

Democratic Alliance speech by

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Dealing with the Gauteng Pandemic

Ndza khensa mutshami wa xitulu,
Honourable Members,
People of Gauteng,
Fellow South Africans.

We are debating the Gauteng State of the Province address at a time when our country is battling the Covid-19 pandemic. I send my condolences to all the families who have lost loved ones to this deadly virus. I thank all the healthcare workers who have been on the frontline fighting this pandemic, hi khensile.

On Tuesday, the Premier delivered what was supposed to be the state of the Gauteng Province. It was an opportunity for the Premier to unpack the true state of Gauteng, its challenges, and how best we can emerge from the dire situation in which we find ourselves. The premier used over 8500 words to say very little, if anything at all. Ecclesiastes chapter 6, verse 11 reads "The more the words, the less the meaning and how does that profit anyone?". The people of Gauteng have not profited in any way from the many words that you said on Tuesday, Sir.

At the same time that the Premier was speaking, Statistics South Africa released the 2020 fourth quarter Labour Force Survey. The latest quarterly Labour Force Survey indicates that over 7 million people in South Africa are unemployed with Gauteng accounting for 2,3 million. Gauteng has the second highest unemployment rate after the Eastern Cape. What we are observing is the urbanization of unemployment and poverty. More people are poor and unemployed in Gauteng than they were in 2014 when you took charge as the premier of this province.

This was the seventh state of the province address you delivered, and as I sat here listening to you, I asked myself, what would be the best way to measure your new list of promises, the seventh set of promises? For the last seven years, you have done well to deliver promises or wishes to the people of Gauteng. The best way to judge a man and a Premier is not on what they say they will do, but on what they are known to have done. Hi Xitsonga hi ri mintirho ya vulavula. And for you Sir, your empty promises speak for themselves. Johan Wolfgang von Goethe says "Knowing is not enough, we must apply, willing is not enough, we must act." You Sir, have failed to apply that which you know and your actions have not followed your wishes.

This is your second term as a Premier of Gauteng; it is supposed to be a term wherein you accelerate building a capable Gauteng that offers an effective response to the challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty that the people of Gauteng face, but you have been a disappointment. Watching you deliver your address on Tuesday, I could tell that you were preoccupied with matters other than the business of being the Premier of Gauteng.

The boldness you displayed in your first term has been replaced with a lot of inaction. You are leading like you are dancing on eggshells; scared to take decisions that would upset some constituencies in your own organization. By so doing, you have succeeded in disappointing the people of Gauteng by your inaction.

I know you will dismiss my conclusion as a normal reaction of an opposition Member, but you and I know that even your own comrades are talking about life after Makhura; not in 2024, but sooner than that. Even your own comrades believe that you are no longer fit to lead Gauteng, and not just the ANC. The Makariki faction, which you know very well is busy mobilizing for your ouster. Talk has it that you will not finish the second term. The popular hashtag in Gauteng is #MakhuraNotFitToGovern.

If I were in your shoes, I would lead like it is my last day, for I don't know when the Makariki faction will strike. I would do good by the people of Gauteng.

Mr. Premier, you are a likeable man who talks the good talk but can't walk the talk. What Gauteng needs is a Premier that walks more than he/she talks. More doing and less talking. Seven years later, your legacy in Gauteng is rising unemployment, Life Esidimeni, Covid-19 corruption, a collapsed Gauteng Enterprise Propeller, and a failing healthcare system.

There was a time that people used to believe you were different, but we now know that even staff members in your own office have the bravado to engage in corrupt practices that robs the people of Gauteng of important services. The fish rots from the head, and in Gauteng, corruption starts at the Premier's office. You even went to court to confirm that indeed staff members in your own office facilitated corruption.

With rising unemployment in Gauteng, these are the urgent tasks that you and your government should be focusing on:

1. Urgently lobbying of the Minister of Labour and Employment to make it less problematic for companies or firms to hire the millions of unemployed people of Gauteng. Gauteng should be a special employment zone where it is easy to hire the people of Gauteng. To hire more people in the special economic zones, we need a flexible labour framework. When we talk of SEZ, we must be talking of Special Employment Zones. The Premier should be at the forefront of this lobby and leading the fight to Parliament for the benefit of the people of Gauteng.
2. The Gauteng Growth Development Agency (GGDA) together with the national Department of Trade and Industry and Competition, should be leading efforts to open export channels of goods produced in Gauteng. The GGDA and the Department of Economic Development should be looking at taking advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

For the economy to grow, we need capital investment, improved technology, entrepreneurship, labour, and producing goods and services that the rest of the world wants to consume. We know we have available labour; we need to get the labour skilled. The best way to gain a skill is to be employed, hence our SEZs should be Special Employment Zones with flexible labour laws.

3. Urgently stabilize the Gauteng Enterprise Propeller (GEP) so it is able to assist entrepreneurs that are starting and running business in Gauteng and ensure the R250 million partnership fund that is in the hands of GEP is distributed to assist small businesses in order to kickstart the Gauteng economy.

I understand why you did not touch on these matters as your mind is on what the Makariki Faction will do; whether or not they will allow you to finish your term, you chose to hide behind a lot of words to say very little. Even the response to your fellow members in attendance was very, very muted. One could surmise that your heart is not in it anymore, just like your favorite football team. You are just waiting for your last day to come. Having observed and lived under your leadership in the last seven years, I have come to the conclusion that you Sir, and your administration, are not fit to govern Gauteng. Ndza khensa.