing Committee of Petitions recently hosted a two-day public hearing in Sedibeng to discuss and resolve all adopted outstanding petitions on service delivery from the region.

The Joint Oversight led by the Office of the Chairpersons in the Legislature focused on 19 petitions adopted between 2005 and 2020. Committee Chairperson, Hon. Boitumelo Letsoalo, said, "The petitions represented a varied myriad of issues, on by-law enforcement with encroachment issues, incorrect title deed allocations, RDP requests from people who have been waiting with 1996 C-forms, municipal billing issues, unlawful liquor outlets and speed control issues." The right to petition is protected in sections 17, 115, 118, and 195 of the country's Constitution, and the Gauteng

Petitions Act (5 of 2002). "It is important for communities in Gauteng to know their right to petition the Gauteng Provincial Government and Gauteng municipalities, and are thus entitled to be listened to and have their grievances attended to and be involved in matters that concern them or the community they live in, beyond elections, and hold authorities to account," Hon. Letsoalo continued.

GPL ensured that all Mayors in the Sedibeng district, Gauteng MEC's and Senior officials were present to address the 19 petitioners and resolve the relevant petitions in their respective portfolios. As envisaged by the Joint Oversight at the end of the two-day hearing, some petitions were resolved on the spot and some will be closed in the coming weeks. 

Q&A

WITH COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Chairpersons of various Portfolio Committees of the Legislature recently held a webinar with Mail & Guardian, where they answered questions about the work done by the Committees they lead. The session was moderated by Hector Motivator, Founder and Managing Director of The Motivation Company.



Honourable Refiloe Kekana

Chairperson: Portfolio Committee on Social Development



Honourable Gregory Schneemann

Chairperson: Portfolio Committee on Roads & Transport



Honourable Alphina Ndlovana

Chairperson: Portfolio Committee on Community Safety



Honourable William Matsheke

Chairperson: Portfolio Committee on Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation

Question: What is the role of the Legislature's Social Development Committee?

Answer by Hon. Kekana: The Committee has an oversight responsibility to check if the objectives of the Social Development Department are aligned with their budget, and that there is good governance and efficient service delivery. Budgets are allocated to the various roles of the department, such as administration, restoration services, caring for homeless people, Early Childhood Development, and the like. Adjustments had to be made to accommodate the Covid-19 pandemic, which amplified issues such as poverty and GBV.

Question: Would you say there are problems facing the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)?

Answer: The programme is run at several different levels, from municipal to national, and all the various departments involved must spend their budgets optimally for the programme to run smoothly.

Question: What does the CoGTA & Human Settlements Committee do?

Answer by Hon. Gregory Schneemann: The Gauteng Department of CoGTA provides support for municipalities and their delivery of basic services. Its budget is divided between administration, local governance, development & planning, and developing traditional institutions. My committee has been analysing municipalities' progress, and its report will provide a useful tool for zooming in on critical areas where they need to improve on their performance. Proper planning is one area where CoGTA can help; and experts will help to prevent, for instance, fruitless

expenditure in municipalities. The skills of officials need upgrading, and CoGTA can indicate which courses are the most useful.

The budget for Human Settlements is divided into four programmes: administration; housing needs, planning and research; housing development; and housing asset and property management. The critical areas that the department focuses on are urban renewal, mega developments, title deeds, hostel redevelopment, support for people with disabilities, and a new programme, that of land release.

The oversight role of the Portfolio Committee concerns efficient spending of budget, and direct engagement with municipalities is now part of the strategy. The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown have impacted on the delivery of projects by Human Settlements, and on municipalities, particularly regarding payment of services by people who lost their jobs. The focus is now on regaining lost ground and restoring services.

Question: What is the Community Safety Committee's reflection on the budget allocation for the Department of Community Safety?

Answer by Hon. Alphina Ndlovana: The Portfolio Committee receives constant complaints from the community concerning the effectiveness of, for instance, the police. The department only received a 3% increase in its budget for this financial year. There was an increase in the amount allocated towards dealing with GBV, concerning training of the police on the taking of statements from victims, and the deployment of the GBV brigades, who visit households and create awareness of the impact of GBV. The "green door" initiative

provides access to safe houses for victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

Additional training for the police was prioritised, and additional budget was allocated towards the provision of vehicles, surveillance, and the like. Covid-19 affected the filling of various vacant posts, and halted unannounced police searches at schools for drugs, as well as training programmes for the green door initiative. The allocated budget for the department was insufficient to address increased homelessness and crime, said Ndlovana.

Question: What did the Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation Committee ensure that the Department assists its stakeholders cope with Covid-19 related setbacks that hit their industry?

Answer by Hon. William Matsheke: The Department is responsible for four functions: administration; cultural affairs; library services; and sports and recreation – and with all those areas to look after, the budget allocated to Department is insufficient. It was one of the most affected by Covid-19; its budgets slashed, and cultural activities stopped. Relief grant requests were made to the provincial and national departments for artists and sportspeople as the lockdowns hit them badly.

Hon. Kekana spoke about a community centre in Soshanguve; the Committee has visited and found it had some structural problems; the facility is closed until the problems get resolved.


Concerning the electrification of Orient Hills, Hon. Schneemann said there has been extensive engagement with the municipality concerned and it had been engaging with

Eskom. The community had closed a road in the area, and Hon. Schneemann appealed to the community to unblock it, while acknowledging that the concerns of the community were being taken seriously. He shared his email address: gschneemann@gpl.gov.za and phone number 060 999 9146 for anyone Citizens willing to get in touch with him for any service delivery related issue.

Responding to a question concerning sport facilities in the Mogale area, Hon. Matsheke said the rolling out 40 community courts had been delayed for various reasons, but the West Rand area has been prioritised for development. The Social Cohesion Carnival was interrupted because of the Covid-19 pandemic, but plans were afoot to revive it, and other events, in accordance with set Covid-19 regulations.

He added that his Committee was ensuring that the Department was working hard at making Gauteng a filming destination; it is prioritising sports development in townships; artists must apply for relief funding; sport events need more funding; and the issues concerning the Performers' Protection Amendment Bill must be finalised.

Hon. Kekana appealed to the public to seek information about what government services are available in their areas and interact with their councillors.

Hon. Schneemann said in terms of Human Settlements, this year the Department had a substantial grant to develop informal settlements, which must be monitored closely. He appealed to members of the public to pay for their services so that they can be delivered efficiently. 

COMMITTEE CALLS FOR COMPLETION OF ABANDONED HOUSING PROJECTS

The Gauteng Legislature's Portfolio Committee on Co-operative Governance (CoGTA) & Human Settlements recently conducted oversight visits to various abandoned housing projects in Etwatwa; Kagiso; as well as Klipspruit as part of its investigation. ing organizations pay for their programmes.

The investigation aims to assess progress made by the Gauteng Department of Human Settlements' in finalising abandoned and incomplete housing projects in the province. During its assessments, the Committee discovered hundreds of houses across various communities that remained unfinished.

The Department's officials appointed to manage these projects cited various challenges, including vandalism and invasion of government houses by non-qualifying community members; finalisation

of beneficiaries' administration process; and issues with appointed contractors. The Committee expects the Department to provide answers on factors resulting in this provincial challenge; as well as its implementation plans to ensure that all abandoned housing projects in the province are finalised and duly handed over to the rightful beneficiaries.

Committee Chairperson, Honourable Kedibone Diale said, "As the Committee we are specifically interested to find out how the funds were allocated, contractors appointed, as well as the beneficiary verification process and project schedules."

Etwatwa

The Committee visited Etwatwa Extension 9 and 10 where it found 251 incomplete houses. Interviews were conducted with several beneficiaries awaiting houses to

ascertain whether they were registered on the Department of Human Settlements' database, and the status of their applications. Amongst beneficiaries was an elderly and unemployed Mr Motaung, who lives with a disability. He has been in a shack while waiting for government house that he first applied for in 2013. Concerned by his plight and desperate need for safe and dignified shelter, the Committee urged the deployed Department's Housing Project team to prioritize him, and deliver his house by December 2021. The rest of the 251 Etwatwa houses are expected to be completed within the allocated 2021/22 financial year budget.

Hon. Diale said the Department needed to set feasible targets to accelerate the completion of incomplete housing projects, and the Committee would monitor this work closely to ensure transparency and legitimacy.



Honourable Kedibone Diale
Chairperson: Portfolio Committee on
CoGTA and Human Settlements

"We are encouraged by the deployment of a different Project Manager with a proven track record to oversee and lead implementation of this process. Department officials who were part of the oversight visit said the beneficiary administration process and delayed procurement contributed to delays in turn-around times," she added.

Meanwhile, Hon. Diale raised concerns with poor information sharing with beneficiaries on the Department's applications process, and the qualifying criteria. The demanded that housing applicants be kept on the loop at every stage of the project.

The Department is expected to respond with detailed plans in four weeks. The Committee appeals to the people of Gauteng to refrain from purchasing government houses; and report any corrupt and criminal conduct by government officials. 🗣️

COMMITTEE CALLS FOR TIGHTER LAW-ENFORCEMENT ON UNLAWFUL PROTESTS

The Legislature's Portfolio Committee on Community Safety has called on Gauteng Law Enforcement Agencies to put stringent measures in place to deal with sporadic protests that often spring-up in various areas across the province.

According to Chairperson, Honourable Alpha Ndlovana, the Committee is concerned that these protests, which have been characterized by looting and vandalism, are compromising government efforts to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, rebuild the economy and restore calm in communities".

"Participants in these violent protest actions demonstrate utter disregard for the law by not adhering to the country's Disaster

Management Act regulations, looting of business premises and the destruction on property.

"We have noted that in some areas this unrest is accompanied by provocation and intimidation of innocent people who have nothing to do with whatever conditions have given rise to these unlawful protest actions. In some instances, cars are stone, people attacked, and live ammunition fired at community members and police, which leads to fatalities," she added.

She said these needed to be met with "strict and decisive" action from law-enforcement agencies. "There also must be a proper deployment of Public Order Police in areas where these protest actions are prevalent,"

she added. Meanwhile, the Committee recently investigated whether Gauteng's law-enforcement agencies were sufficiently equipped to fight crime in the province, particularly the South African Police Service (SAPS).

"Crime levels in the province are concerning", Hon. Ndlovana said, "and therefore we needed to get a full picture on where things stand as far as resource allocations to those entrusted with the task to fight crime."

She said among the common reasons given for police inefficiencies was understaffing and shortages of vehicles, firearms and ammunition allocated to fight crime in the Gauteng. "But we needed to dig deeper and see where the bottlenecks are in the system," she continued.

A Committee report will be put together with findings and recommendations after the investigation, which will be table at the Legislature for adoption and action.

The 2019/20 crime statistics painted a picture of staggering crime levels in Gauteng.

"The United Nations had recommended the ratio of one (1) Police Officer to 220 civilians, however, in South Africa, it is one police officer to 383 civilians.

"This is highly unacceptable if we are to win the fight against crime in our Country and Province. It is for this reason that the Committee needed to conduct this investigation and consult various stakeholders in a form of a seminar to come up with solutions," Hon. Ndlovana concluded.

