

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA AT THE SALGA  
PROVINCIAL MEMBERS ASSEMBLY, BELA-BELA FOREVER RESORT,  
WATERBERG DISTRICT

02 September 2025

Programme Director,  
COGTA Deputy Minister, Dr Dickson Masemola,  
Speaker of the Limpopo Legislature, Dr Makoma Makhurupetje,  
MEC for COGHSTA, Mr Basikopo Makamu,  
MEC for Treasury, Mr Kgabo Mahoi,  
SALGA Limpopo PEC led by Polokwane Mayor, Cllr John Mpe,  
Executive Mayors and Local Mayors, Chief Whips,  
Chair of the House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, Hosi Ngove,  
SALGA NEC and staff led by President Cllr Stofile,  
Provincial SALGA staff led by Ms Ledile Sebati, Municipal Managers,  
CFOs,  
Faith-Based Leaders,  
Business Community,  
Stakeholders,  
Members of the Media,

Thobela, Ndi mats Sheloni, Avuxeni, Good morning, Goeie môre,

We gather here at a defining moment, an era when politics is shifting,  
geopolitics is reconfiguring, and the voices of our communities are

becoming louder and more impatient. It is a moment that compels us, as leaders closest to the people, to reflect deeply on our journey and to recommit ourselves to the sacred responsibility of service delivery.

Fellow delegates, allow me to remind you of the long road we have traveled as a province. We have made remarkable strides and achieved significant milestones along the way. Since the dawn of democracy, our province has been at the coalface of change. In 1994, less than 30% of rural households had electricity. Today, that figure has climbed to a remarkable 97,1%. Water access, which stood at just 26.9% in 2002, rose to over 64.1%, and though rural water access peaked at 80% in 2010, and the latest it later declined to 64.1% due to increase population, failure in maintenance, and general management of contract for water provision issues.

Our roads, once dusty pathways confining development to urban centres, have been transformed, with 13,800 kilometres targeted for gravel-to-tar upgrades. The De Hoop Dam, built at R3.4 billion, today sustains communities and mines, serving over 800,000 residents in Sekhukhune.

Through the Roads Agency Limpopo, critical infrastructure developments were realised. In healthcare and education, we have also seen remarkable gains: nearly half of our 476 clinics now operate 24/7, while the matric pass rate has soared from 38% in 1996 to 85.1% in 2024. These are milestones that no one can erase—they are the footprints of freedom and development.

Today, we can say without fear or contradiction that our women now occupy positions of power and influence, positions that were unimaginable for them before 1994- this is a testament to the tireless work of our provincial government.

Yet, fellow delegates, let us not lull ourselves into complacency. The story of progress is real, but so, too, are the gaps that threaten to erode it. Most of our municipalities, despite receiving infrastructure grant money, households remain without piped water, and sanitation and refuse collection still lag behind.

Across the province, under-spending of the Water Services Infrastructure Grant has left too many of our people reliant on rivers and tanker deliveries. And while we erect community halls, and Sports fields, many rural villages still await clean water, proper sanitation, and stormwater systems. These contradictions are the reason communities lose faith and why councillors face hostility instead of honour when their names are called.

Programme Director, as we enter the final leg of this council term, let us ask ourselves: What mark are we leaving behind? What legacy will you, as councillors, mayors, and municipal managers, be remembered for? Are you certain that your performance today will earn you the confidence of the people tomorrow?

The political winds have shifted in other provinces; councillors who neglected their people found themselves replaced. Power, when misused or underutilised, is temporary. Service to the people, however, is eternal.

This is the time to ensure that every grant is fully utilised, that town planning is enforced to prevent chaotic mushrooming of illegal structures, and that community participation is no longer treated as a box-ticking exercise but as the heartbeat of democracy. Our people are losing patience. They call, they write, they march, and too often, they are met with silence. This silence is not only unacceptable; it is dangerous.

Programme Director, our municipalities must strengthen their financial discipline by ensuring clean audits, curbing fruitless and wasteful expenditures and collecting revenue effectively. Every rand must be spent where it has the greatest impact, on water, sanitation, roads, housing and other basic services that change the lives of our people. Sound financial management is not just about balancing books. It is about restoring public trust, unlocking investment, and guaranteeing sustainable service delivery for generations to come.

Delegates, this Assembly is a workshop of ideas, a forge of solutions, and a platform for accountability. Let us move away from working in silos. Let us embrace the District Development Model as a living framework that unites a province, districts, municipalities, and traditional leaders in one developmental mission.

Let us contribute meaningfully to the review of the White Paper on Local Government, ensuring that its final product reflects the aspirations of our communities.

I challenge each of you today: rise above the comfort of the office, roll up your sleeves, and lead with urgency, humility, and accountability. Let us build municipalities that are not only functional but truly people-centred. The dream of our democracy will only be fulfilled when every village has clean water, when every child studies under light, when every road connects opportunity, and when every citizen feels the dignity of being served by a caring government.

Let us use the collective wisdom and energy of this Assembly to recommit ourselves to efficient, ethical, and quality service delivery. The people of Limpopo are watching, history is recording, and the future is demanding.

I thank you.