

OPENING ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR TRANSPORT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY, MR
NAMANE MASEMOLA ON BEHALF OF THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO HONOURABLE
CHUPU MATHABATHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
COMMUNICATION FORUM AT PALALA IN LEPHALALE.

11 July 2019.

Programme Director;
Executive Mayor for Waterberg District Municipality, Cllr Mories Mataboge;
Our Local Mayor,
Our Director General, Ntate Nape Nchabeleng;
Representatives from the GCIS and other government entities;
Our esteemed Government Communicators;
Invited guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning!

Let me start first by extending the apology from our Premier, Honourable Chupu Mathabatha who was originally scheduled to address this important meeting.

As you know, today the Legislature is debating the State of the Province Address which the Premier presented last week. It is for this reason that the Premier is unable to be part of this crucial Provincial Government Communicators' Forum.

I can assure you that the Premier had wished to be part of this important event. He has however requested me to remind you about the strategic significance of your work as communicators for our Provincial Government.

The Premier has also said that I should express his appreciations for the response this Forum is receiving from our communicators in the municipal sphere.

We are indeed one government, with distinctive functions, yet interdependent and interrelated.

Programme Director;

I take it that it is not necessary for me to explain the significance of government communication to this meeting because such would be worse than preaching to the already converted.

I also know that we all agree that if our democracy is to function very well, we require an informed citizenry. In essence, it is highly vital to provide citizens with adequate information on priorities, programs and activities of government. This also helps to institutionalise transparency and accountability.

It is only a transparent and accountable government which can claim legitimacy.

You are therefore our frontline troopers who are tasked with the all important task to provide citizens with adequate information on priorities, programs and activities of government. Your role as government communicators is to use the communication tools at your disposal to empower our people with knowledge so that they can make informed decisions, about their own lives and how they relate with their government.

In summary, your role is to empower our citizens through the art of communication. You are not supposed to use your unique and important space as communicators to dis-empower our citizens, through propaganda, falsehood and general misinformation.

Ours is a democratic state and not a dictatorship which is ran and sustained through propaganda.

We have said even before we took over in 1994 that ours would be a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

It is for this reason that the people must always be at the centre of all government programs. For this to happen, the people need information from you as government communicators. If you do not communicate, and our people are left without information, you must know that you are fermenting a recipe for disaster.

The art is not just to know how to communicate. The art is to know when to communicate and what to communicate.

The point here is that your communication should always be aligned with government policy and government program of action.

I have earlier indicated that the Premier is at the Legislature for responses to the State of the Province Address – that SOPA is an important policy guide for all of us throughout this financial year.

We also take our guidance from the State of the Nation Address presented earlier by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Both the State of the Province Address and the State of the Nation Address are based on the manifesto of the ruling party, the African National Congress.

That manifesto of the ANC represent a 5 year contract entered between the people of South Africa and this government – the ANC manifesto priorities have become the priorities of this government.

These priorities include the following:

1. economic transformation and job creation,
2. education, skills and health,
3. delivery of reliable and quality basic services,
4. transforming human settlements and strengthening local government,
5. social cohesion and safe communities,
6. building a capable, ethical and developmental state and ,
7. Building of a better Africa and a better world.

Whatever we do or communicate should be located within these policy priorities. We should not be communicating anything that offends these policy directives, because these priorities represent a contract between government and the people of this country.

It is for this reason that it would be strange to find any government communicator who has not seen nor interacted with the ANC manifesto, the SONA and the SOPA.

From next week your various Provincial Departments will be presenting budget speeches – we expect that those budget pronouncements will also be pillared on the framework of the manifesto, the SONA and the SOPA.

Programme Director;

This government takes communication very seriously. It is for this reason that we also call on all of you to take your work seriously.

We are prepared to invest in your professional development.

We want to see you improving your capacity to serve our people better.

You must take advantage of various training opportunities to enhance your skills so that you can be able to serve government and the people of Limpopo better.

As government, we will not deny you reasonable opportunity to enhance your skills where resources and circumstances allow.

You must also make your own private initiatives to learn further and empower yourselves.

Part of these personal development initiatives is to simply acquaint yourselves with general developments around you.

You need to be glued-up with contemporary developments, both within and outside of your work space.

You must also read and study various policies of government, and not just those that affect your department or municipality.

You must understand government as a single entity with various complementary segments.

Programme Director,

I want to conclude by re-emphasising the significance of the work you do as government communicators.

I call on all of you re-commit yourselves to communicating even better for this government. You are already doing a good job, but there is always a room for improvement.

As I have said earlier, if you don't communicate, you are making our people poorer without information.

Communication is the lifeblood of our democracy.

Without communication and you as communicators doing your job, our democracy will cease to function.

I wish you well over the next two days. I wish you robust and honest interactions. I know that you will also make time to commend yourselves for best practices and criticise yourselves for shortcomings.

I thank you!