

2026

STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS



Dr Phophi Ramathuba
Limpopo Premier



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#7thAdministration



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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THAT WORKS FOR ALL





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PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER OF LIMPOPO, DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA

Limpopo Legislature, Jack Botes Hall

05 March 2026

Speaker of the Legislature, Honourable Dr Makoma Makhurupetje,
Deputy Speaker, Honourable Tebogo Mamorobela,
Members of the Executive Council,
Honourable Members of the Legislature,
Permanent Delegates to the National Council of Provinces,
Chief Whip of the Legislature,
Ministers
Deputy Ministers
Members of the National Assembly
Judge President of Limpopo Division of the High Court and other Members of the
Judiciary,
Representatives of the Mphephu Royal House of the Vhavenda Kingship,
Her Royal Highness, Queen Manyaku Thulare, the Acting King of the Bapedi Kingship,
Her Royal Highness, Queen Modjadji VII of the Balobedu Queenship,
Chairperson of the Limpopo House of Traditional & Khoisan Leadership, Hosi Pheni
Ngove,
Your Worships Executive Mayors and Mayors,
Representatives of the Zion Christian Church,
Representatives of the St Engenas ZCC,

The leadership of the Governing Party, the African National Congress in Limpopo, led by
Vhamusanda Vho-Reuben Madadzhe,
Leaders of Opposition Political Parties,
Former MPs and MPLs,
Director General and Head of Departments,
Stalwarts and Veterans of our struggle,
Provincial Commissioner of the South African Police Service,
Heads of Chapter Nine and Ten institutions,
Leadership of Faith-Based Communities,
Leadership of Organised Business and Labour, Youth, Women and Community Leaders,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen and all the people of our vibrant province,

Ndi Matsheloni! Thobela! Avuxeni! Silotshile! Gooie More! Good Morning!

Honourable Speaker, we are back in this august house with mixed feelings. Ordinarily we should begin by reporting back on work we have done as per our commitment last year. However, the circumstances we face today dictate otherwise.

We stand here with one eye full of hope and intentions, while the other is wiping tears. Tears of a devastation we have not known in the 25-year history of our province, since the last floods in 2000. Limpopo is a province that knows drought, that knows hard soil, that knows the long road. But in the last two months, we were reminded that when the heavens open, they can either bless the land or test the people.

And yet, Honourable Speaker, even when the river rises, the calabash still floats. Even when the wind tears the roof, the home of botho remains. Because in Limpopo we say: "Metsi a tliša bophelo, eupša ge a feta moedi a tliša bohloko."

Floods: the storm that touched every corner of our province

Whilst many were celebrating Christmas in December 2025, our people in Waterberg (Modimolle-Mookgophong) and in Capricorn (Blouberg) began experiencing what looked like a passing storm, unfortunately it carried a typhonic force. When the skies finally quietened, houses were destroyed, lives were lost, roads were flooded and the hope of germinating seeds in freshly cultivated fields was washed away.

As we were still counting losses, early January 2026 brought another dark cloud, this time from the Mozambique Channel, pouring relentlessly over the north-eastern parts of our province. In Bennde Mutale, a mother with her teenage daughter went to fetch firewood, only to find themselves stranded, trapped on what became an island. They were miraculously rescued on the third day. By then, the storm had traced its way deeper into Thulamela, almost following the Mutale and Luvuvhu rivers like a cruel guide.

Then the rivers rose faster and higher than self-raising flour. The waters surged towards Giyani, Collins Chabane and Ba-Phalaborwa. The Klein Letaba, Letaba, Selati and Lepelle rivers all raced to the Limpopo River, carrying trees and debris, trees that, when they could not pass bridges, simply rested there, blocking roads and creating a bush in the middle of a route that should connect our people to work, children to school and our communities to seek care.

The aftermath was heart-breaking. Villages that slept in happiness woke up with no houses at all. Mbaula in Greater Giyani Municipality became a national focal point, of what floods can do and of what government must do when its people cry. Desperate calls came from every direction.

A lone woman climbed a tree for network signal and when the Mopani Disaster Management Centre finally received her call, the people of Mbaula were saved – through internal help, through the bravery of rescuers, through solidarity. But we lost a five-year-old boy, separated from his mother as she tried to cling to a tree branch for safety. And

with eight or so bridges flooded, the community relied on the little help that could pass through to reach them.

In Sekhukhune District, the Lepelle River also caused extensive damage. In Lepelle-Nkumpi, residents of Ga-Mampa were trapped for hours, cut off from the services that others take for granted.

Madam Speaker, today we count loss measured not only in infrastructure damages, but also in human pain. Twenty-seven lives were lost; others are still missing or unaccounted for. The damage amounts to billions of rands. Over 450 roads have been damaged. More than 3 500 houses were destroyed. Schools and health facilities suffered damage and learning was interrupted.

What breaks my heart Madam Speaker is how some pessimists within our society have downplayed the intensity of this disaster by claiming that we are alarmist and that only infrastructure built in the past 30 years was damaged. We have seen bridges that have been there for years succumbing to the intensity of the floods.

Equally, there are resilient structures like the RDP houses in Mbaula that remained in place when parts of the village were levelled to the ground. This is testament that we have begun to build resilient and strong structures that can withstand climate shocks.

A recovery plan rooted in dignity and integrity

I narrate these events, Honourable Speaker, to remind us that our task resembles that story of Prophet Jeremiah – called to rebuild what has been broken, to restore what has been scattered, to lift the fallen and strengthen the weary. The work ahead is massive: to restore dignity, reconnect communities to economic opportunity and allow people to move freely and safely within our province.

We are grateful for the support from the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Disaster Management and for the unity shown by Executive Mayors, Mayors, councillors, and, most importantly, the ward committees across affected municipalities – joining hands in rescue operations, assessing damage and providing relief packages.

We also appreciate the leadership of His Excellency the President, Mr Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, who came to our rain-drenched communities, greeting citizens whose houses were submerged in Tshakhuma, listening to the pain in Giyani and standing with the people of Mbaula.

National government has since thrown its weight behind Limpopo's recovery through the classification of this tragedy as a national disaster.

We welcome the much-needed support from private sector, civil society organisations, organised labour – especially COSATU, ordinary people of Limpopo, who until now are still donating to restore lives of those who have been displaced.

Honourable Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my political home, the African National Congress and its leagues, for providing leadership in garnering support for relief in all the affected areas. We saw them mobilising trucks, individuals and even collaborating with the private sector to ease the intensity of the devastation and restore the well-being of our people.

Our task now is to use the limited resources at our disposal to begin rebuilding after we have reprioritised. We are better prepared to begin this work and thus we have begun. In the 2025 State of the Province Address, after witnessing floods in 2024 and 2025, we directed the MEC for Finance to set aside a Provincial Disaster Management Contingency Reserve Fund which was duly set aside.

In accordance with applicable legislation, 1,2% of the provincial budget was made available for that purpose. We did this knowing that the response for the support from the

National Disaster Management Committee takes a while before funds are disbursed. For example, the province and the municipalities have just received in February 2026 the R500 million to cover the 2024/2025 floods.

Honourable Members, in addition, we are now directing the MEC for Finance, Mr Kgabo Mahoi, to make available funds to the provincial departments to cover the urgent recovery and rehabilitation intervention funding requirements for the recent disaster.

The floodwaters may have moved bridges and roads, but they must never wash away our ethics. In this 7th Administration, we have said: “*A ku na ndzhawu ya vukungundwani/ Ga go na sebaka sa bohodu/Ahuna tshifhinga tsha vuvhava/Daar is geen plek vir enige vorm van korrupsie nie*” There is no space for corruption or floodpreneurs who are busy salivating at the smell of these funds.

Let me be clear, Honourable Members, every rand earmarked for reconstruction will rebuild Limpopo. It will restore dignity of our people. It will reconnect communities. And we will jealously guard this process against any form of abuse, corruption and waste. We have put in place a **reporting framework as well as a work schedule that we shall monitor on a 30-60-90 day basis**. In addition, the Office of the Premier will be receiving progress reports fortnightly.

A silver lining: better prospects for Limpopo

Even as we mop the floors, Honourable Members, we must keep our eyes on the horizon. There is a silver lining. The economic outlook has opened better prospects for Limpopo. We are seeing improvement in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) output and a decrease in unemployment. This does not mean our work is done; it means our work is beginning to show results.

Even amid growing global geo-political uncertainty occasioned by the current Middle East crisis, we remain optimistic about Limpopo’s prospects.

The Year of Remembrance: our compass is history, our duty is the future

Madam Speaker, President Ramaphosa during his SONA reminded us that 2026 is a year of memory and historical significance. It marks 70 years of the 1956 Women's March, when brave women laid claim to their dignity and humanity. We also commemorate 50 years of the 1976 Soweto Uprisings, not forgetting 30 years of our Constitution: a Constitution that enshrines equality, human dignity and freedom.

We owe gratitude to the heroes and heroines of our struggle who understood that the mandate of a democratic government is to push back the frontiers of poverty, fight inequality and dismantle unemployment.

It is for this reason that we have decided to name the recently acquired office complex of the Department of Social Development after the courageous Happy Joyce Mashamba.

We may not rename every landmark after every icon, but we will do everything humanly possible to safeguard the memories of those who carried the burden so that we could carry the promise.

A blueprint for renewal

As the governing party in Limpopo, we draw strength and direction from the ANC's January 8 Statement, which reminds us that renewal is not a once-off event, but a daily discipline – rooted in the people, grounded in service and intolerant of corruption.

This year is "*The Year of Decisive Action to Fix Local Government and Transform the Economy*". It is a blueprint that calls on us to build a capable state, to defend the gains of democracy and to place the needs of the people – especially the poor – at the centre of governance. It is upon this that we want to fix the local government and grow the economy of our province.

We recall President Oliver Tambo's words in the January 8 Statement of 1979, at the height of apartheid, when he spoke of: "one country, one people, one government – a government of the people of South Africa." Those words remain relevant. We have erased bantustans. We have rejected segregation. We have rejected tribalism. We reject patriarchy. But our work continues because underdevelopment was engineered over centuries and it cannot be undone by wishing, it must be undone by planning, spending well and delivering.

Our commitment as the 7th Administration

Honourable Members, when we began this 7th Administration, we did so with a single mind to achieve the following objectives: **inclusive growth and job creation, fight poverty and reduce the high cost of living**, as well as **establish a capable, ethical developmental state**. This is meant to amplify service provision to all our people. The floods have tested our systems, but they have also revealed the courage of our communities, the dedication of frontline workers and the power of unity.

Honourable Speaker,

We meet today here mindful of the many questions our people continue to ask, questions that are fair, urgent and practical:

"When will jobs come?" "Where will they come from?" "How do we, as ordinary people, access these opportunities?" "And how do we know that the commitments made in the 2025 State of the Province Address are now turning into real work on the ground?"

This section of my address responds directly to those questions.

1. INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

Honourable Members, in 2025, we committed that we would mobilise investment, unblock industrialisation projects and strengthen enterprise support so that economic participation is broadened beyond a few to the many. Today, we return to you to account.

1.1 Economic Outlook: What is happening to the Limpopo economy?

Over the past five years, Limpopo's economic growth has been inconsistent, characterised by periods of contraction and sluggish recovery – growing just below 2%. This has largely mirrored the national economic performance. However, through increased diversification, our economic growth trajectory has shifted.

For many years, Limpopo was South Africa's poorest province, but those days are almost behind us. According to Statistics South Africa's latest Income and Expenditure survey, **poverty in Limpopo has decreased from 66% in 2015 to 47,6% in 2023, the largest reduction of any province in the country.**

The GDP data released in October 2025 showed that Limpopo registered the **highest growth rate of 0,9%**. In the same period, **Limpopo rose to become the 4th largest contributor** to South Africa's GDP, accounting for 7,8% in 2024.

Residents ask: "But Premier, does GDP growth mean jobs?"

Economic growth does not automatically mean jobs, but it creates the conditions for jobs if it is driven by the right sectors and if we deliberately connect growth to local employment, skills development, supplier opportunities and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises - MSME (what we commonly call SMME) participation.

The current growth has been driven mainly by the tertiary sector – personal services, government services, finance, trade and mining as the only primary sector. That is why, as we look forward to our target of 2,2% annual growth by 2030 as envisaged in the Limpopo Development Plan, we must now expand growth into job-rich and labour

intensive sectors: agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction and emerging sunrise industries such as renewable energy and mineral beneficiation.

1.2 Limpopo Rising – Africa’s New Investment Frontier: Are investment pledges real?

Honourable Speaker, one of the biggest questions we hear from communities is: “Premier, these investment conferences, are they real, or are they only talk show?”

Our Investment Conference is not about social media content creation. It is about mobilising investments that can be converted into tangible projects.

Under the theme “Limpopo Rising – Africa’s New Investment Frontier,” we hosted a successful Investment Conference in October 2025. **We registered 47 investment pledges amounting to R170 billion, surpassing our target of R120 billion.** These pledges are directed at the sunrise industries identified by the LDP – energy, mining, water, and public infrastructure.

From the 2025 pledges, we project the creation of more than 32,600 permanent jobs and 15,000 temporary jobs.

Residents then ask the next important question: “When will these jobs be created, and how will local people benefit?”

That is exactly why we are strengthening project follow-through. We are clear that conversion of committed investments remains a challenge due to several issues, including bulk infrastructure readiness, regulatory processes, land availability and project preparation.

We are therefore **directing the MEC for Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Mr Tshitereke Baldwin Matibe, to intensify post-conference investor engagements**, remove bottlenecks and provide regular progress reports to Provincial

Government so that pledges translate into implementation which subsequently result into job creation. We call upon all our municipalities to prioritise these investors when they deal with regulatory approvals so that we don't spend years waiting for these projects to be realised.

1.3 InvestSA Limpopo One-Stop Shop: What are we doing to unblock projects and speed up investment?

In this regard we welcome the final completion of the InvestSA Limpopo One-Stop Shop located at the Limpopo Tourism Agency building, Southern Gateway of Polokwane, which will address the consistent frustration experienced by investors and local entrepreneurs/SMMEs wherein approvals and processes may take too long and, at some stage, can be difficult to navigate. The result is delayed projects and delayed jobs.

This One-Stop Shop will be a hub to accelerate the entire investment value chain by providing key investment and business support services – facilitating processes and providing specialised advisory services to simplify the business landscape.

We have as well launched the *Limpopo Investment Prospectus* which profiles Limpopo as an attractive destination and showcases our competitiveness in mining, agriculture, light manufacturing, automotive opportunities, digital technologies, real estate development and tourism. The plan is to avoid being a one-sector economy. When the economy relies on only one or two sectors, it becomes vulnerable. Diversification is how we build resilience and expand employment pathways, so that a young person in Giyani, a graduate in Thohoyandou, an artisan in Burgersfort, or an emerging farmer in Zebediela can all find a place in the economy, hence our emphasis on inclusive growth.

1.4 Eskom Commitment: What does the Tubatse Pumped Storage Scheme mean for jobs?

Honourable Members, in September 2025 Eskom made a ground-shifting commitment to develop the Tubatse Pumped Storage Scheme, a facility expected to produce about 1,500 megawatt of power capacity and around 21,000 megawatt-hour of energy in Fetakgomo-Tubatse Local Municipality, along the escarpment between the Nebo Plateau and the Steelpoort River Valley.

This was cemented at the Investment Conference when Eskom pledged R35 billion for the project, to be implemented as a multi-year programme.

1.5 Employment Creation: What evidence is there that jobs are being created?

Honourable Members, we measure progress not only by plans, but by outcomes.

Even though Statistics South Africa reported a **significant decrease in Limpopo's unemployment rate, from 35% in quarter 2 of 2025 to 29,8% in quarter 3 of 2025 to 28,2% in quarter 4 of 2025**, the reality is that great deal of work remains in creating meaningful opportunities that lead to sustainable jobs, including for those who have become discouraged and lost hope in their quest to earn a living.

However, not all is bleak: there is light at the end of the tunnel. Today, I want us to look beyond percentages and focus on the impact on people's lives over the past year. Statistics South Africa recorded that **employment in Limpopo increased from 1,488,000 in quarter 1 of 2025 to 1,552,000 by the end of the year, an increase of 64,000 jobs. Limpopo remains the fourth-largest employer in the country and continues to rank among the better performing provinces.**

The increase in employment is evidence that our economic interventions, together with broader shifts in the labour market, are starting to produce measurable outcomes.

We do not suggest that the challenge is behind us, but progress matters. An increase in employment is not accidental; it is the result of deliberate effort and coordinated action.

We will build on this momentum and work with renewed urgency to reduce unemployment further, with a clear goal of bringing it below 20% and ensuring that growth in our province is inclusive, sustainable and job-rich.

1.6 Limpopo Industrialisation Agenda: Turning resources into factories, and factories into jobs

Honourable Speaker, last year we directed the MEC for LEDET to ensure that the bottlenecks that held back one of our catalytic projects, Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone, are removed so that tangible progress is registered.

We are delighted to report that indeed we have made great strides, with the land now formally transferred to the SEZ and bulk work has begun. We have also appointed a new CEO who is expected to drive the vision of the province in that area.

We are reporting steady progress on the bulk infrastructure investors need. Phase 1 of the water supply system is underway: the bulk pipeline contractor is appointed, the site is established and construction has started, including 15 new boreholes and conveyance via a manifold and rising main.

A second contractor is building a 6 Mega L water purification plant. and a reservoir and elevated tank contract will be awarded within four months. These water works should finish in 25 months, meeting demand for 10 years as Musina Dam is considered. Wastewater, security fencing and final designs for key services will follow.

Township establishment for the South Site will reach public notice in the second week of March 2026, followed by statutory objection and tribunal processes to ensure lawful accelerated implementation.

Honourable Speaker, we also reported in this house that we shall follow through all processes to designate Fetakgomo-Tubatse Special Economic Zone (FTSEZ). That process has been concluded, awaiting final Cabinet approval.

While awaiting designation, enabling work has advanced: the township establishment application has been approved; a skills development plan is complete.

The zone is also exploring new green and advanced manufacturing opportunities: a preliminary business case for vanadium battery energy manufacturing has been developed with the CSIR and is being marketed and an MOU has been signed between FTIP, Valterra Platinum and Mintek to pursue hydrogen energy derived from PGMs – framed as practical steps toward local beneficiation.

Working towards benefitting MSME

Honourable Speaker, last year we raised our concern about LEDA having neglected growth of small business. We directed the MEC for LEDET to attend to this matter urgently. Today we are comforted by the fact that **1,842 enterprises (1,455 MSMEs and 387 cooperatives) have received financial and non-financial support** such as equipment, market access, formalisation, digital literacy, governance and compliance support. What this does is that it spreads the economic reach and services to local residents, who, in turn, may employ local people as part of their business expansion. **We still encourage our residents to continue using LEDA for any assistance they require with their businesses.**

Honourable Speaker, Ms Ramaoka Rose Senong from Ga-Phaahla in Makhuduthamaga Municipality is an entrepreneur, an SMME, who specialises in clothing production. *O roka diaparo tsa setso, tsa manyalo le mekete ya go fapafapana. Re a tseba gore ka mo ga bo rena Ga-Sekhukhune re a nyala ebile re a nyadisha.*

She was not spared the wrath of the recent floods, where lightning struck all her sewing machines, leaving her and her employees without a source of income. She reached out and as government we are in the process of assisting her. In the next two weeks, Honourable Speaker, through LEDA, we will be replacing all those sewing machines she has lost. To cheer her up and affirm our commitment to her course I have invited her as my special guest. Thobela Mologadi!

Honourable Members, when we said we are going to revive LEDA, this is what we mean, serving ordinary people who may not be able to access financial assistance from commercial institutions and banks.

Looking ahead to 2026/27, the province will broaden support to enterprises owned by women, youth, persons with disabilities and military veterans and will establish a Provincial Enterprise Development Technical Committee and a Broad-Based Economic Empowerment Committee to improve coordination and measurable outcomes.

1.7 Agriculture: The engine for rural jobs and agro-processing

Honourable Speaker, Agriculture remains the engine for rural jobs, especially through agro-processing.

Last year I made a passionate plea when I said: “It pains me every time where I drive past the once renowned Zebediela Citrus Farm seeing it in its hollow state, failing to rise from the ashes.”

We are not a government of empty promises, but of action and tangible results. Just last week, as a follow-up, I went back to Zebediela, this time around not only with MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development Ms Nakedi Sibanda-Kekana alone, but also with our capable, credible women of integrity under the company WIPHOLD, who were officially introduced to the Bjatladi CPA beneficiaries as their new investors.

We call upon the CPAs to take this opportunity and create a conducive environment for our investors to assist us in returning Zebediela Citrus to its former glory.

Farming operations have started, which includes planting 500 hectares of white sugar beans as an early soil preparation towards our long-term citrus restoration. This intervention will also be a short-term cash flow generation mechanism; expected to create about 460 local job opportunities, especially during harvesting period by July 2026.

Asset protection is also underway through installation of approximately 37 km of electrical security fencing and trenching to strengthen the perimeter.

AgroTechnovision has been appointed to evaluate soil suitability and orchard health, with early findings suggesting around 95% of existing citrus trees may need removal due to age (many over 50 years) and declining productivity – laying the basis for modern replanting and sustainable productivity to begin by July 2026.

We hope that the outcome of our intervention in Zebediela would mirror the success that we are beginning to see with the revitalisation of the Majeje Citrus, as an example, which is progressing toward completion by end of March 2026, with final planting, planned to reach 450 hectares. The expansion is already driving increased capacity needs at the Masalal packhouse. It is therefore my pleasure to announce to this august house that the project has created 40 permanent jobs and is projected to support 350 seasonal jobs once fully productive.

The success of these stories is dependent on CPAs. We must begin to appreciate that as CPAs we are not farmers, we possibly know nothing about farming. However, our ancestors have left us with this inheritance, the land. We are landlords, we must have tenants, we must collect rental, we must share profit with our tenants whilst acquiring requisite skills in farming. In that way, we shall have sustainable land that will continue to benefit us for generations to come. At the same time protecting food security and creating sustainable jobs.

Whilst we are patiently waiting for the review of legislation that governs the CPAs by the Minister of Land Reform and Rural Development, we must continue to intervene in stalled projects like Tshivhase Tea Estate and the Magoeba Tea Estate, and many others who are still locked in the web of CPA versus productivity.

Even though our infrastructure investment at the Hereford Vegetable Cluster (Tafelkop Farmers Association), has not yet translated into full production potential, structured interventions are being implemented. This will raise productivity through better coordination, input support and a clustered aggregation market system linked to School Feeding Scheme contracts. The project has already created 62 jobs in 2025/26, with a target to exceed 150 jobs, including opportunities for persons with disabilities.

On producer commercialisation, the **province finalised a Commercialisation Framework and identified 10 producers per district (50 in total) for profiling, focusing on market readiness, compliance and the infrastructure support needed to access formal and export markets.**

This is in line with our previous commitment of preparing our small-scale farmers taking advantage of new market opportunities to meet their requirements. Markets have different standards and expectations on how products must be harvested, stored and transported before they are exported.

Honourable Speaker, we were clear when we said days of exporting raw materials, be it in agriculture or mining must come to an end. We shall work with industrialists to promote agro-processing. It is against this background that I am proud to report to this august house that for the first time in the history of Limpopo an avocado processing factory, ECOVADO, has been established and is fully operational in Dovheni Village, Collins Chabane Municipality.

The factory currently processes 5-tons of avocados per hour, creating sustainable market access for local farmers whilst reducing post-harvest losses. It produces fruit juices, extra virgin avocado oil, cosmetic and skincare products. Products are available in national retail stores. We call upon more retailers to see the market potential for these products and many others produced elsewhere in our province. In that way, more jobs will be created.

Infrastructure Aligned to Agricultural Development and Rural Economic Growth

Honourable Members as part of improving disease control veterinary laboratory rehabilitation is at an advanced stage: Phase 1 for laboratories in Mokopane, Lephalale and Makhado is complete, with Phase 2 planned for 2026/27 financial year – supporting disease control, export readiness and jobs in the red-meat value chain.

Improving on disease control would help the province to curb or control some of the challenges, including the foot and mouth disease (FMD) that has, once again, engulfed some parts of our province.

From 05 December 2025, Limpopo had registered cases of FMD. We have collaborated with stakeholders to deal with mass vaccination plan in all of Limpopo, including areas without outbreak.

As part of revitalisation of the over 100 non-functional **agricultural schemes across the province, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is directed to audit them and provide support to bring them back to life.**

It is our conviction, Honourable Speaker that, using the advantage of land we have, we can spread further the reach by supporting various agricultural schemes were over 100 of them are non-functional. As a start we shall **buy them tractors** that will help them continue to expand their operations.

We direct the MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development as well as the MEC for Finance to finalise the funding mechanism for the procurement of tractors to support agricultural schemes, not individuals, beginning this financial year, 2026/27.

This overarching approach links inclusive growth to strengthened value chains, agro-processing and broad-based job creation across villages, townships and towns.

1.8 Infrastructure – A backbone for economic development

Honourable Members, in the 2025 State of the Province Address, we made a clear undertaking: that infrastructure, especially roads construction and maintenance, will be treated as the backbone of economic development in Limpopo.

Out of the total 20,000 km of our roads, only 6,500 km are tarred or paved, leaving 13,500 km of gravel. These are provincial roads that connect residents to economic activities and social services. We cannot overemphasise their need to be maintained, hence we will continue to support our #DikgerekereWednesday programme.

As part of strengthening internal capacity to maintain those 13,500 km of unpaved roads, the province has procured 54 earth-moving machines – graders, compactors, dozers, tipper trucks, front-end loaders, trailers, as well as utility vehicles such as bakkies and minibuses. These interventions enabled maintenance of 17,669.8 km of gravel roads through regravelling and blading, especially because of recent floods.

We therefore direct the MEC for Finance Mr Kgabo Mahoai to find resources to support both the maintenance of existing and augmentation of additional yellow fleet. #DikgerekereWednesday should continue to rise.

Honourable Speaker, we are also pleased to report to this distinguished house that **the upgrade of the 33 km Morebeng to Sekgosese road, in Greater Letaba Municipality, Mopani District, is back on track.** Our recent project visit confirmed that only 500

metres, composed of the two bridges, is outstanding, but will be completed in the next six months. This is important because stalled projects cost communities opportunities and undermine confidence. We are restoring momentum and accountability, more so that we took the President of the country, His Excellency Mr Matamela Ramaphosa to pronounce on this road.

The reality that confronts us as a province is that with current budget constraints, we will never have the required billions of rands to tar or pave the 13,500 kilometres at a go. Hence our approach to **appoint 21 contractors to tar 21 projects distributed across all our five districts.**

We remain committed to the development of road infrastructure across all our five districts. The Department of Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure, through its entity, Roads Agency Limpopo, will commence the implementation of 17 new projects in the 2026/2027 financial year, with a total investment of R1.3 billion.

This is in addition to the 21 new road upgrade projects and 22 maintenance projects currently being implemented during the 2025/2026 financial year.

We call upon our people to be patient, their turn will come, one village at a time, until our villages have access to quality roads and bridges.

Honourable Members, we are also encouraged by the public-private partnership model of addressing the backlog. We have recently **completed the landmark Steelpoort Bridge (Ga-Malekana) in Fetakgomo-Tubatse**, a product of partnership with the eastern-limb mines who contributed 90% of the funding whilst government contributed 10% through Roads Agency Limpopo. Thankfully this partnership is continuing as witnessed by the recent signing of another MOU to maintain the portion of the Mahlagari Road (D212) from R555 towards Mpumalanga in the Steelpoort area.

On Wednesday 25 February 2026, in collaboration with Venetia Mine, **we handed over five (5) kilometres of road between De Vrede and Taaibosch in Blouberg Municipality** to a contractor. The agreement is that this road should be completed in the next 12 months. We appeal to the community to cooperate with the contractor to see to it that the project is implemented according to the timeframes. We believe that this will give us opportunity to seek alternative funding for the remaining 7,5 km to reach Kgoshi Kibi's place, Ga-Kibi, Mohananoa wa Mmatshwene ya Lebula.

Honourable Speaker, we hope that our recent meeting with the South African National Defence Force will unlock challenges impacting on the Welisizwe Bridge implementation programme, especially in the light of recent floods. The SANDF has capacity that we require for speedy implementation of the recovery process that we as a province desperately need, like the famous Tswinga bridge. This is the bridge that has recently taken three lives. We therefore direct the MEC for DPWRI Mr Ernest Rachoene to prioritise low-lying bridges like Tswinga.

Honourable Members, we came to this house to request financial support to develop and build the ZCC St Engenas Interchange on the R71 road, in partnership with SANRAL since it is their road. However, to our disappointment, in two financial years we have had to return our contribution to this project to Provincial Treasury due to procurement delays by SANRAL. We have since elevated the matter to the attention of the relevant Minister at national level for speedy resolution.

1.9 Turning visitors into village and township jobs

Tourism is positioned as one of Limpopo's fastest routes to inclusive growth because it creates township and village jobs across the value chain – tour guiding, accommodation, catering, transport, arts and crafts and events.

With global travel rebounding in 2025 and tourists increasingly seeking sustainable, nature-based and cultural experiences, Limpopo is well placed to grow market share if tourism is deliberately integrated with sport, arts and culture offerings.

By the end of 2025, Limpopo performed strongly in domestic tourism, ranking second nationally for domestic trips after KwaZulu-Natal. The province aims to sustain this momentum through consistent destination marketing and stronger product development. A key initiative is the #TourismThursdays campaign, implemented with local and district municipalities to showcase local attractions and stimulate domestic travel.

The province is also growing its events portfolio. **Our well-maintained Peter Mokaba Stadium has played host to PSL Cup Final, SAFA World Cup Qualifier, CAF games and other continental games, showcasing our capability to host high profile national and international sporting events.**

However, there is still a need to bid for bigger events beyond sport, national and international conferences and conventions. This is the more reason we are directing the MEC for LEDET, MEC for DPWRI, MEC for DSAC to work with the City of Polokwane **to finalise on the matter of the construction of the Polokwane International Convention Centre.**

Honourable Speaker, we have previously remarked that **we need to create a logistics and cargo hub here in Polokwane** that will assist with various functions to coordinate the strength of connectivity we have here. We are mandating the MEC for LEDET to finalise the planning process and coordination towards the realisation of this vision.

On connectivity, Limpopo welcomes the FlySafair Cape Town – Eastgate (Hoedspruit) route but we are prioritising stronger collaboration to improve access through Polokwane International Airport.

Entrepreneurs and civil society are invited to propose eco- and cultural-tourism projects for partnerships, while revised MOUs with BRICS and SADC and renewed EU marketing aim to expand international reach.

1.10 Arts, culture and sport are not extras in development

Honourable Members, economic growth cannot be separated from social stability. Communities affected by violence, substance abuse and gender-based violence are communities where children do not learn well, businesses do not thrive and families live in fear.

In this regard, we affirm a truth that is too often overlooked: Arts, culture and sport are not “extras” in development. They are part of the economic engine of Limpopo, part of social cohesion and part of how we confront poverty and the high cost of living.

Honourable Speaker, we are pleased that we have made progress since the SOD turning in 2024, the Provincial Theatre is on track for completion in 2027/28 financial year, having created at least 78 jobs and supported 15 SMMEs so far.

With the completion of the Limpopo Provincial Theatre in March 2027, we are laying the groundwork for its full operationalisation. Furthermore, we have committed an additional R18 million to ensure its operational readiness. This will enable the rolling out of theatrical productions, film shows, craft markets and performing arts in partnership with Creative Structures.

Limpopo proudly owns Lekompo genre, as evidenced in the national recognition wherein, for the first time, Metro FM awards has included this category in their annual events. We root for Shandesh, Kharishma (we still pray for her speedy recovery), Nathi Lepaka who are nominated in various categories and other artists who have diligently raised the flag of Limpopo. Of course, we are still saddened by those who have passed away like Dr Nel.

We welcome back our queen performer Makhadzi *wa vho rine*, let her continue to promote Limpopo through music and her unique dance moves.

I am, however, concerned that up to date we have not finalised the creative industry strategy. Therefore, I direct the MEC for Sports, Arts and Culture, Mr Jerry Maseko, to make sure that the strategy is expedited by July 2026.

2. REDUCING POVERTY AND TACKLING THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

2.1. Education is the strongest and most reliable foundation for inclusive growth

Honourable Speaker, education is Limpopo's most reliable foundation for inclusive growth, poverty reduction and lowering the long-term cost of living. It is the bridge between childhood disadvantage and adult opportunity, enabling people to work, build businesses, innovate and participate in society with dignity. By strengthening skills and learning power, education tackles poverty at its source and reduces vulnerability to debt, hunger and unemployment over time.

We see learner performance improvements as an economic investment that supports the production of scarce skills across sectors. During the term, **Limpopo's National Senior Certificate pass rate increased from 85,1% to 86,01%**, attributed to stronger curriculum delivery, targeted learner support and improved monitoring at school, circuit and district levels.

Bachelor passes rose from 41,370 in 2024 to 43,052 in 2025, increasing the number of learners eligible for further study and training – highlighted as a clear pathway out of poverty for many households.

Having registered the above progress, our focus now is performance on Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. These are the foundation towards building relevant skills that our economy requires.

Infrastructure and learner dignity remain our priority. Honourable Members, **out of 19 Priority 1 schools needing urgent sanitation intervention, as per our SOPA last year, 15 of them were completed and four are at advanced stages.**

Honourable Speaker,

Polokwane Municipality is experiencing rapid population growth due to migration, which has increased pressure on school infrastructure in the Capricorn South Education District. This has resulted in overcrowded classrooms and recurring admission challenges.

To address this, the Department of Education is at an advanced planning stage for the construction of new schools and additional classrooms. Planning will be finalised by the end of the 2025/2026 financial year, with procurement of contractors beginning in the first quarter of 2026/2027.

The projects include new schools at Bendor Secondary, Fauna Park Primary, and Greenside Primary, as well as additional classrooms at Klaas Mothapo Secondary, Makgoathane Secondary and Kabelo Secondary.

These interventions will reduce overcrowding, improve learner placement, and ensure access to quality education, while strengthening long-term infrastructure planning in line with population growth.

Honourable Speaker, in 2025 we reported to this august house operational work to improve enrolment and learning conditions in Early Childhood Development (ECD), which we had noted its importance in the educational success of our province. We are proud to report to this august house that we placed priority on improving our ECD offering through infrastructure investment, and to that effect **we have renovated 54 ECD facilities and constructed low-cost ECD centres, including the Masisi site in Vhembe east now**

completed, with Mopani east planned. Both MECs for Education and Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure will give detail on these aspects.

Honourable Speaker, we have acknowledged the improvement we have made with the matric pass rate. However, we are worried about where these 41% or so will go. We direct the MECs in the economic cluster to work with the MEC for Education, Ms Mavhungu Lerule-Ramakhanya, **to revive our goal of reaching 55 focus schools by the end of the 7th administration.**

We need agricultural schools, vocational schools and schools of technology – robotics and coding. Not every learner will be a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher, nurse or engineer. We require more artisans and learners with vocational skills to match the demand of our growing economy.

Our envisaged mining and mineral beneficiation academy in Sekhukhune is on the right track and we will leave no stone unturned until it is realised. A high-level technical committee has already commenced with the designs in partnership with Services Sector Education Training Authority (SSETA), University of Johannesburg (UJ) and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Mining houses are also on board.

Honourable Speaker, we made a commitment that we will work with Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), Giyani Municipality and DHET to make sure that the Giyani Campus of TUT is established. To date great progress has been registered, which includes refurbishment of infrastructure, with several key teaching and learning facilities completed – for both staff and students.

Based on a special dispensation granted by the DHET, 230 students who still need to register were admitted to the campus across five diplomas and honours in education.

2.2 Transport is where inclusive growth meets daily life

Honourable Speaker,

Reliable transport is central towards inclusive growth, it connects people to work, learners to schools, patients to clinics and producers to markets.

We welcome and **commend President Ramaphosa for his unwavering commitment to the Limpopo-Gauteng high-speed rail project**. Although some may dismiss it as merely an elite venture, let us remind everyone that there is no economy that can grow and develop unless there is investment in infrastructure, particularly mobility and commuting. Its ripple effect is felt by the very same poor and working class, starting with its construction phase where many jobs will be created.

Upon completion, as part of decongesting N1, goods will be moved from road to rail. This action also has the potential to revitalise our small towns like Bela-Bela, Modimolle, Mookgophong, Mokopane, Makhado and Musina and restore economic activity.

When a bus or a minibus taxi is involved on a head-on collision with a truck, majority of people who perish on these roads are the same poor and working class who rely only on road transport. We want to see them protected.

In anyway, Marxist-Leninist political economy teaches us that when you invest in the infrastructure, the primary beneficiaries of the ripple effects of that development or investment are the working class, the poor of the poorest.

Decentralising development to villages and rural areas is what make us to continue to chart a course towards a better Limpopo, where hope flourishes and every citizen plays a role in our collective progress.

Honourable Member, the Great North Transport (GNT) continues to turn around. We have put a three-pillar strategy in place to realise the complete turnaround and permanent financial sustainability for this entity. To date, the leasing pillar of the strategy has worked

well, and we are now moving to the bus procurement and fixing pillars. We thank the leasing partners.

In the next financial year, GNT will receive all 71 buses purchased by 30 September 2026. The buses will start coming in batches in May 2026. GNT will, at the same time, from May 2026, start fixing at least 90 buses from our standing fleet. This turnaround will ensure that, through GNT, the Limpopo Government provides safe, affordable, and reliable transport for Limpopo Citizens.

Furthermore, GNT will integrate apprenticeship training for Diesel Mechanics in partnership with the province's TVET Colleges. To this end, GNT has already received the first intake of 10 students from Sekhukhune TVET College. The students started on the 2nd March 2026 at Makhado and Seshego Depots. The GNT project is tied to clear timelines, against which we shall monitor and ensure that all milestones are met as per plan.

There is a painful matter regarding the former GNT employees' pensions. The provincial government takes the matter in a very serious light. To that effect, we can report that the matter is under the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) mediation through their provincial office. The provincial government trusts that the mediation process will uncover whether the errors were caused by Great North Transport or the Pension Fund Administrators. The provincial government will then facilitate the payments from the institution which committed errors or omissions. The government instructed LEDA to procure the services of the Actuaries to help determine exactly what happened, by whom, to whom and by how much. All these processes are taking place under the watchful eye of the Provincial SAHRC.

Through the bus subsidy programme, **the province continues to provide affordable, safe and dependable public transport for commuters**, offering direct financial relief to working class families who would otherwise face unaffordable travel costs.

From 01 April 2025, **more than R900 million was invested to sustain nine negotiated bus contracts**. In the previous financial year, over 22 million passengers benefited and by 30 September 2025 a further 12,454 million passengers had already used subsidised services, demonstrating both the scale of demand and the programme's impact. In 2026/27 financial year, services will expand to areas previously without subsidised routes, supported by stronger collaboration with commuter forums, traditional leadership and transport operators to build an integrated, community-owned system.

At last, we are pleased to report progress in unlocking stalled projects, **notably the long-delayed Thohoyandou Intermodal Facility**. Implementation has resumed under the Independent Development Trust (IDT), with the contractor on site to complete remaining works. The taxi rank is positioned as both a transport and economic asset, expected to improve commuter experience, public safety and trading opportunities that support township economies.

Honourable members, we should begin to appreciate the totality of work we are doing to improve safety on our roads, especially during national holidays and other days like Easter and the Festive seasons. We have had a remarkable Easter campaign that yielded a positive result. During the 2025 Easter holidays, we experienced no fatalities on the N1. Equally, during December-January **festive season statistics show a 14% reduction in the number of accidents on our roads and a 10% decline in road fatalities**.

However, we still want to emphasise that those who would not observe traffic rules, we shall gladly respond to their invitation to straighten their behaviour.

Consequently, road safety will be strengthened through planned 24/7 traffic enforcement, recruitment of 154 additional officers, and improved tools and safety systems to reduce preventable fatalities. I, therefore, direct MEC for Transport and Community Safety, Ms Violet Mathye, to initiate consultations with the labour forum on introducing shift work amongst our traffic officers.

Matters of Safety and Justice

Honourable Members, the Limpopo Division of the High Court, with its main seat in Polokwane and a Local Division in Thohoyandou, continues to enhance access to justice in our Province. Under the leadership of Judge President M.G. Phatudi and Deputy Judge President M.V. Semenya, supported by nine Judges, the Division enrolled 274 serious criminal trials during the 2024/25 financial year. These matters, including murder, rape, robbery with aggravating circumstances, fraud and corruption, reflect the significant burden carried by our courts in addressing violent and complex crimes.

The Division successfully finalised 125 criminal cases during the reporting period, with 186 matters enrolled in Polokwane and 88 in Thohoyandou. Both seats recorded progress in concluding serious offences, securing sentences in the majority of finalised trials.

2.3 When health matters

When we speak about reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living, we must also speak about health. Because illness is expensive. It takes away income through lost workdays, it forces families to borrow for transport and food while caring for a loved one and it deepens inequality when rural households must travel long distances for services. A healthy Limpopo is a productive Limpopo and that is why health is not only a social service, but a driver of inclusive growth and economic development.

Our commitment towards strengthening tertiary services is meant to improve access to quality health care in our province. We are registering a reduction of costly referrals to Gauteng academic and central hospitals. Construction of our Academic Central Hospital is progressing well, currently at 52 %. Our teams of specialist clinicians cannot wait for its completion.

We recently delivered cojoined twins in Mankweng Hospital. Our team of capable clinicians are providing the with tertiary services care, the care that few years ago would

not have been provided in our province. We call upon the people of our beautiful province Limpopo to pray for our twins and our clinicians as they continue to provide care which will include complex operation to separate them.

Honourable Speaker, therefore, the need for the attendant Limpopo Medical School has now become more critical. We call upon the University of Limpopo and DHET to speed up the construction of the medical school campus. Polokwane Municipality has already done their part by donating the required land next to the central academic hospital.

As committed last year in this house we are pleased to announce progress in various areas. Advanced technology investments include a LINAC and brachytherapy machine for oncology, ten ceiling-suspended X-ray units across different district hospitals all maintained at 100% functionality.

A R42 million Positron Emission Tomography (PET) CT Scan unit at Pietersburg Hospital has been installed, with licensing in progress and staffing underway.

The Department of Health has completed all the outstanding infrastructure projects. Therefore, moratorium on building new clinics must be uplifted with immediate effect. We welcome the partnership with Venetia mine and together with the Department of Health, construction work for a clinic in Ga-Kibi(Blouberg Municipality) must begin this financial year.

Our population is growing, the burden of diseases is increasing, the number of facilities is failing to cope. The MEC for Health, Ms Dieketseng Mashego, is directed to develop a plan on how new clinics will be built in this province.

Limpopo has improved HIV outcomes, with retention on Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) rising from 93,5% to 99% and 96% in September 2025, above the 95% target.

Children's retention also improved, while paediatric viral load suppression increased to 87,3% and 93,8%, exceeding the national average – reflecting stronger clinical governance and teamwork.

Prevention efforts are yielding results: HIV positivity among 14 to 15-year-olds has declined and remains below target, supported by partnerships with higher education institutions and community-based interventions, including PrEP for consenting high-risk HIV-negative mothers. TB screening and treatment initiation have been intensified with minimal loss to follow-up.

Honourable Speaker, the health of our children remains our responsibility. It is for this reason that, as committed before, another Breastmilk Bank was launched at Mokopane Hospital, in addition to Mankweng, Letaba and Philadelphia hospitals. For the 2026/27 financial year there is one planned for Tshilidzini hospital. We call upon all mothers to donate breastmilk because no child should be denied access to breastmilk because of any circumstances, especially after the President has spoken against stunting.

We are monitoring progress for the construction of the Siloam District Hospital, which is 76% complete, earmarked for June 2026 completion.

2.4 Confronting the rising cost of living

Human Settlements: dignity, security and inclusive growth

During the 2025/26 financial year, our department responsible for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs (COGHSTA) delivered 3 469 houses and completed 918 serviced sites against annual targets of 2 923 houses and 1 962 serviced sites. These outcomes reflect both progress and areas requiring acceleration, particularly in bulk services and connections.

Through our work in human settlements and community-based programmes, we also contributed to inclusive growth and job creation, 27,448 work opportunities were reported through the Community Works Programme and 1,413 jobs were created through housing construction and site servicing. This is how government spending must work, providing services while expanding livelihoods.

Protecting dignity: older persons and persons with disabilities.

Honourable Speaker, all of us will age one day. Therefore, as a province we continue to prioritise their well-being. To that effect 537 older persons accessed residential care facilities, 14,708 accessed community-based care and support centres whilst 1,000 older persons participated Active Ageing programmes (Golden Games) from July to September 2025.

For persons with disabilities, by December 2025, 284 accessed residential facilities and 3,943 accessed protective workshops.

In 2026/27, the province will expand capacity-building for officials and stakeholders, strengthen advocacy and establish additional protective workshops to reduce exclusion and improve access to opportunities.

Reducing poverty and cushioning households from shocks.

Honourable Speaker, through our Social Relief Programme we responded to disasters, bereavement, displacement and unemployment shocks by assisting 7,903 people with services. While framed as temporary support, it is positioned as a critical lifeline to prevent deeper poverty.

Family preservation services were strengthened through 23 funded child protection organisations, reaching 55,496 family members. The province reports 153,147 family members reunified and 26,184 participants in parenting programmes.

For the 2026/27 financial year, we will intensify referral systems for child abuse reporting and implement the 365 Days Plan on prevention and management of child abuse. We will also continue registering Partial Care facilities, Drop-In Centres and Child and Youth Care Centres, and assist non-compliant facilities to meet Minimum Norms and Standards, presenting compliance as essential to child safety.

Safer communities: victim support, GBV, substance abuse and crime prevention.

Honourable members, we welcome the declaration of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) as a national disaster. This is an indication that we are a government that cares and are worried about the rate at which these cases are occurring.

We launched a 100 Days GBV&F Campaign, strengthening victim responses including support for protection orders.

Teenage pregnancy remains our biggest challenge. It steals the future of our children. It shatters their dreams and takes away their dignity. We, therefore, direct the MEC for Social Development, Ms Fulufhelo Radzilani, to work with her counterparts in finding solutions to this pressing matter.

Inclusive growth through youth and women empowerment.

Honourable Speaker, our developmental agenda will remain incomplete unless it includes the most vulnerable sectors in society; this includes women, youth and people with disabilities. Research has shown that the needs of these sectors remain overlooked. Therefore, they need a deliberate programme coordinated by government.

In addressing the challenges faced by these vulnerable groups, we will embark on the process of rebuilding, ensuring that it is inclusive to allow ordinary people of Limpopo to assist, to take charge of their lives. This requires labour intensive methods of execution.

We shall set aside R60 million for sustainable livelihoods projects, which will go a long way in mitigating for current or recurring incidents of this nature. The Office of the Premier is directed to implement an integrated programme in the 2026/27.

3. BUILDING A CAPABLE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members of this House,

As we alluded earlier on, this is the year of fixing local government. In simple language, it means this is a year to focus on the improvement of provision of basic services – water, sanitation, electricity, roads infrastructure and refuse removal. It as well means, professionalising local government, reducing municipal debt. It simply means accountability.

3.1 Local Government: restoring performance, financial discipline and service provision

Honourable Speaker,

We have provided support to all 27 municipalities in Limpopo, with visible progress in compliance and governance as evidenced in the overall improved audit outcome. While we once more recorded only two clean audits Capricorn District and Waterberg District, we are encouraged by the 18 municipalities that achieved unqualified opinions, improving from 14 in the previous year.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the four (4) municipalities that improved from qualified to unqualified audit opinion: Blouberg, Bela-Bela, Collins Chabane and Elias Motsoaledi.

At the same time bravo to those who sustained unqualified audit outcomes. We urge them not to stagnate but improve to clean audit opinion in the next financial year's audits.

However, the seven municipalities remaining with qualified outcomes are a cause for concern. While we acknowledge the improvement – from ten qualified municipalities last year – we must be firm: qualified audits must not be normalised. They affect credibility, investor confidence and ultimately service provision. We expect consequence management where it is required and we will provide targeted support to address root causes, especially supply chain weaknesses, asset management, revenue management and project implementation.

We are also confronting municipal debt and illegal electricity usage through a coordinated strategy. Municipalities with long-standing debts have entered payment arrangements with Eskom and Water Boards, committing to pay current accounts in full while servicing historic debt. This is essential to stabilise services and prevent disruptive interventions.

3.2 Water and sanitation: a constitutional right, an economic enabler

Honourable Speaker, water is not only a service – it is a constitutional right and a foundation for dignity. It is also an economic enabler: without reliable water, agriculture, tourism, mining operations, construction and small businesses cannot thrive.

We have been honest with our people: despite significant investment over many years, the lived reality in some communities has not matched that investment. That is why we have **developed the Differentiated Approach to Water and Sanitation Provisioning Strategy, aligned to the Water Master Plan and the Limpopo Development Plan**, to identify where communities are unserved and underserved, why they remain so and what must change.

A practical breakthrough has been the establishment of Water War Rooms. In Vhembe, weekly coordination, illegal connection removal, borehole activation and improved maintenance contributed to nine projects concluded and a reduction of three underserved settlements in three months.

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members,

Polokwane is not just another municipality in Limpopo. It is the Capital City of our province, the seat of government, the heartbeat of our administration and a primary economic hub that carries the confidence of investors, the movement of goods and services, and the daily functioning of thousands of households. Many of the people gathered in this House spend most of their time in Polokwane for work and service delivery responsibilities. When Polokwane thrives, Limpopo thrives; and when Polokwane struggles, all of us feel the consequences – socially, economically and institutionally. That is why we raise this matter not to promote Polokwane at the expense of other areas, but because we understand its central role in the broader development of our province.

Honourable Members, the water challenges in Polokwane have gone on for far too long. And we must say it clearly: the blame game is not giving our people water. Water provision must never be reduced to politics, point-scoring or public quarrels while communities queue for buckets.

The responsibilities are known. Lepelle Northern Water is a bulk water services provider – it must provide the bulk services it is mandated to deliver. The Polokwane Municipality, on the other hand, has a responsibility to pay for services rendered and to manage its obligations with discipline. Let me be equally clear: Polokwane does not owe Lepelle Northern Water. But the reality remains that each institution must do its part, on time, and without excuses – because the people of Limpopo do not drink explanations.

It is for this reason that the Office of the Premier has found it necessary to intervene directly. We cannot continue to “beg each other” while taps run dry. Where there are failures of performance, poor coordination, or conduct that undermines delivery, we will act decisively – because the one who is giving the problem must be removed and the one who must deliver must be enabled to deliver. Our residents deserve solutions, not rivalries.

Honourable Speaker, this matter does not apply to Polokwane alone. Water insecurity is a threat to inclusive growth across Limpopo, affecting households, clinics, schools, small businesses and investment. But if Polokwane is to realise our shared ambition of becoming a metropolitan municipality – if it is to meet the standards of a true metro – then it cannot do so without reliable water supply. A metro cannot be built on dry taps.

As part of resolving this crisis, we will meet the Honourable Minister of Water and Sanitation tomorrow, 06 March 2026, to finalise a decisive way forward, clarify accountability across the value chain – from bulk supply to reticulation – and ensure that implementation timelines are non-negotiable. We will not rest until water provision is stabilised, coordination is restored, and our people can once again live and work with dignity.

Based on these lessons, we will ensure the establishment of a Provincial Water War Room across all water services authorities, coordinated by the Office of the Premier and supported by CoGHSTA, to oversee and align the work of Water Services Authorities across the province. We will expand the war room model across all districts and WSAs, because war rooms must be placed where problems are fixed, not discussed endlessly.

The #HiNwaMatiFridays campaign may have had a sluggish start, but its continuity is something we value and continue to promote. Our people shall drink clean water! This is a commitment to action! Mopani District Municipality has shown us how this is done and we are going to make sure that other municipalities follow suit.

Honourable Members, communities also have responsibilities: to protect infrastructure, stop illegal connections and reject vandalism. We will enforce the law, but we also appeal for civic responsibility, because vandalism steals from the poorest first.

3.3 Traditional leadership: stability, capacity and dispute resolution

Honourable Speaker, traditional leaders remain central to development, social cohesion and land governance across Limpopo. We have reconstituted 141 of 203 traditional councils in line with legislation, the remaining 62 will continue to be supported for reconstitution, as we continue to address different challenges they face ranging from disputes, conflict with jurisdiction, vacancies to court judgements.

In addition, we held an induction and training programme in partnership with the National School of Governance to strengthen ethical governance and functionality of traditional councils.

We processed 104 recognitions of traditional leaders and advanced an important preventative intervention: documenting customary laws of succession and genealogies to reduce disputes. This work, endorsed by the Provincial House and local houses, has already supported many royal families, strengthening certainty and stability in communities.

On tools of trade, we continue constructing and refurbishing traditional council offices, over 25 constructed and 18 refurbished since 2014, while providing furniture and introducing solar energy solutions to reduce operating costs and ensure continuity of service.

We also reaffirm our commitment to safe initiation practices. Hence, Honourable Members, the total number of initiates admitted at various legal initiation schools for 2025 season was 40,217. Out of these, unfortunately we lost two young lives throughout the season. This is commendable work that coordination that has been established through the Provincial Initiation Coordinating Committee (PICC). The PICC continues its work and where illegal initiation schools persist, monitoring teams, supported by SAPS in investigating, the matter will be submitted and presented to NPA for possible prosecutions.

We made a commitment to establish an advisory panel to address disputes. As the term of the current investigative panel ends in 2026, the MEC for CoGHSTA, Mr Basikopo Makamu, is directed to appoint a new panel. We will also expand mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism to restore relationships within royal families and reduce prolonged conflict.

Honourable Members, the Premier does not appoint traditional leaders, it is their royal houses that appoint them. We are currently developing standard operating procedures wherein anyone who will be acting should be submitting an undertaking to ensure that when the incumbent of the position is ready, they will not cause challenges.

The provincial government is aware of the Ingwane case, which is a constitutional matter which has declared Section 25 of our Limpopo Traditional Leadership Institution Act 6 of 2005 as unconstitutional and invalid. This judgement has posed a serious impact and implication on levies of the traditional leaders.

I have directed the MEC for Treasury and CoGHSTA to come up with a sustainable manner to resource traditional councils. I have also directed the MEC for CoGHSTA to disburse funds to certain qualifying traditional authorities, after amalgamation of the three former homelands. The process is far much advanced.

Honourable Members, the current local government term ends in November 2026. We must ensure a stable transition into the 6th administration. A multi-stakeholder task team, CoGHSTA, the Office of the Premier, Provincial Treasury, SALGA and District Municipalities, has been established to produce credible handover reports.

This is how we build a capable, ethical and developmental state: we plan, we measure, we correct, and we account, so that government works better for the people of Limpopo and so that inclusive growth becomes real in every village, township and town.

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members,

On governance and accountability, Limpopo Provincial Government achieved **five clean audit outcomes** in 2024/25, namely in Sport, Arts and Culture; Provincial Treasury; Transport and Community Safety; Economic Development, Environment and Tourism; and the Office of the Premier. Importantly, with Treasury support, the departments of **Education, Social Development and Public Works & Infrastructure** improved from **qualified to unqualified** audit opinions. This is progress in rebuilding public trust and tightening controls where weaknesses existed.

However, we will not be complacent: sustaining and expanding these gains requires continuous monitoring, stronger consequence management and improved internal controls across all institutions.

We also note the mixed performance of public entities. While the Limpopo Tourism Agency sustained a clean audit and Gateway Airports Authority maintained unqualified outcomes, regressions at Roads Agency Limpopo and the Limpopo Gambling Board remind us that governance must be consistent across the entire state system. Treasury will intensify technical oversight, strengthen financial reporting, and ensure that remedial actions are implemented without delay.

In February 2026, Treasury, working with CoGHSTA and SALGA, conducted the **section 72 MFMA mid-year budget and performance assessments** across delegated municipalities. This is to guide municipalities toward funded budgets, credible planning and stronger service delivery as we approach local government elections.

Honourable Members, rain reminds us that renewal is possible, even after seasons of hardship and floods, it reminds us that if we do not build strong channels, what should nourish us can also destroy us.

Our task, as the government, is to make sure that the gains of growth do not wash past our people, but are carefully directed into every village, township and town through real

infrastructure, safer communities, functioning services and an economy that opens doors for women, youth, persons with disabilities and those too long excluded.

Let us leave this House committed to turning forecasts into delivery, plans into projects and the promise of inclusive growth into lived reality – so that when the rain comes, it becomes a blessing for all, and when the waters rise, Limpopo stands ready, resilient, and hopeful.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all Members of the Executive Council, who have carried their responsibilities with diligence and urgency and to our Director General, all HODs, CEOs of State Owned Entities for providing steady leadership to the administration and guiding our collective efforts in the right direction.

Let me also thank the people of Limpopo for their tenacity, patience and support as we continue to serve them. We appreciate your feedback that you continuously make through our social media pages.

My family, including my mother and my lovely daughters, who have been my greatest support; I would also like to thank them.

Aa!

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