LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ADDRESS BY THE PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA AT THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL BUDGET LEKGOTLA

11 NOVEMBER 2026
THE RANCH RESORT, POLOKWANE

Members of the Executive Council,
Director-General,
Premier's Special Advisors,
Heads of Department,
Chairpersons of Boards of State Owned Entities
Chief Executive Officers and Chief Financial Officers present,
Regional Heads of Department of Water and Sanitation as well as State Security Agency,
SALGA's Provincial Director of Operations,
Chairperson of the Limpopo House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning, Thobela, Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni!

We gather at this Executive Council Budget Lekgotla at a most critical juncture in the life of the 7th Administration. When we took the oath of office

in June 2024, we did so with a solemn promise to the people of Limpopo: that this administration would bring sweeping, fundamental and lasting changes to their material conditions. Today, we cross the threshold into the exact halfway mark of our five-year term.

This Lekgotla also convenes directly on the back of the 2026 Local Government Elections. While those elections yielded commendable democratic victories, they also delivered an unvarnished, piercing message from our residents.

The people have spoken loudly and clearly at the polls. They are demanding immediate, visible and tangible improvements in basic service provision - specifically addressing the burning crises of water scarcity, broken and flood-damaged roads, rising unemployment and deep-seated poverty.

The people's wishes must be respected. This Lekgotla must serve as a definitive turning point. We must rigorously measure what this administration has endeavoured to achieve against the raw, lived expectations of our residents.

As we look ahead to the remaining two and a half years of our term, our focus must shift resolutely toward tangible, high-impact delivery and the dismantling of unexplainable administrative bottlenecks.

For instance, how do we explain to our people that major provincial dams, such as Nandoni and De Hoop, remain brimming with water for years, yet

communities living right on their doorsteps have no access to clean, potable water?

Colleagues, let us be brutally honest with ourselves: too often, our administration appears trapped in endless, circular explanations that yield zero results. We do not seem to know how to turn the tide because we are locked in a culture of bureaucratic paralysis.

Recently, as HODs, CEOs and CFOs, you held the 2026 Provincial Technical Mid-Year Performance Review Retreat. The defining question coming out of that retreat - and the one this Lekgotla must answer - is simply this: Are you prepared to use the resolutions of that session to answer the agonising questions our communities asked during the elections?

Why do our people still lack consistent water? Why have flood-damaged roads languished unrepaired? Why is unemployment still rising unabated? Even though the Q3 Labour Force Survey shows that unemployment in Limpopo has thankfully decreased by 1.8% to 30.2%, this remains unacceptably high - even if it sits below the national average of 33.7%. What bold, disruptive economic interventions are we executing to turn this situation around?

This Lekgotla is expected to answer these questions and adopt actionable resolutions. Are we truly confident that our current trajectory is bringing change? We want to see more projects opened, more water taps flowing, and incomplete infrastructure concluded on time.

Our expenditure patterns remain deeply worrisome; significant amounts of money are continually recycled through our systems without translating into pointed, life-changing services for our people.

As the Director-General correctly noted in his closing remarks at the Technical Retreat, our policy documents, strategic priorities, sector strategies, and budget allocations are well-aligned. Policymakers - the Premier and MECs - have performed their responsibilities.

Yet, critical half-yearly performance targets have not been achieved despite the full availability of financial and human resources. Cluster reports attribute this under-performance to delayed procurement processes, poor project management and a lack of funding. Let me state clearly: these factors fall entirely within the mandate of Accounting Officers, CEOs and Chief Financial Officers.

Oversight committees have rightfully concluded that our administration is failing to perform due to a glaring lack of consequence management, ethical leadership, accountability and work ethic. These governance failures have created a dangerous trust deficit between the state and society, worsening poverty and economic stagnation.

We know what must be done. We held a Special Infrastructure Integrated Planning Workshop as far back as July 2025, adopting clear directives to align delivery cycles with budgets and multi-year planning. The challenge is not that we lack plans; the challenge is that we do not execute.

We must operate as a coherent detachment. For the remainder of this financial year and the term ahead, we are adopting the strategic focus areas agreed upon at the technical retreat:

1. Rigorous implementation of Socio-Economic Cluster Catalytic Initiatives, including Special Economic Zones (SEZs). There is steady progress in the North side of Musina SEZ but we need finalisation of township establishment in the South. This requires urgent attention so that those investors waiting are not discouraged. Equally, the approval of Fetakgomo Tubatse SEZ should prompt us into action, capitalising on existing infrastructure and support from the partners. Let us run with it to hep fight unemployment in our province.
2. Strict adherence to the 3D Sustainability Plan and consistent reporting to the Provincial Legislature as directed by SCOPA.
3. Intensified rollout of the Limpopo Professionalisation Action Plan and Digital Transformation Roadmap to build an ethical, capable developmental state.
4. Full implementation of the Provincial Audit Improvement Action Plan for 2026/27.
5. Ensuring strategic functionality of all provincial entities as true vehicles for economic development.
6. Seamless strategic support from OTP, COGHSTA and Provincial Treasury on the Local Government Transition. In the next few days many councils will be established after the elections, they would require a constant reminder of matters on the critical path like water. Those water war rooms established must be meaningful for engendering a differentiated approach to water provision. In addition, the three departments should assist municipalities in streamlining their

Integrated Development Plans to speak the District Development Model that we have used as a tool for development.

7. Endorsement and immediate implementation of the 2026/27 Budget Adjustment Framework, alongside revised HR recruitment plans aligned with early retirement frameworks.

As we chart our decisive course for service delivery and uncompromising implementation over the next two and a half years, there are several flagship catalytic projects and pressing programmatic imperatives that must command our absolute focus.

Let us speak about our legacy and cultural infrastructure. We have made a solemn commitment to the people of Limpopo regarding the construction of the Provincial Theatre. That structure must be completed, and its June 2027 deadline must be kept at all costs - no excuses, no delays.

As the Executive Council, we have already approved its operational implementation plan so that the theatre is fully up, running and alive with artistic excellence the very moment the physical keys are handed over. Culture is the soul of our nation; we cannot falter here.

Colleagues, we must address the persistent threat of climate change and extreme weather. We must take a hard, unyielding stance on disaster management spending. We cannot continue reacting to crises after the fact; we must be proactive, firm and strategic to prevent recurring disasters, especially as we face the looming threats associated with El Niño. Every rand allocated to disaster risk reduction must be spent effectively before

disaster strikes, not after our communities are already underwater or suffering.

Infrastructure connectivity remains our economic lifeblood. We have recently handed over the contractor for the monumental ZCC Interchange project. Our collective task, as mandated by this administration, is to ensure that this project is executed with military precision and completed within the projected 18-month timeframe.

On the other end of the spectrum, we must confront our failures: the Thohoyandou Intermodal Facility remains a glaring blot on our path of development. Repeated interventions and endless meetings have yet to bring about a final handover and public usage. This administrative inertia must end today.

As our learners currently sit in examination halls across the province, our hearts and hopes are with them. We expect a tangible, measurable improvement in our Grade 12 examination results this year.

But leadership is about foresight: the Department of Education must start preparing right now for 2027, ensuring that Mathematics, Science, and Technology subjects continue to be fiercely prioritised as the bedrock of our future economy.

Economic transformation requires localised skills. The establishment and rollout of the Sekhukhune Mining Beneficiation Academy requires our urgent attention and full backing. This academy will bring much-needed relief in

closing the critical technical skills gap that exists in our mining sector, ensuring our youth are direct beneficiaries of the mineral wealth beneath their feet.

Finally, colleagues, as we approach the annual observance of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children, we must move beyond mere words. Gender-Based Violence and Femicide is a direct assault on our democracy. As a provincial government, we must act decisively, resource our social protection systems and ensure that our law enforcement and community structures leave perpetrators with nowhere to hide.

Let us take these directives forward into our budgets and our daily work.

Members of EXCO, our people will not appreciate our strategic agility unless they experience a material improvement in their daily lives. To borrow the stern wisdom of Sun Tzu: “Those who establish a viable organisation will survive even if they are small, while those who establish a moribund organisation will perish even if they are large.”

The time for talk, excuses and endless paperwork is over. The next two and a half years belong to rigorous implementation, implementation and implementation!

Let us deliver for the people of Limpopo.

I thank you!