



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA AT THE
SALGA LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL MEMBERS ASSEMBLY,
BURGERSFORT, FETAKGOMO-TUBATSE MUNICIPALITY**

12 August 2026

Programme Director;

President of SALGA, Cllr Bheke Stofile;

MEC for CoGHSTA, Mr Basikopo Makamu;

SALGA Provincial Chairperson, Cllr John Mpe and the Provincial Executive Committee;

Executive Mayors, Mayors, Speakers and Chief Whips;

Municipal Managers and Senior Officials;

Distinguished guests;

Good morning, Avuxeni, Goie More, Ndi Matsheloni, Thobela!

I am delighted to join you here in Burgersfort as we close the curtains on the political term of the 5th SALGA Executive in our province. We gather not just to conclude a meeting, but to close a chapter of service.

The theme you have chosen, “**Developing Resilient Municipalities**”, is not merely a slogan; it is the fundamental diagnostic requirement of the 7th Administration.

When we talk about the "Capable, Ethical Developmental State," we are essentially talking about resilience. A resilient municipality is one that does not buckle when the rain falls, does not collapse when the budget tightens and does not abandon its people when the challenges mount.

We must be honest with ourselves today. Local government in our country is a relatively young project. In our early years, we successfully fought to bring water, electricity and roads to areas that had been neglected by the apartheid state. We gave our people hope. It became natural for a community to expect that their village, too, would be connected to the grid at some point.

But as we moved into our third decade, we began to see signs of fatigue. We built, but we forgot to maintain. We focused on new capital projects while our existing infrastructure - our water reticulation, our road networks and our substations - began to decay. We allowed the "maintenance gap" to become a service delivery crisis.

The Chairperson's report is encouraging. We have seen financial management improve. To have 18 municipalities with unqualified audit opinions is a testament to the work SALGA has done in professionalising the sector. To have Capricorn and Waterberg District Municipalities achieving clean audits is a benchmark we must all strive for.

However, I am not here to celebrate the absence of a "disclaimer." An audit opinion is not service delivery. A clean book does not fill a dry tap. We are moving beyond the stage of celebrating compliance; we are now in the era of demanding impact.

As we look toward the 4th of November 2026, the elections will be a reset button. My message to those who seek the mandate of the people is this: The era of the "political councillor" is ending. We need the "developmental leader" as that has always been an aspiration of the mass democratic movement.

After November 4th, we do not need people who view council seats as employment opportunities. We need people who view them as CEO positions. We need mayors and councillors who understand project management, who understand asset maintenance and who understand that they are stewards of public trust.

Resilience requires that the next crop of leaders must possess three traits:

1. *Technical Competence*: You cannot manage what you do not understand. Our councillors must be able to read financial statements, understand infrastructure plans and interrogate the reports of the municipal manager.
2. *Emotional Resilience*: The pressure will be immense. You will face protests, budget cuts and climate disasters. A leader who panics is a liability.
3. *Accountability*: We have pushed for Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPAC) chairpersons to be full-time. Use that capacity. Do not

let these be ceremonial roles. If the administration fails, the oversight bodies must be the ones to correct it - not the Provincial Government.

SALGA has done well in its advocacy and capacity building. But as we transition to this new term, I have specific expectations:

Move from Training to Coaching: It is not enough to train a councillor on what to do. We need to coach them on **how** to do it. SALGA must partner with the province to ensure that induction is not a one-week event, but a continuous mentorship journey.

The "Maintenance" Mandate: SALGA must lead the advocacy for a shift in grant funding. We cannot keep asking for money for "new projects" while our old roads are potholes and our pipes are leaking. We must lobby for a "Maintenance-First" budgeting approach as it has already been demonstrated in the Municipal Infrastructure Grant funding.

Zero Tolerance for Stagnation: The Chairperson reported that some municipalities have remained stagnant in their audit outcomes for over a decade. This is unacceptable. SALGA must assist us in diagnosing **why**. If a municipality is failing, we must intervene surgically - not wait for a total collapse.

Professionalisation of Administration: We need a firewall between political interference and technical administration. SALGA must continue to be the vanguard of professionalisation. We need Municipal Managers who are hired for their expertise, not their political connectivity.

We are building a Limpopo where inclusive growth, water security and energy reliability are the norms, not the exceptions.

To the outgoing Executive: You have held the line. You have improved financial reporting. You have fostered labour stability. You leave behind a stronger platform than the one you inherited.

To the incoming leadership: The people of Limpopo are watching. They do not care about the size of the SALGA levy or the complexity of the municipal organogram. They care about whether the streetlights work and whether the water comes out of the tap.

Let us be the generation of local government that stopped the regression and started the consolidation. Let us build resilient municipalities that can weather any storm.

I thank you.