

SPEECH BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING THE POST-BUDGET GALA DINNER, FUSION BOUTIQUE HOTEL, POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY, CAPRICORN DISTRICT

13 March 2026

Programme Director,

Speaker of the Legislature, Dr Makoma Makurupetje,

Deputy Speaker, Ms Tebogo Mamorobela,

MEC for Treasury, Mr Kgabo Mahoi,

Members of the Executive Council present,

Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality, Cllr Mamedupi Teffo,

Executive Mayor of Polokwane Municipality, Cllr John Makoro Mpe,

Executive Mayor of Mopani District Municipality, Cllr Pule Shayi,

Traditional Leadership,

Faith-Based Leaders,

Members of the Business Community,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Ndi Madekwana, Thobela, Riperhile, Good Evening, Goeie Naand.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to all of you for joining us this evening. I know that when people receive an invitation to a Friday night event, they often face a simple but important question: Do I go home and rest after a long week, or do I attend yet another engagement?

Yet tonight you chose to be here. That decision says something powerful about you. It tells us that Limpopo is blessed with a business community that cares deeply about the direction of our province and is prepared to engage meaningfully on issues that shape our economic future.

For that commitment, allow me to say: we do not take your presence for granted.

Ladies and gentlemen, they say that budgets are not merely about numbers, but about choices and priorities. Behind every figure lies a vision of the future we wish to build.

Economist John Maynard Keynes once observed that “the difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping from old ones.”

Ladies and gentlemen, earlier this week the MEC for Treasury, Mr Kgabo Mahoai tabled the R95.8 billion Limpopo Provincial Budget before the Legislature. But in truth, that budget was not addressed to government itself. It was addressed to the people of our province and to partners like you who drive investment, innovation and employment.

As a province, we continuously challenge ourselves to think differently about development, growth and partnership. We believe that the budget tabled is not a government document alone; it is a social contract between government, business and the people of Limpopo

The real meaning of any budget is therefore tested not inside legislative chambers, but in conversations like the one we are having tonight.

This evening gives us an opportunity to reflect together on several fundamental questions:

How should the resources of our province be used to unlock growth?

How do we stimulate economic expansion while protecting essential social services?

And most importantly, how do we ensure that public spending translates into jobs, opportunity and dignity for our people?

These are not theoretical questions. They are practical questions that determine whether budgets change lives.

Programme Director, one of the key pillars of this year's budget, is infrastructure development as a driver of economic growth. Infrastructure remains one of the most powerful catalysts for economic transformation. Roads connect markets. Energy powers industries. Water sustains agriculture and manufacturing. Digital connectivity opens doors to innovation.

This is why we are increasingly exploring mechanisms that allow government and the private sector to work together through strategic partnerships, particularly through Public-Private Partnerships.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must also confront an economic reality that economists often refer to as jobless growth. At times, economies may

expand while employment levels remain stagnant. Growth that does not create jobs cannot sustain social stability or long-term prosperity.

Projects such as the Musina–Makhado Special Economic Zone are therefore critical. For many years, this initiative was spoken about with great anticipation. I am pleased to say that the project is now moving forward and construction activity has begun.

During the construction phase, jobs are created through infrastructure development. But the long-term success of the zone will depend on its ability to attract industries that create sustained employment and value chains across the province.

Whenever government funds infrastructure projects, we must ask clear and measurable questions:

How many jobs will be created during construction?

How many permanent jobs will exist once the project is operational?

How will local businesses and SMMEs participate?

How will communities benefit?

Distinguished guests, another matter that deserves honest discussion is accountability.

We can spend an entire evening discussing plans and strategies. But plans have little meaning if they are not executed properly. The credibility of any government ultimately rests on whether allocated resources translate into real improvements in the lives of citizens.

Allow me to conclude by reflecting on a simple but profound question that many residents across our province often ask: What does the provincial budget mean for the ordinary person living in a rural village?

Our communities want to know what has been allocated and what services they should expect. If funds are allocated for roads, residents must ask where those roads are being built. If resources are allocated for clinics or schools, communities expect to see those improvements materialize.

Ladies and gentlemen, Limpopo stands at an important moment in its development journey. The ambitions contained in this budget will only succeed if they are supported by the energy, innovation and partnership of all stakeholders in this room.

Government has laid the foundation. Business must help build the structure. Communities must occupy and sustain it.

Together, we can transform the promise of this budget into tangible progress for our province.

I thank you for your continued partnership and wish you a productive and enjoyable evening.

I thank you.