

REPLY TO THE STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS DEBATE IN THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, HONOURABLE CHUPU MATHABATHA, HELD AT LEBOWAKGOMO LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER.

28 February 2018

Madam Speaker;  
Deputy Speaker;  
Members of the Executive Council,  
Chief-Whip of the Majority Party,  
Honourable Members of the House,  
Leaders of Political Parties,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much Madam Speaker for this opportunity to respond to the debate on the State of the Province Address which I presented last Friday at the Jack Botes Hall.

Let me first add my voice of condemnation to the heinous crime that was committed over the past weekend where an innocent young man, Thoriso Themana was brutally murdered.

Immediately after hearing this I called the Provincial Police Commissioner to add my voice, and standing here today, I am glad that the police have played their part.

Let me also join some members of the Legislature and the community of Polokwane and Flora Park in particular that after their meeting last night, they decided to form Community Watch to monitor their streets and their city.

Madam Speaker, bringing up a teenager child is not an easy thing. However the responsibility of making sure those children grow to be responsible citizens remain with us as parents. I also urge the community not to take the law into their hands, but support the law enforcement agencies as they deal with this criminal act.

Madam Speaker,

In terms of the SOPA debate, I would be the first to admit that had we tried to mention every little detail about the progress we have made and the challenges we faced as a Province, we would probably still be at the Jack Botes Hall even today. The truth is that there is so much work we have done in the past five years.

Even more importantly is the fact that we are equal to the remaining challenges and we will surely overcome.

Secondly, let me take this opportunity to thank all Members of this esteemed House who participated in the debates on the

State of the Province Address on Tuesday and today.

As always, despite the intensity and robust nature of the debates, the decorum of the House was maintained.

This is important because this Legislature is an important instrument of our people to advance and deepen democracy.

As I have already indicated, your debates were indeed very vibrant, robust and truly enriching. This will go a long way in strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of our government.

The people in whose name we are called leaders will, and must be the ultimate winners of whatever that will accrue from these debates.

I also must say that whilst it is normal for politicians to use these types of debates to score political points, I do not for a second doubt your commitment to the project of building a better Limpopo.

As government, we also accept that we can only achieve more by working with all stakeholders, including political parties represented in this august House.

I know that on Tuesday the House adopted a resolution to dissolve – this resolution was to allow for the gazetting of the date of election. As we speak, the 08th of May has already been gazetted as the date for the next general election.

I know that as result of this proclamation, many of you would be working very hard to win support for your different political parties.

If it was according to my wish, I would love to have all of you to return to this law making house – however, the decision lies with the masses of our people. It is the masses who will decide on who is coming back and who is not coming back.

However, my humble plea is that in whatever we do to return back to this House, let us not undermine our collective achievements of the past five years.

As I have said, the truth is that Limpopo has achieved a lot over the past five years.

Madam Speaker;

We are not in politics for merely politicking – we are not in politics for the narrow purpose of opposing. Our calling is far much greater. Our calling is about service to the people. We have entered in to a contract with the people to drive the service vehicle towards a destination of a better life for all.

As I have said during the delivery of SOPA, credible statistics tells a picture of Limpopo as a Province on the move.

We may not be where we need to be but we are definitely not stagnant – we are marching forward.

The fact is that in 1996, only about 32% of households in Limpopo enjoyed access to electricity connection - today that figure stands at a whopping 94.1%.

In 2001, just 27% of the population enjoyed access to decent sanitation facilities – today the figure has risen to 57%.

We are proud to go to the people and say, in the past five years, we built over 43 000 houses for the poorest of the poor.

The fact that Limpopo has the lowest unemployment rate in the country can only be ignored by those who are in politics for the sake of just politicking.

We are proud that the people of Limpopo appreciate the fact that in the last five years, we have managed to create over 317 000 jobs. Those who do not read and philosophise about poverty would know how significant these figures are.

These developments are not an accident of history – they are a direct result of the deliberate pro-poor policies of this ANC government.

These developments are a result of hard work and fidelity to the struggle to better the lives of our people.

Madam Speaker;

We understand the significance of the issue of VBS, particularly because of the devastating effect the matter has in this Province. You would know that apart from a huge quantum of public resources which has been wasted; there are other victims in this matter.

Those victims are the ordinary men and women whose investments have evaporated with the liquidation of the Bank.

However, we believe that anyone who understands the concept of separation of powers and the separation of functions will agree that we have done all that we could do under circumstances.

As the Provincial Executive we did not fold hands – instead we took practical and visible action.

It is the Provincial Executive which I lead that had commissioned the forensic investigation into the VBS deposits by municipalities. When the report was issued, we did not sit on the report; we processed the report and implemented its recommendation.

As a result of this forensic report, we now know which municipalities invested what amount of monies and, under what circumstances.

Because of that report, several officials have lost their jobs and others are undergoing disciplinary hearings.

It is also false and deliberately misleading for anyone to suggest that action has only been taken against officials and not politicians. Those with decent memories will recall that the ruling party has fired several mayors who were fingered in the report. So, it is not true to suggest impunity or anything of that sort.

However, Members will know that there is a limit to the things that we can do as the Executive on this matter. For an example, we cannot determine the pace and direction of the unfolding police investigations. It is not our space to do that.

We have done all what we needed to do. We have also pledged to cooperate with the law enforcement agencies in this regard.

I must however mention that law enforcement agencies are almost done with court ready documents, and members should watch this space!!

Honourable Members;

I am certain that the work we started in 2014 will continue in the next five years. I am saying this because I am confident that the people will want us to continue on this path to better their lives.

The people will indeed want us to proceed with implementing our flagship SEZ project. They would want us to do this because they stand to benefit from over 21 000 direct jobs which will be created in the Musina-Makhado SEZ.

I take it that Honourable members have seen the public advertisement for the positions of CEO and CFO for the Musina-Makhado SEZ Company. Indeed the work is continuing; we will not be stopped.

The people will also want us to continue guiding the mining investment projects which account to a combined value of over R7 billion. As we have said during SOPA, these investments combined will create around 28 000 jobs for the people of Limpopo.

We will be doing all these and more in order to honour the contract we entered with the people of this Province to build a better future for everyone.

Madam Speaker;

As I conclude, I wish to once again thank this august House for the confidence of electing me as the Premier of our Province back in 2014.

I also wish to thank this House for all the support I enjoyed over the past five years. It was because of your support that we were able to navigate our way out of section 100 administration.

It was on account of your support and guidance that we were able to deal with and address the infamous text-book saga.

Because of your support, we were able to stabilise the provincial government. Most importantly, the finances of this Province are in a good shape because the guidance from this House.

Over the past five years, our work has been commended and at times criticised in this House.

At no stage did we allow these commends and praises to make us grow pompous and big for this House. We have always accepted your praises and commends with humility because we know that nothing is worthier than serving the people of our Province.

Equally, we never took your criticisms as personal attacks or anything of that sort. We have always accepted that your criticisms were part of your important contributions to the building of a better Limpopo.

Lastly, I wish to reiterate the call for all of us to continue working together.

Let us work in unity for the good of our province and its people. Let us master the art to subject our personal ambitions and aspirations to the broader ambitions of the people as a whole.

Together we can make Limpopo a better place to live in.

Good luck to all political parties in the coming elections.

I thank you!