



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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Chairperson, Honourable Bonginkosi Dhlamini, led the Oversight Committee on the Premier's Office & the Legislature's (OCPOL) recent youth unemployment workshop that took place at the Braamfontein Convention Centre.



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NEW COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL TO MONITOR POLICING IN GAUTENG

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).



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SEVENTH ANNUAL VITA BASADI AWARDS

The Legislature recently hosted the Seventh (7th) Annual Vita Basadi Awards – an initiative of the Gauteng Speakers' Forum (GSF) that aims to recognize excellence by local women in various areas of work and/or acts of service to fellow citizens who lack the means to help themselves.

FROM THE SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATURE

In the recent weeks, Deputy Speaker, Honourable Nomvuyo Mhlakaza-Manamela and I took part in the 17th Commonwealth Speakers' and Presiding Officers' Conference (CSPOC) that was hosted by the Rwandan Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in Kigali.



The objectives of the Conference were to: 'maintain, foster, and encourage impartiality and fairness of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments; promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in its various forms; and develop parliamentary institutions'.

We were part of the CPA South African Branch delegation, led by National Council of Provinces (NCOP) Chairperson, Hon. Amos Masondo, which included Speakers and Deputy Speakers from the Gauteng, Western Cape, Northern Cape, and the Limpopo provincial legislatures. The four legislatures make up the sub-branches of CPA South Africa.

The conference adopted a series of resolutions, including plans to improve

trade and economic integration, the capacitation of Members of Parliament (MPLs) and Staff, as well as public health and the handling of pandemics such as Covid-19.

Furthermore, parliaments on the African continent were urged to finalize the establishment of an African Medicines' Agency to help regulate products; invest more in research efforts and the development of Africa's own vaccines.

We were challenged to adopt better public participation frameworks including introducing citizens' performance scorecards as part of institutional monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms on the work of parliaments; and to continue strengthening impartiality and inclusivity and in how we perform our duties as

speakers. We were also urged to continue optimizing information and communication technology to improve the effectiveness of parliamentary administrations and embrace e-Procurement, e-Taxation and many other opportunities created by the changing digital technology landscape.

Also emphasized by the conference were the CPA values and principles that remain topical to African countries, which include: i) *the absolute right of individuals to participate in democratic processes*; ii) *commitments to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights agreements*; iii) *tolerance, respect, understanding, and religious freedom*; iv) *open dialogue and the free flow of information*; and v) *the recognition of gender equality and women empowerment as basic human rights*. The conference also affirmed the role of minority and opposition

parties in strengthening parliamentary oversight. As the Gauteng Legislature we joined other African Parliaments in the Commonwealth in the commitment to leverage our shared history and tradition in promoting respect for all people, and protecting vulnerable groups.

The 2023 biennial CSPOC will be hosted by the Cameroon Branch of the CPA, and the 2025 CSPOC conference by the Botswana Branch.

Hon. Masondo expressed his confidence in African parliaments that they will raise the bar in serving the citizens of their nations.

Hon. Lentheng Mekgwe

Speaker: Gauteng Provincial Legislature

BRIXTON MULTIPURPOSE CENTRE HOSTS SOPA 2022



Getting another year of the Legislature's business on the roll, Speaker, Hon. Ntombi Mekgwe, recently presided over the Opening of the Legislature, the first Sitting where Premier David Makhura delivered the State of the Province Address – highlighting his administration's service delivery plans for 2022.

The Sitting is convened annually as a requirement of the Standing Rules of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature, i.e., Rule 15 which requires that, "the Premier must deliver an address on the state of the province at every first Sitting of the Legislature".

The much-admired event took place at the Brixton Multipurpose Centre last month and was hailed by many impressed attendees as signalling the country's great strides in fighting Covid-19, given that SOPA 2021 was largely virtual due to strict restrictions on public events.

Highlights of the Premier's address

Makhura said while the Township Economic Development Bill was still subject to due internal processes, the Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) continued to invest in township economies.

He said over R20 billion had been spent on these economies. A breakdown of the spending was R5.6 billion on women-owned enterprises, R5.6 billion on youth-owned businesses, and R420 million on businesses owned by people living with disabilities.

He said all this spending took place between 2014 and 2019. The Premier's speech also focused considerably on the importance of economic recovery.

He said unemployment, and a struggling economy, remained the emergencies that would dominate the GPG's focus as the country and Gauteng continue to gain some level of control on the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and its negative effects. Gauteng has an unemployment rate of 37%.

Continuing, Makhura said a war-room he had assembled to tackle service delivery and economic recovery was working. He said part of its success was in the tourism, food, and beverage industries.

He also emphasised the health and other economic benefits of using cannabis, and that relevant GPG departments were engaged in ongoing talks with cannabis industry leaders to concretize plans.

"This year, we will dedicate a special unit within the Provincial Government to work with the industry and national government

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Mr. Peter Skosana
Secretary to the Gauteng Legislature

FROM THE SECRETARY TO THE LEGISLATURE

Dubbed the 'critical center of excellence' in parliamentary operations, the Parliamentary Institute will ensure a well-functioning National Parliament and provincial legislatures. This will be through providing independent and quality research, analytic and capacity-building services to Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of Provincial Legislatures (MPLs) and all support Staff.

Parliamentary Institutes are critical for developing skilled MPs who can make informed decisions and develop relevant, effective, and responsive policies.

SALS identified the need for a sector parliamentary institute in the Fourth Parliament as one of the recommendations of the development of a sector common oversight framework called the Sector Oversight Model (SOM).

The legislative sector lacked a dedicated institute to identify needs, design and deliver programmes, conduct research and provide access to relevant information, unlike the executive, which has a dedicated institution to capacitate

staff, i.e. the National School of Government (NSG).

Subsequently, the Speakers' Forum approved the establishment of the Institute in the Fifth Parliament with an establishment process approved in the Sixth Parliament. The establishment process builds on the approvals to date to work out the details related to the establishment of the Institute from concept to implementation.

In essence, the Parliamentary Institute will ensure that Parliament and legislatures succeed in the fulfilment of their mandates, i.e.: law-making, oversight, public participation and fostering cooperative governance. This in turn will result in state capability, accountability, and responsiveness.

As South Africa is a developmental State with the aim of actively steering economic development to alleviate poverty and address the needs of Citizens, strong capacity informed by critical thinking and analytical skills is necessary in how Parliament and legislatures function. It will also strengthen knowledge management among MPLs and officials,

as well as the establishment of the alumni association of former MPLs and officials of the Legislative Sector.

The Institute will operate under the stewardship of the Speakers' Forum of South Africa. SALS is an association that is made up of representation of all provincial legislatures – coordinated under the leadership of the Speakers' Forum of South Africa. The Speakers' Forum itself is voluntary association that operates as a separate body distinct from its members. It is composed of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) and the Speakers and Deputy Speakers of all nine provincial legislatures. The Speaker of the National Assembly and the NCOP Chairperson are the co-chairpersons of the Speakers' Forum.

The Forum sets the direction for the sector and is the highest policy-making body of the sector that oversees the management and coordination of sector programmes. It draws up the policy framework that guides the work of the sector.¹⁷

The South African Legislative Sector (SALS) recently launched the long-overdue South African Parliamentary Institute (SAPI).

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BRIXTON MULTIPURPOSE CENTRE HOSTS SOPA 2022

to address the regulatory and licensing issues, attract investment and facilitate black participation in this new sector," he continued. The benefits of cannabis were also highlighted by President Cyril Ramaphosa during his State of the Nation Address.

The Premier also lamented a lack of focus on infrastructure investment and maintenance in the Province. He said several vital projects faced delays for no reason – pointing this out as a "missed opportunity" given that the infrastructure development sector has potential to provide much-needed job.

He said this remained his biggest concern, and another war-room would be created to deal with backlogs and problems in that regard.

"Between 2014 and 2019, we invested R53 billion in social and economic infrastructure,



which contributed to the creation of 120 000 jobs. Our track record on maintenance has been dismal, and costing projects are issues of concern," he continued.

The Premier's address forms the base of GPL's oversight work for the year ahead.

The Legislature holds the Provincial Government accountable for delivering its commitments to the people of the Province.



EDITOR'S NOTE

Warm greetings to all of you valued GPL Stakeholders and readers, I'm delighted to join the Let's TALK: GPL team as the new Editor as we continue educating and keeping you abreast about what your Provincial Parliament has been up to since you picked up the last issue.

I trust you're doing your best stay safe from Covid-19 as we start another year, still with a level of uncertainty about what lies ahead. We are, however, motivated by the consistent decrease in new infections as well as emerging research with evidence confirming the effectiveness of the vaccines. I urge those who haven't yet taken the jab to do so urgently – and encourage those around them who haven't – so that we all have a fair chance against the virus.

We bring you another edition of Let's TALK: GPL – filling-you-in on some of the Committees' activities that wrapped up 2021 and ushered in the new year, 2022.

As per usual, Committees have been criss-crossing the province keeping Provincial Government Departments honest in their service delivery commitments and the use of public funds to ensure that your life is made better.

Upfront we bring you highlights from international conferences that Presiding Officers recently participated in, which include the exciting election of our own Speaker as Treasurer for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) – Africa Region. Read all about that, and about the resolutions of the 17th CSPOC conference in Kigali, Rwanda.

We also catch-you-up on the proposed Community Safety Bill and the change it envisages bringing about to the province's policing system. Also read up about the significant oversight breakthroughs made by the Health, CSSL, and the Road & Transport committees, and their positive spinoffs for the people of Gauteng.

OCPOL recently brought under one roof the youth of Gauteng, economic experts, and reps of various sectors to share thoughts on how the grim youth employment reality can be tackled. This was but one of many continuous interventions by GPL to bring key role players together to address youth unemployment. These are but highlights of what the Legislature's Committees have been up to in the recent weeks and days. [\[1\]](#)

More can be found on our social pages and the official website of GPL,

Website: www.gpl.gov.za

Facebook: Gauteng Legislature

Twitter: GPLegislature

Instagram: GPLegislature

Lesego Mncwango

CPA AFRICA REGION ELECTS GPL SPEAKER AS TREASURER

Speaker, Honourable Ntombi Mkgwe, was elected to the role of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) – Africa Region Treasurer at the association's 51st CPA-Africa Region conference that was held in Abuja, Nigeria.

Taking over the reins from the West Africa CPA branch, she will serve her three-year term up to 2024. The conference preceded the 17th Commonwealth Speakers' and Presiding Officers' Conference (CSPOC) that was hosted by the Rwandan Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in Kigali.

The five-day 51st CPA – Africa Region Conference, held under the theme: 'African Parliaments and the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic', adopted a number of resolutions on how African parliaments should fight Covid-19, and strengthen research and development to reduce dependence on first world countries for life-saving medicines.

Hon. Mkgwe's election as Treasurer comes as countries across the globe are relaxing their lockdown restrictions following the devastating impact of Covid-19. This places upon her an opportunity to actively, together with all Office Bearers, drive strategies and policies that strengthen oversight while responding to socio-economic disparities aggravated by the pandemic – a task she has embraced with much zeal and determination.

Her election to the continental executive of CPA was unanimously hailed as another great stride by the association. Leader of the South Africa delegation and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Hon. Lechesa Tsenoli, said, "Her election is a befitting recognition of her good leadership traits in the South African Legislative Sector, and the Southern Africa sub-region and the CPA-Africa Region at large. We feel honoured both as South Africa and the Southern African block of Parliamentarians. It affirms and encourages the exemplary performance of many women representatives in national and sub-national parliaments and legislatures."

Hon. Mkgwe expressed gratitude for the confidence placed on her by the continental body of Parliamentarians. Meanwhile, amongst its numerous resolutions, the conference committed to:

- i) strengthen African Parliaments' oversight on governments' strategies;**
- ii) fight corruption; and**
- iii) adopt the allocation of at least 15% of national budgets to the health sector.**

Parliamentarians condemned the non-equitable share of the world's capacity to fight the global pandemic through vaccines, most of which are not accessible to the African continent.

Legislators were challenged to develop models to solve economic challenges and achieve Sustainable Development goals, many of which suffered setbacks because of the global health crisis occasioned by the outbreak of Covid-19. Furthermore, a call was made for laws to be made that protect the interests of African countries and open equal access to support, resources, and the local development of pandemic-fighting vaccines.

Parliaments were also urged to step-up efforts to fight the prevalent gender-based and domestic violence.

Hon. Mkgwe said, "The fight against Covid-19 and its impacts on women, children, poorer communities, national economies and on lives and livelihoods of people, has to make a real difference. It is my hope that the resolutions adopted by this conference will be successfully implemented by all national and sub-national legislatures. [\[2\]](#)

OCPOL LEADS CONVERSATION TO ADDRESS GAUTENG YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Chairperson, Honourable Bonginkosi Dhlamini, led the Oversight Committee on the Premier's Office & the Legislature's (OCPOL) recent youth unemployment workshop that took place at the Braamfontein Convention Centre.

The two-day workshop saw the youth of Gauteng, economic experts, the entrepreneurial sector, government departments, the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), and other key stakeholders share thoughts on all matters pertaining to youth opportunities and the country's economic development.

It was necessitated by the country's staggering youth unemployment statistics, their economic unproductivity and rising

poverty made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdown restrictions; a plight that has exacerbated poor mental wellness, substance abuse and crime.

Top of the agenda was the slow implementation of the Tshepo 1-million drive – the Gauteng Government's short-term strategy to address youth unemployment.

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Honourable Bonginkosi Dhlamini
Chairperson: Oversight Committee on the
Premier's Office & the Legislature (OCPOL)



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OCPOL LEADS CONVERSATION TO ADDRESS GAUTENG YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. Dhlamini said, "The Tshepo 1-million drive was designed to train, skill and mentor 1 million young people, focusing primarily on women and People with Disabilities through a set of projects aimed at capacitation, entrepreneurship, and employability."

He said OCPOL had continued to lament the Gauteng Government's under-performance relating to youth unemployment in this programme.

"The programme looks good on paper but its effects are not felt on the ground by making our youth employable. Given Gauteng's unemployment reality, the Tshepo 1 million should be making great inroads, but it isn't.

This is unfortunate given the growing evidence that that entrepreneurship and self-employment offer the biggest opportunity to create jobs in South Africa, particularly with the increasing number of start-ups which could become an engine of jobs growth in the future," he continued.

The recent labour force survey released by Statistics South Africa presented a grim picture regarding youth unemployment in the first and second quarters of the 2021/22 financial year.

"The real challenge now facing the country is for all talk to cease and an-all-hands-on-deck approach to be found, in rescue of the youth of South African," Hon. Dhlamini continued.

Prime among the key contributors in this devastating reality is the skills' shortage and limited expertise among the youth.

Furthermore, job losses during the Covid-19 pandemic mainly affected low-income earners. Those with higher levels of education had higher chances of receiving a full salary than those with lower levels of education. About nine (9) in every 10 employed graduates (91,0%) continued to

receive full salaries, compared to 83,4% of those with less than matric as their highest level of education.

Hon. Dhlamini continued, "It places the country under immense pressure to come up with alternative and unconventional employment methods to turn things around. The session was therefore one of many building blocks that are required as we focus on building an economy that works. It facilitated a conversation between implementers and recipients of programs that will curb unemployment."

OCPOL will table the workshop's recommendations to the House for further processing and implementation by the Gauteng Provincial Government. ¹⁴

NEW COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL TO MONITOR POLICING IN GAUTENG

The Gauteng Legislature's Portfolio Committee on Community Safety has just concluded the process to solicit public inputs into a newly proposed law, the Community Safety Oversight Bill.

Honourable Alphina Ndlovana

Chairperson: Portfolio Committee on Community Safety



The law introduces a multi-faceted model to oversee and monitor conduct in Gauteng's policing system – at different levels – to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the provincial police service and at municipal level.

The Community Safety Oversight Bill proposes methods to monitor the conduct of both the South African Police Service (SAPS) and municipal police services in all Gauteng's municipalities.

Committee Chairperson, Honourable Alphina Ndlovana, said among the mix of methods proposed by the bill is the formalization of collaboration between the police service and community policing forums, neighbourhood watch services, and community organisations. Ranking high on the priority list proposed by the bill, she

said, was the establishment of the Gauteng Provincial Police Ombudsman office, whose primary task would be to investigate all public complaints about the police service(s).

She said, "The Bill suggests that the way the Gauteng Executive currently addresses public concerns about police inefficiencies points to a gap in the system, and the need for an independent structure that will bring about the change in holding the police service accountable." She said the envisaged bill grants special powers to the proposed Ombudsman's office the autonomy to enforce such accountability by first identifying bottlenecks in the relations between the police and Gauteng residents.

She continued, "The proposition is to move away from the current practice of determining policing needs primarily on the

basis of crime statistics but taking a holistic approach to determine policing needs based on information obtained in partnership with communities, civil society, other government spheres, business and the like."

The bill also provides for the voluntary registration of security service providers on the Gauteng Department of Community Safety's database of organisations which will enable the due screening and vetting of security service providers, and introduces further training where gaps are identified.

In addition to identifying inefficiencies on the ground, the Bill also addresses aspects such as the reporting to the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of Community Safety by the SAPS Provincial Commissioner and executive heads of municipal police services.

It also proposes the establishment of a Provincial Safety Advisory Committee to advise the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of Community Safety on functions, strategies and policies that aim to increase efficiencies in policing.

She added that proposals made by the bill "are well in the spirit of the Constitution, as they reinforce the principles of cooperative governance and intergovernmental relations in general, more specifically between the Civilian Secretariat and the Province".¹⁵

The bill can now be found on Gauteng Provincial Legislature's official website, www.gpl.gov.za for review and input by Gauteng residents.

'NO ROAD TRAFFIC TARIFF INCREASES FOR GP', SAYS CSSL

The Legislature's Committee on Scrutiny of Subordinate Legislation (CSSL) has approved a request from the Gauteng Department of Roads & Transport to halt the

implementation of the annual increase in the province's road traffic tariffs for the 2021/22 financial year.

The request was tabled by the Gauteng Department of Roads & Transport for approval by the Committee.

The Gauteng Provincial Government (GPG) is compelled by legislation to present every provincial regulation for scrutiny and approval by the Legislature prior to them being passed. Chairperson of the CSSL Committee,

Honourable Dulton Adams, said, "In taking this decision, the Committee considered submissions received from stakeholders which emphasised that Gauteng residents were facing economic hardships as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic which has had significant reduction in income and a rise in unemployment."

The decision not to implement the annual traffic tariff increase will ease the financial burden on motorists and see them paying the same tariffs as in the previous financial year for services

such as motor vehicle license renewals. Hon. Adams continued, "The Committee took this decision after considering the implications that a zero tariff hike will have on the Department of Roads & Transport's revenue collection, but had to weigh this against the hardship faced by citizens as result of Covid-19 and the disruption of economic activities in ways that were unique to this crisis. He said the Committee had instructed the Department to table all fees that were to be increased in the 2021/22 financial year for consideration for implementation in the 2022/23 financial year.¹⁶

PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES RECEIVE ETHICS TRAINING

Members of the Provincial Legislature (MPLs) recently concluded an Integrity & Ethics training course, delivered by practitioners from various sectors.

The course forms part of the comprehensive training curriculum designed to develop and broaden MPL awareness and skills required to fulfil their Constitutional mandate – living up to their oath of office.

Chairperson of Committees, Honourable Sizakele Nkosi-Malobane said in an age characterized by various forms of poor ethics, corruptibility and dishonesty among public representatives and leaders in various spheres, training courses of this nature have become integral in organizational strategic planning. She

said, “The training envisaged equipping MPLs with the right information regarding the expected standards of ethical conduct and the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions on matters of conflicting interests and the violation of the oath as sworn public servants.

“It also afforded MPLs a platform to debrief and engage on issues of concern related to their day-to-day operations.”

MPLs also received training on acceptable conduct during media interactions and presentations.

“Members will have a better understanding of the importance of having strategic relations with the media, how to interact better with media, how to handle interviews and respond to questions honestly and with integrity, as well as making use of social media to reach stakeholders and make GPL visible,” she added.

Below are some of the highlights from the MPLs’ Ethics training session.



MPLS ASSESS READINESS OF GAUTENG SCHOOLS

Lead by the four Presiding Officers, elected public representatives in the Legislature (MPLs) recently visited schools across the province in an effort to assess their readiness for the new academic year.

Deputy Speaker, Honourable Nomvuyo Mhlakaza Manamela, said, “Annually around this time of year as the Legislature we routinely

visit selected schools from all Gauteng regions to gauge their readiness ahead the year of schooling.

“During these visits we talk to educators and SGBs to learn about various challenges that impede seamless teaching and learning. We also use the opportunity to donate valuable educational support materials, uniforms, and hygienic packs to learners that we receive from donations by Good Samaritans in the province, who are moved by the plight facing black children – which often impedes their ability to learn.

Here are some of the moments that we captured during the schools’ visits.



SPEAKER ON CPA AFRICA REGION DUTY IN GHANA

As part of her role as Regional Treasurer of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Africa Region, Speaker Honourable Ntombi Mekgwe, recently addressed delegates to the region's 82nd Executive Committee Meeting, which took place in Accra, Ghana.

The week-long programme of meetings started on the 3rd and ends on Thursday 10 March 2022 – coinciding with the landmark 65th Anniversary of Ghana's attainment of Independence from the British colonial rule, as well as with International Women's Day.

In the spirit of International Women's Day theme: **'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow'**, Hon. Mekgwe spurred members of the Executive Committee into action by

"delving into the continuous strides made by Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and Women in the world to address issues facing women; particularly those related to social, economic, political, justice and development."


Quoting the words of the late President of Mozambique, President Samora Machel, she said, *"The emancipation of women is not an act of charity, the result of humanitarian or compassionate attitude. The liberation of Women is a fundamental necessity for the revolution, a guarantee for its continuity and a precondition its victory"*.

"Women continue to play a crucial role in the realisation of "the Africa We Want", as proclaimed by the Vision of Africa 2063 – and I urge men to stand up and toil side-by-side with women," she continued.

She lauded the people of Ghana for their hard work, a pioneering spirit, and the country's rich culture – and conveyed her wishes for the republic's successful and prosperous future.

"Through our gathering, we seek to promote our democracies and come

up with solutions fit for Africa and her people. And as we adjust from the devastating effects of Covid-19, we seek solutions that will move Africa forward and in accord," she concluded.

The week-long programme of meetings was attended by high-profile participants from the CPA Africa Region's member countries, representations from CPA International and the President of the Republic of Ghana. 



GAUTENG RECEIVES R500M TO HIRE MEDICAL STAFF

Led by Chairperson, Honourable Dr Rebecca Phaladi-Digamela, the Legislature's Portfolio Committee on Health has commended the Gauteng Department of Health for acquiring 220 new ambulances to add to its current fleet, to strengthen the province's public health emergency system.

Dr Phaladi-Digamela said the Covid-19 pandemic had seen an unprecedented rise in medical emergencies and the need for transferral services.

The new figure is made up of various ambulances under different categories including 200 intermediate life support and 20 Intensive Care Unit ambulances. This is in line with the growing population of Gauteng and will enable the EMS to respond to medical needs.

"The ambulances will ensure a timely transfer of patients in severe and life-threatening conditions, especially for people living in hard-to-reach areas, and

those without personal transportation," she said. Ambulance services provide a valuable, life-saving service and plays a vital role in the entire emergency care system.

Leading up to this acquisition, the Committee had expressed numerous concerns to the Department that its Emergency Medical Services (EMS) did not always meet the response time targets of 15 minutes for areas surrounding the Johannesburg CBD and 45 minutes for outlying and hard-to-reach locations. "The new fleet will certainly address this concern. It is a demonstration of our collective commitment to ensure Gauteng has


EMS that is fully capacitated to respond to emergencies. The Department has already started the recruitment process to ensure enough people to manage these cars," said Dr Phaladi-Digamela, the Chairperson continued.

Meanwhile, the Department has received more than R500m to hire staff as part of the province's Covid-19 response.

This was recently announced by Gauteng MEC for Finance, Honourable Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, when she tabled the province's medium-term budget policy statement for the 2021/2022. This, she said, became necessary when the province entered the fourth in December,

which saw a rise in Omicron variant infections – though only brief.

She said the allocation was a direct response to the call by the SA Medical Association for Gauteng to address its medical staff shortages, which were impeding the government's response to Covid-19.

Dr Phaladi-Digamela said, "Over the past three months the Gauteng EMS has increased its staff, with more than 160 EMS personnel being recruited in various categories including basic life support, intermediate life support and advanced life support." 



7th ANNUAL VITA BASADI AWARDS

The Legislature recently hosted the Seventh (7th) Annual Vita Basadi Awards – an initiative of the Gauteng Speakers' Forum (GSF) that aims to recognize excellence by local women in various areas of work and/or acts of service to fellow citizens who lack the means to help themselves.

Directly translated, 'Women of courage' from a Swahili/ seSotho phrase, the Vita Basadi Awards celebrates the unique and often voluntary role played by women in society.

Speaking at the event, Honourable Speaker Lentheng Mekgwe said, "In line with our role as the Tribune of the People of this province, we are duty bound to shine the spotlight on those who work side-by-side with us – though not in a formalized way – to improve the quality of lives of the people of Gauteng."

The event ordinarily forms part of the Legislature's month-long activities every August to celebrate Women's month. However, due to the unique circumstances presented by Covid-19, the recent instalment of the awards' ceremony had to be postponed for December 2021.

She said the awards were just but a part of GPL's efforts to reach out to the resilient and self-starting women in communities – and tell them that the Legislature sees their contributions, and

is grateful for their selfless sacrifices, to contribute to the welfare of those around them.

"Through these awards we say thank you – and we herald a call to more Gauteng women to follow in your footsteps and be the initiators of the change that we want to see in our communities," she continued. Speaker said, "These are our very own next-door neighbors who have chosen the path of greatness and walked in the footsteps of female giants such as the 1956 group of ladies – who stood up for what was right, despite the odds.

"It is very fitting therefore to celebrate these pillars of our communities. They go out of their way to ensure that the child next-door does not go to bed on an empty stomach; they look after their fellow neighbors with special needs; they provide shelter to the homeless; protection to the vulnerable – and many other Good Samaritan acts," she added.

Here are some of the highlights from the night of the stars:

