

SPEECH BY PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA, AT THE SALGA LIMPOPO LEKGOTLA, 20 JUNE 2025, THE RANCH RESORT, POLOKWANE

Programme Director, Deputy Chairperson of SALGA  
SALGA Limpopo Chairperson  
Minister of Electricity and Energy  
MEC for COGHSTA  
COGTA Representative  
Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality  
SALGA PEC and NEC members, Provincial and National Staff  
All Executive Mayors, Mayors, Speakers, Chief Whips, MPAC Chairpersons, and  
Municipal Managers from all 27 municipalities  
Heads of Department and senior managers  
Auditor General of South Africa  
Professional Bodies  
Distinguished Guests,  
All Media Representatives,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Avuxeni, Ndi Matsheloni, Thobela, Good Morning, Goie More.

It gives me immense pleasure to be back here today to address this important session after our fruitful engagement last year. I stand before you re-energized and ready to reflect - both on our progress and the considerable journey ahead.

Those of you who were present during the last Members Assembly will recall the deep concerns we expressed regarding crucial areas such as audit outcomes, service provision and the pressing need for skilled professionals in key positions. I emphasised then, as I do now, the importance of Councillors being visible and engaged within their communities. Yes we followed up seeing Ward Committee meetings that were conducted by various municipalities. Local government remains everyone's

As we stand at the brink of the end of term for many councils, this is possibly the last integrated development plan and budget they will manage. We must confront the reality that the outcomes we see outside paint a concerning picture. In the lead-up to the national elections in 2024, the government's approval rating plummeted to a disheartening 15%. Even as we saw an improvement to nearly 30% by November 2024, we must recognise that this still represents a small number - too small for the level of service our communities expect and deserve. We must prepare for the reports leading to the 2026 local government elections, which will guide us on how we can improve our standing.

Today, we observe the deteriorating state of our towns and cities. Central business districts are shrouded in darkness. Our roads are in disrepair, with potholes that continue to inconvenience our residents daily. Crime and lawlessness are rampant, contributing to the destruction of municipal infrastructure and the inability to collect revenue only exacerbates the situation.

Moreover, we face significant challenges in managing contracts, as evidenced by the collapse of projects shortly after their commissioning - this highlights a serious gap in our managerial capacity.

The rift between political leadership and administration is palpable and must be addressed if we wish to avoid dysfunctionality within our municipalities.

While it is commendable that some municipalities have made strides in improving access to basic services like water and electricity, others are still struggling with inadequate infrastructure, financial mismanagement and glaring skills shortages.

According to Statistics South Africa, progress has been made, with increased access to electricity in rural areas and expanded water supply. Yet, we continue to grapple with significant water provision challenges, a thorny issue for provincial governance.

We cannot deny the impact of political instability - changes in local governance structures disrupt service provision and leave our communities vulnerable.

The disclaimed audits tell a story that must change; they adversely affect perceptions of governance, financial management, and service delivery.

As we engage in this planning session, I ask: What do our councils have to show for their tenure? Have they remained connected with the communities they serve, or have they become ostracized due to inaction?

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Freedom Charter, we must reflect on what fruits our democracy has borne.

We must raise these points knowing the crucial role that SALGA plays in supporting municipalities. Have we adequately communicated and celebrated our achievements?

As councillors transition from their roles, will they face unemployment if the communities do not vote them back? What skills have we imparted that equip them to address the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution? Are we fostering leadership that can effectively participate in agricultural development and meet the needs of our constituents?

Limpopo Province stands at a critical juncture in our development journey. We are fighting to grow our economy, combat unemployment, alleviate poverty and curb the rising cost of living. The Limpopo Development Plan envisions a capable, developmental public service - and local government must embody these ideals.

Let us collectively ensure our towns and cities resonate with a song of freedom, pride and progress. It is time to recommit uplifting our 27 municipalities, empowering them to deliver their best for the people. We can and must do more - together.

Thank you.