



# LIMPOPO

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**TO ALL EDITORS**

**DATE: WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH 2020**

### **LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SPECIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING**

Following the special Cabinet meeting convened on Sunday by the President of the country in response to the Novel 2019 Coronavirus (COVID 19) outbreak, we convened Limpopo Special Executive Council (EXCO) meeting yesterday, 17<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. The meeting mainly focused on customizing the national plan pronouncements of the President. We also sought to devise other measures to respond to this crisis following the declaration of this virus as a pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO).

We are however encouraged to announce that our fellow citizens who have been quarantined at the The Ranch Hotel since last week, have received the test results and they are all cleared. Nevertheless, they still have to finish the mandatory quarantine period of 21 days. In this regard I want to join the President in extending my sincere words of appreciation and thanks to the people of Limpopo for welcoming our fellow brothers and sisters.

EXCO meeting received an update from the MEC for Health on the progress regarding the Coronavirus (COVID 19) outbreak. At the time of the presentation, the number of cases as pronounced by the Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize was at **62**, which has since increased to **85**. So far Limpopo Province has recorded only one case.

In terms of this report, the focus was largely on our efforts with regard to the planning and co-ordination of the outbreak, risk communication and community engagement, Case management, Infection prevention training of healthcare workers, EMS readiness and above all Surveillance and tracing.

Our **focused attention** to the critical areas is beginning to take shape. In terms of identification of possible cases and provision of the necessary response, the government, both national and provincial level, is screening all people at all Ports of entry as and when they enter and leave the country. In as far as the laboratory services are concerned, the province has the capacity to test COVID 19. This is notwithstanding the fact that at the moment the service is centralized at the National Health laboratory Services (NHLS). Our Virologist in the province has now undergone training and will be performing the tests with effect from the **1 April 2020**.

With regard to the **isolation and quarantine centers**, Pietersburg hospital is the designated site for the treatment and isolation of all **moderate to severe** cases of COVID 19. However all facilities in the Province are readily prepared for **facility-based-ward** to isolate cases before transferring to Pietersburg Hospital. Districts have also been instructed to identify areas of quarantine where social circumstances do

not allow self-quarantine at home, such as schools, churches etc. Our Tropical hospitals like Modimolle Multiple Drug Resistance TB has also been identified and it is being prepared for such cases.

EMS staff is undergoing training in order to be equipped to fetch patients. The protocols have been developed, and the Standard Operating Procedures are in place and are being communicated to various stakeholders.

In terms of Surveillance and tracing, all contacts of confirmed cases will be traced by the tracer teams. We have established 310 **tracer teams** for the entire province. Close contacts will then be requested to self-quarantine at home for a period of fourteen (14) days, of which they will be daily monitored for symptoms.

It is obviously of vital importance, that critical personnel and role players are trained and continue to be trained as and when circumstances dictate. To that effect, the province has an on-going training programme for:

- EMS staff
- Port Health staff
- Healthcare workers
- Communicators
- Municipality personnel
- Legislature staff and all other key stakeholders

As the President said, this outbreak of unprecedented magnitude, will inevitably have a devastating impact that will afflict humanity for many years to come. It is in this context that the provincial government is not only focusing on the containment of the pandemic, but also forecasting into recovery plans.

In terms of institutional arrangements, to coordinate the work of government in this regard, EXCO has established various committees. The first committee is comprised of all EXCO members and will be led by the Premier. This committee will meet twice a week or as and when the situation demands.

We have also established the Provincial inter-ministerial team which will be chaired by the MEC for Health, Dr Phophi Ramathuba. The committee will meet thrice a week and is comprised of MECs for Provincial Treasury, COGHSTA, LEDET, Education, Sport, Arts & Culture, Agriculture & Rural Development and Transport & Community Safety.

The third committee is the Technical Working Committee which will deal with specific matters of expertise relating to the outbreak. This team will be led by the Director General of the Limpopo Provincial Administration and will meet on a regular basis.

Our awareness Campaign is anchored around key messages summed up as WAC, meaning: Wash, Avoid and Cover. These messages are:

- Wash your hands with water and soap/sanitizer as frequently as humanly possible (for minimum 20 seconds)
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth and eyes
- Avoid spitting in public
- Avoid congested places (funerals, churches etc)
- Avoid spreading fake news
- Cover your mouth when coughing and swiftly dispose of the tissue you used in a closed rubbish bin
- Keep a social distance
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care

- Share your travel history with your healthcare providers

Over the next few days, as the Premier of the province, I will be interacting with various organs of civil society to communicate this important message of government. These structures will include but not limited to, traditional leaders, faith-based organisations, non-profit making organizations, organized labour and such like related formations.

South Africans are known for their resilience and their commitment never to be deterred in their determination to win. We have never lost any battle, and this time around we are certain that we will win.

I therefore call on all the people of Limpopo and the country as a whole to join government in its fight against this scourge that continues to rear its ugly head in our public life.

**Let's Grow Limpopo Together.**

**END**

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**ISSUED BY THE LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**