

PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA'S RESPONSE TO THE STATE OF THE PROVINCE
ADDRESS DEBATE, LEBOWAKGOMO LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER, 06 MARCH 2025

Honourable Speaker
Deputy Speaker
Members of the Provincial Legislature
Members of the Executive Council
Chief Whip
Chair of Chairs
Chairpersons of Various Committees

Good morning,

Honourable Speaker, I stand before you today with a deep sense of gratitude for the critical responses and robust debate that followed the State of the Province Address delivered on the 27th of February 2025. Your engagement is a show of our collective commitment to the development of Limpopo, we appreciate the diverse perspectives shared in this esteemed house.

We also acknowledge the diverse debates that have also taken place outside this house, showing the extent of interest this address has elicited. We may not go into individual responses; however, we shall make attempts to cover general aspects that have been raised.

It is important to acknowledge that, despite our differences, there is a consensus among us regarding the path of development that our province requires. We all agree that our primary focus must be on growing the economy to include everyone and fighting the scourge of poverty that has plagued our communities for far too long. This shared vision of building an ethical and developmental state is crucial as we move forward together.

What stands out from the debate is the unanimous desire among members to see the commitments we have made come to fruition. No one desires progress more than we do, Honourable Speaker. This is a commitment that, as the 7th Administration, I, along with the entire executive council, have made to our people.

We are alive to the reality that our people are getting impatient with our failure to honour our commitments. It is for this reason that, as a start, yesterday and today we convened a summit for senior management from all our 10 departments and state-owned entities. These are men and women whose primary responsibility is implementation of our plans. It is critical for them to understand and appreciate what is at stake, should we fail to deliver on our commitments .

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the African National Congress for deploying capable men and women in various roles within the legislature and the executive. Their contributions during the debate have elevated our collective responsibility to make Limpopo a province we can all be proud of.

It is true that the ANC-led government has transformed the socio-economic landscape of our province. While we may be considered a rural province, it is noteworthy that 94,4% of our settlements are formalised dwellings. We have made significant strides in improving access to electricity, healthcare, education and sanitation. We have built more clinics, human settlements and schools in 30 years than any government has done in 300 years.

True to our form and, as Honourable Mokgonyana, our chief whip acknowledged: “We are honest to ourselves, and where we have encountered challenges, we have always been the first to acknowledge and confront them.”

Honorable members will agree with us that the way we were detailed when presenting our SOPA, even members of the opposition struggled to find fault in our speech and resorted to repeating issues that we have already acknowledged.

Honourable Wilson, we are not sleeping on duty, hence the withdrawal of US funding for HIV/AIDS programmes has not hindered our work and initiatives. That is why you saw Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi recently launching another programme of finding 1,1million more people living with HIV but not on ARVs. Just yesterday Global fund executive director for HIV,TB and Malaria, Peter Sands said they are still maintaining their ambition on lenacapavir, a pre exposure prophylaxis medication given to HIV negative individuals to protect them from getting infected with or without PEPFAR funding

While some NGOs may be affected, all public health facilities continue to offer essential support. We shall allocate about R23 million to retain staff linked to public health facilities from such NGOs. We are a resilient nation, and as our President said, we shall not be bullied.

Honourable Lulama Jack, the problem of presenting speeches that are written somewhere else is that you forget to look at relevance of that text. Regurgitating debates that took place in parliament a month ago with slight changes of Premier for President, SOPA for SONA is not good for you. We were very clear on the gender-based violence and femicide, starting with the feedback of the summit we held immediately after making the commitment last year. We even went further to direct the MECs involved to monitor implementation of resolutions taken.

Let us remind you Honourable Lulamile Jack, we have raised concerns about our two nurses who were raped while on duty and our four students whom we visited two days ago to provide psycho-social support because we are a caring government.

We have been the ones who have made a connection between unemployment and mental health issues. Hence, we repeat, the danger of reading speeches written somewhere else is that you begin to sound like a record with scratch.

That claim that we have made no progress in combating TB and HIV/AIDS can only come from someone who doesn't stay in this province. Statistics show a marked improvement with life expectancy rising from 56 years to 67 for women.

Honourable Mogoane, to have more than 200 clinics operating for 24 hours is a remarkable achievement. Growing up one can't remember any clinic operating for 24 hours. This is a first for our province since democracy. This is work in progress, hence we reported that the department is currently recruiting more than 300 professional nurses to activate more clinics to operate 24 hours.

We must not take for granted progress made by the ANC-led government of building clinics. For example, on a 45-kilometre stretch of Road D4040 between Ga-Chuene and Boyne there are eight (08) clinics – Ga-Chuene, Ga-Maja, Soetfontein, Mmamushi, Ga-Molepo, Unit 14, Sehlale and Evelyn Lekganyane.

Honourable Members, whilst still on the matter of security at health facilities, we are encouraged by the recent crime statistics in the province. Of course it would be ideal to see total clampdown on crime.

In the third quarter of 2024, Limpopo has witnessed a significant improvement in crime statistics, boasting a remarkable reduction across some of the 17 major crime categories, rendering Limpopo as the safest province in South Africa.

This notable decline reflects concerted efforts by law enforcement agencies and community initiatives aimed at enhancing public safety. Specifically, crime categories such as sexual offences, attempted murder, robbery, rape and assault have recorded the largest reductions, signalling a positive trend towards safer neighbourhoods. The collaborative approach to crime prevention and community engagement appears to be yielding fruitful results, fostering a sense of security and trust among residents in the province.

Honourable Speaker, while some may argue for tarred roads over gravel, we must acknowledge the time it takes to upgrade all provincial roads, especially that the funds we require are not available. The MEC for Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure in his debate shared with us that they would require more than R300 billion to tar the entire province.

In the meantime, we are committed to improving the lives of our residents, who recognise the good work being done. You will be surprised at the number of requests we continue to receive for #DikgerekgereWednesday intervention that so far has made a mark, notwithstanding the rains and floods.

We have also acknowledged the challenges surrounding water provision in Giyani and are implementing turnaround strategies. It is misleading to claim that there is no water when we are making steady progress in providing households with access. Our turnaround strategy will extend across the province.

Members of the House, we have openly discussed the challenges facing the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and our interventions required to ensure its success. The Musina Council has already met and approved necessary process for land use.

The Makhado Municipality is finalising necessary approvals. We anticipate that the Floor Area Ratio will be completed by the 11th of March 2025, with the Traffic Impact Assessment following by the 25th of March 2025. The legal team is addressing outstanding objections and expect to submit to the Makhado Municipal Planning Tribunal by the 14th of April 2025.

Honourable Speaker, it is disheartening to witness objections to the Musina-Makhado SEZ development, especially when it promises to uplift historically marginalised communities. We must question the motives of those lobby groups who oppose this project. Are they genuinely committed to the development of black communities, or are they perpetuating an apartheid mentality that seeks to subjugate our people for capital gain?

Or, Honourable Members, are we not dealing with enemies of progress who don't want to see our young people getting employed? Remember, some of them are not even citizens of this province or even this country. They are threatened by our development. They want us to be eternal slaves and beggars, going hand in cap to the likes of Donald Trump asking for ARVs money. We must ask: what tangible contributions are they making to improve the lives of our people in these areas? Who is actually funding them?

Honourable Members, we will continue to provide free education to those who may not fully understand the dynamics of investment pledges. Since the inception of our investment conference, we have seen numerous pledges materialise.

Just two days ago, I witnessed the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the Vhembe District Municipality, Collins Chabane Municipality and the Masingita Group of Companies. This group has committed to building Nkuna City in Nkuzana and they have already made significant progress by construction of a mall and filling station as part of phases 1 and 2. This MOU will result into our municipalities providing bulk services in order for phase 3 which includes amongst others, construction of residential units, schools, industries, health facilities, and others.

Furthermore, we have been diligent in following up on the R120 billion pledge from the recent investment conference as MEC for LEDET has outlined during the debate on Tuesday and he will provide further details during his budget vote speech.

Honourable members , we have noted opportunistic tendency aimed at using the current challenges of Zebediela Citrus Farm as a justification for rejecting government's commitment on land reform . We felt it is critical to take few minutes of your time and address this matter. Like in the rest of the country, this province faces the formidable challenge of land reform. By land reform, I refer to the three pillars enshrined in section

25 of our Constitution, namely land restitution, land redistribution and land tenure reform. The recently passed Expropriation Act, of 2024, stands as a unique and important landmark to usher in a new era of rapid release of land, large scale acquisition of land, and the return of the land to persons who have been previously dispossessed and then locked out of the land value chain, by discriminatory laws of apartheid, such as the Group Areas Act, the so called Community Development Act, all of which are progenies of the notoriously racist Natives Land Act of 1913. The 1913 Natives Land Act is the original sin. By the stroke of a pen, Africans were deemed non-citizens, squatters and non-persons in the country of their birth. Hence, as argued in the book Land Matters, “the struggle for freedom was the struggle for land”. Since 1994 the democratic government has made strides to achieve equitable distribution of land, and to end property racism. Yet property racism, land dispossession, and land inequality remain. For instance, it is a shameful fact to state today, that 70% of commercial agricultural land is in the hands of white people. This was the situation in 1994, and it is clear that land reform faces stubborn and formidable resistance.

Right wing organisations, including the Democratic Alliance, which pretends to be liberal, and Afriforum, Solidarity which do not pretend to hide their contempt for black people, have engaged in a new offensive against land reform. For its part, the Democratic Alliance has purported to engage our courts to frustrate transformation. Progressive forces must oppose this challenge and expose the DA for the reactionary force that it is. Afriforum has turned to foreign governments to use their might to choke South Africa’s march to freedom and land justice. Just as President Ramaphosa declared, we shall not be deterred, neither shall we be bullied. The path towards freedom continues.

True, land reform is bedevilled by the challenge of maintaining land in productive usage. The argument which links land reform to dismal production of land is born of mischief. It seeks to draw, not only correlation, but also causation. It argues, simply, that land reform is the cause of decline in land productivity. It is not difficult to see why the argument is both ignorant and racist.

To place it in perspective, land reform is a matter of justice, both economic justice and historical justice. The imperative in the Constitution, for land reform is one born of centuries of struggle against imperialism and colonialism. That struggle is incomplete and it must be fought. But we should never confuse that struggle with economic jingoism, which blames land reform for economic stagnation. The truth is that we need both land reform and economic development. In fact, land reform is a necessary precondition for economic development. There can be no economic development in a country with such levels of high concentration of land in a few hands.

If there's anything utterly unproductive, it is the link between restitution and land productivity. The sooner it is understood that restitution of land is not an imperative of commerce but one of justice, the better. The economic production of land restored back to the land claimants is important, but it is to lose the plot to make the economic production of the land a precondition for restitution.

The Community Property Association (CPA) model – as provided for in the Community Property Association of 1996, has failed and the model needs to be seriously reviewed and government needs to come up with a model that will give land ownership back to individual land beneficiaries. It would therefore be a waste of time to try and work through the individual challenges affecting each CPA because some of the challenges are structural and systemic.

According to the 2022/2023 CPA Annual Report by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), it was revealed that 1 141 CPAs in the country were non-compliant with the rules and regulations of governance, 188 were partially compliant, while only 81 were compliant. Some of the key challenges necessitating this dysfunction include infighting, inadequate management skills, legal non-compliance, and little government support.

The result of this CPA chaos is that land is now lying fallow and is not being put to productive use to benefit the beneficiaries. In essence, CPA members who want to engage in productive farming are now being held to ransom by those who are only concerned about fighting for positions.

The envisaged model will give birth to a new dispensation where individuals are allowed to own and farm their own pieces of land. Individual ownership will address the current system where CPAs are now being used for rent-seeking purposes with limited to no production taking place.

Therefore honourable members we have not given up on the Zebediela citrus we were just stating facts on where the challenges are and what needs to be done. One will also recommend to honourable members to buy and read a book “South African Land reform complexities, the Marobala O Itsose Experience” written by one of our own, Mr Sechaba Nkoana,

Allow me to conclude by quoting Honourable Machete who said: “It will be crucial for achieving sustainable development as it directly impacts poverty reduction, economic growth, improved health, education and gender equality by providing essential services like lighting and enabling people to live better lives and contribute more fully to their communities.”

Madam Speaker, one is highlighting these points not because there is disagreement in this house, but because we are singing from the same hymn book, emphasising our commitment to honouring our promises.

We stand here on behalf of the Executive Council to reaffirm that commitment.

Thank you.