

REMARKS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO TO THE MEETING WITH THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM OF THE OFFICE OF THE PREMIER, HELD AT THE RANCH HOTEL, POLOKWANE.

05 JUNE 2018

Programme facilitator;

Members of the Executive Council

Director General, Ntate Nape Nchabeleng;

Head of Departments present here

Our guest presenter, Prof Lesiba Teffo;

Members of Senior Management Services

Ladies and gentlemen of public service;

Good afternoon!

Let me start by expressing my gratitude for your overwhelming response to this meeting.

I have requested that we all take a few minutes from your busy schedules for us to interact and exchange views and experiences about the direction and performance of our Provincial Government.

This is an open meeting where all proposals and views expressed carries equal weight and worth.

This is also a meeting where criticism, particularly self-criticism is welcome and encouraged.

Nothing said in this meeting, can or would be used against any participant. We take all contributions as necessary for our forward movement.

Programme Director, perhaps before I could go any further, I should share with you a story titled **the lesson of the concubines**.

This is a story attributed to Sun Tzu. For the few of you who may not know who Sun Tzu is, I would briefly say that Sun Tzu was a Chinese philosopher and a military strategist.

It is said that Sun Tzu's book, *The Art of War*, earned him an audience with the King of Wu. The King said to him that I have read your thirteen chapters and asked if he could subject Sun Tzu's theory of managing soldiers to a small test.

Sun Tzu agreed to have his theory subjected to test by the King.

The King asked Sun Tzu if the test could be applied to women – Sun Tzu agreed.

Arrangements were made to bring 180 beautiful women from the palace. Sun Tzu divided them into two battalions, each of these battalions were led by the King's most favourite concubines.

Sun Tzu then made all of them take spears in their hands and spoke to them:

“I presume you know the difference between front and back, right hand and left hand” – the women replied “yes”.

Sun Tzu continued, “When to the sound of drums I order ‘eyes front’, you look straight ahead. When I order ‘left turn’, face towards your left hand. When I order ‘right turn’, face towards your right hand. When I order ‘about turn’ face around to the back”.

After the words of command had been explained, the women agreed they understood. He gave them spears so he could begin the drill. To the sound of the drum Sun Tzu ordered “right turn”, in response, the women burst out in laughter.

With great patience, Sun Tzu said, “If the instructions and words are not clear, if orders are not thoroughly understood, the General is to blame”.

He then repeated the explanations several times. This time he ordered the drums to signal “left turn”, and again the women burst into laughter.

Then Sun Tzu said, “If the instructions and words are not clear, if orders are not thoroughly understood, the General is to blame. But if commands are clear and the soldiers disobey, then it is the fault of the soldiers”.

He then ordered that the two battalion leaders who were the King’s favourite concubines be beheaded. The king tried to plead that the battalion leaders should not be beheaded but Sun Tzu proceeded to have them beheaded.

New battalion leaders were appointed.

Now the drums were sounded again and the drill began. The women performed all the manoeuvres exactly as commanded, turning to the right or left, marching ahead, turning around, kneeling, or rising. They performed perfectly in precision and did not utter a single sound.

That was the story of the concubines.

There are many important lessons to this story. Part of the lessons in this story is about the role of leaders in the performance on the rest of the organisation.

The other important lesson from this story is about leadership by example, when the battalion leaders laughed at the commander and could not follow instructions, the rest of the battalion followed suit.

The other lesson from this story is about consequence management. When the defiant battalion leaders were beheaded and consequently replaced, it was a lesson to the new leaders to not follow into the shoes of the replaced leaders.

The last lesson is about taking control. When the king tried to lead with Sun Tzu not to take action against the errant battalion leaders Sun Tzu proceeded to do what he knew to be the right thing to enforce discipline.

I think we will all agree with Sun Tzu that if instructions are not clear, we should blame those who give out instructions— but if instructions are clear and people defy, it is the fault of those who defy and they should be befitting consequence for such defiance.

Programme Director;

This SMS summit is taking place under the theme that says **“professionalising the public service for building a capable state”**.

Professionalising public service simply means that the affairs of public service must be guided by the values and principles enshrined in section 195 of our constitution.

This means that we must endeavour to ensure that the highest level of professional ethics is maintained in the running of government;

It means that as public servants, you must always ensure the promotion of an efficient, economic and effective use of public resources at your disposal;

A professional public service demands that services to the public must be done in a manner that is impartial, fair and equitable. This means that opportunities in government should

not depend on relations or the ability to pay bribes. It means that in providing services and opportunities, we must always be mindful of addressing the inherited legacy of inequality.

A professional public service is the one that respond adequately to the needs of the people and encourages people to participate in policy making.

The theory of the liberation struggle has always informed us that the people are their own liberators. It is for this reason that there is nothing we should do for the people without the participation or input of the people themselves.

The constitution says that a professional public service the one that is development oriented and is accountable to the people. Related to this is the need to ensure that the affairs of public service are conducted in a manner that is open and transparent.

It is our strong conviction that a professionalised public service will deliver us to a capable state.

Part two of our theme speaks about the need to build a capable state. By a capable state we refer to a state which will be able to respond to challenges of:

- Growing the economy;
- Creating more job opportunities for our people;
- Improving our social and economic infrastructure;
- Improving the quality of our education outcomes
- Broadening access and improving the quality of our healthcare system, and
- Effectively dealing with crime and corruption

It is only when we have sufficiently professionalised the public service and improved the capacity of the state that a dream of a better life for all would be realised.

Programme Director;

I would be the first to commend this cohort of senior managers for the good job that is going on in this province. Despite our known challenges, I am convinced that the province is moving in a right direction.

You all know that at some point this province could not even provide textbooks to school children.

You know that at some point the province had to suspend scholar transport and other services simply because the money had been misspent.

At one point government employees were faced with a real possibility of not getting their salaries because the provincial administration was bankrupt.

The province was spending beyond its means yet there were no services going to the people. Investigations revealed that at some of the service providers were being paid more than two times a month for having done nothing at all except to submit invoices.

By November 2011, the Provincial Treasury had an overdraft of R757million with the Reserve Bank. The province wanted to increase the overdraft facility by R1 billion.

Limpopo was always in the news for all the wrong reasons.

Things were so bad that the national government had to come in and take control of several provincial departments.

I am proud to say that your efforts, dedication, and commitment managed to deliver us from that dreadful situation.

Today we are able to say that after almost a decade of disclaimer audit opinion, the Department of Education has managed an improvement in its audit outcome.

Although the Department is not yet where it should be, it is worth something that the Department has moved out of the ugly web of disclaimer.

Today we can at least celebrate two clean audits from both the Provincial Treasury and the Limpopo Gambling Board.

We are indeed making progress, and this is largely because of your dedication to your work as senior government officials.

I am confident that if we cannot remove our eyes from the ball and focus on getting the basics right, we will realise the objectives of our Clean Audit Strategy.

Programme Director;

There is much that is happening in this province which we can all be proud of.

Our SEZ programme is beginning to take shape. This project is expected to create no less than 20 000 jobs for the people of this Province.

Today, for the first time, as Limpopo we have managed to exceed 50% in terms of connecting households with decent sanitation facilities.

We can also be proud that Limpopo is the first, and perhaps the only Province to this date which has a comprehensive Youth Development Strategy.

Programme Director;

I know that the day ahead is still long. It is not my intention hold you hostage with a lengthy speech.

Mine was just to appreciate your presence and to commend you on the good work you are continuing to do.

I also wish to say, before I conclude, that I do not for a second doubt your commitment to the vision we hold as political leadership.

All we need to do is to redouble our efforts in the work that we are already doing.

I lastly wish to challenge each and every single one of you to join our President in adopting the spirit of '**Thuma Mina**'.

Let everyone of us say that:

I want to add my own contribution to the task of professionalising the public service

I want to be there to assist with the task of building a capable state.

I want to be there when Limpopo receives 100% clean audit.

I thank you.