

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY GAUTENG PREMIER DAVID MAKHURA, AT THE 4TH PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE OF SALGA GAUTENG; EMPEROR'S PALACE, EKURHULENI.

29 SEPTEMBER 2016

Programme Director, Councillor Pinky Mkhonza;

Members of the National Executive Committee of SALGA;

Provincial Chairperson of SALGA Gauteng, Councillor Parks Tau and Provincial Executive Committee members;

All Members of Mayoral Committees and all Councillors;

Rev Gift Moerane and representatives of Faith Based Organisations;

Senior Officials of SALGA;

Senior Officials in Government;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let me state from the onset that I support the proposal raised by SALGA regarding the need for provincial legislation to ensure that organized local government makes input on all pieces of legislation affecting municipalities. If this conference so decides, we will work with the incoming provincial leadership of SALGA to lobby all parties represented in the Gauteng Provincial Legislature to support the need for legislation.

This fourth Provincial Conference of SALGA comes almost two months after our country's fourth democratic local government elections on the 3rd of August.

All across our province and our country new councils and councillors have now been sworn in and municipalities are developing plans for the next five years of this new term of office.

The fact that we had a peaceful, free and fair local government election whose results reflect the will of the people is enough proof that our democracy is maturing, resilient and vibrant.

I wish to take this opportunity, once again, to congratulate all our newly elected councillors. I welcome especially all our Executive Mayors with whom we have constitutional imperative to work together in serving the citizens and residents of our province and cities.

Accordingly, I would like to start by posing the business of politics is. What is the purpose of politics? Why are we public representatives?

Given the fact that being a Councillor, especially a ward councillors, is one of the toughest jobs in our democracy, why are you still doing this job? What is the most rewarding thing about being a public representative when there is so much cynicism and negative attitude towards politicians.

Politics must never be about pomp and ceremony, driving state cars and living in state houses. Politics must never be about the clamor to appear in the media everyday.

I would like to argue that politics must be more profound, more transformative and more impactful in improving the lives of ordinary citizens throughout the length and breadth of our province and our country.

Politics must be about using public policy efficaciously and deploying public resources efficiently and effectively. It must be about the values of service and loyalty to the citizens. Without values, there is no honour.

Politics must be about helping the youth realise their dreams through access to better educational and entrepreneurship opportunities so that they can live independent and meaningful lives as productive and conscientious citizens.

Politics must be about helping women to break the shackles of patriarchy by empowering them to play their full role in the economy and society as equal citizens.

Politics must be about building an economy that creates more jobs and includes blacks, women and youth. Politics must be about building socially cohesive communities where all our citizens and local residents live together in peace and harmony as equals, with equal access to the means to support life. The Gauteng Annual Social Cohesion is a powerful vehicle to bring the diverse people of our province, our continent and the world together in the streets of Tshwane once every year on National Heritage Day.

Politics must also be about building an accountable, responsive and clean government. The Open Tender System and Ntirhisano outreach Programme are some of the examples through which we can work together to the benefit of all residents of our province.

Politics must be about making a difference in the lives of others because we are servants of the people. Anything less than that is not worth all the trouble and stress we go through day and night as elected public representatives.

Those who don't know, think it is nice to be in politics but anyone who has been in politics long enough knows it is a tough job. Many of us only derive satisfaction from seeing people who succeed because of the difference we make in the lives of others. Simply put, this is what keeps us going! Solving the problems of the citizens and empowering them to take charge of every aspect of their lives is what keeps us going!

Politics cannot be about political parties and politicians. It must be about the citizens and their collective aspirations and common destiny.

For me, the business of politics in our province, across the party political divide, must be about transforming, modernizing and re-industrializing the economy of Gauteng in pursuit of the twin objectives of employment and empowerment. As the industrial and economic hub of Sub-Saharan Africa, Gauteng municipalities must lead the country in practicing citizen-centered politics.

When we discuss issues in the municipalities, legislature or government, the question we must ask is what do the citizens want. When we debate and disagree as political parties, what should always guide us should be the interests of the residents and citizens. When we take decisions on the budget and policies of our local and provincial government, we should always ensure that the citizens come first.

The interests of our citizens and their well-being should always require that we collaborate and cooperate to meet the needs of the people of Gauteng regardless of the type of municipalities and the party that governs.

Over the past two years since I became Premier, we have worked very well with SALGA and municipalities to define a common Gauteng City Region-wide agenda and partnership in order to improve service delivery, infrastructure development and economic and spatial transformation.

The GCR has become our common project. Together we are stronger. You are the voice of local government. Our constitution has conferred local government powers and functions as a distinct but integral part of the three spheres of government. We need to do everything to strengthen the voice of organized local government and ensure that SALGA continues to represent this spheres well.

Cooperative governance is a constitutional imperative that binds us together like Siamese twins. We have no choice but to work together in the best interest of the people we serve, the citizens of our province and cities. Without the cooperation and collaboration of local government, provincial and national government will not succeed. Similarly, local government will not succeed without the cooperation and collaboration of the two other spheres of government.

MEC Paul Mashatile has already met the Mayors to discuss matters of mutual interest in the spirit of cooperative governance. I have also started my one-on-one meetings with metro and district mayors. I met Mayor Mashaba and Mayor Masina. My engagements with the two Mayors were cordial and productive.

I will complete meetings the other Mayors in October before convening the Premier's Coordinating Forum. The purpose of the interaction with mayors and their teams is to ensure that we align plans and priorities across the province.

We would like to work with all municipalities to deliver better human settlements closer to economic opportunities, build a more integrated, reliable, safe and efficient public transport system coordinated by a single transport authority, extend hours in all primary healthcare facilities across the province and transform the spatial economy and urban space to ensure greater integration and inclusion.

We have specific priorities in each of the five development corridors - northern, eastern, central, western and southern corridors - and we would like to ensure that municipalities align their plans to our Gauteng City Region-wide plans.

It is for this reason that together we must remain resolute in our determination to reindustrialise and re-build the manufacturing base of the economy of our city region. The TMR, places the City of Ekurhuleni, in our Eastern Development Corridor at the centre of our reindustrialisation efforts.

Let us also combine our efforts and resources towards building the economy of the City of Johannesburg in our Central Development Corridor as the hub for the ICT, pharmaceutical as well as financial and business services sectors. Some progress has been made in this regard.

We will work together to position our Northern Development Corridor, anchored around the economy of the City of Tshwane, as the home of the automotive industry, aviation, agro-processing and knowledge based industries.

Linked to this is the work we must continue to do together to diversify the economies of Sedibeng and the West Rand which have suffered significant decline as a result of the decline in the steel industry and mining respectively.

We are intervening to allocate districts greater responsibility and resources to plan, coordinate and deliver district-wide infrastructure and economic development. Going forward, the West Rand and Sedibeng will be in a position to contribute meaningfully to the economy of the Gauteng City Region. In these corridors we want to build new industries in these areas. Gone are the days when districts are left out while metros receive all the attention and resources – we want balanced and even development across the Gauteng City Region.

Programme Director, as part of advancing radical economic transformation, we have a responsibility to collaborate on the programme to revitalise the Township Economy. Too many talented entrepreneurs are trapped in the township economy without any support. The township economy is worth R 90 billion per annum and offers the greatest potential to drive our agenda of increasing, substantially, the number of black people, women, youth and people with disabilities that are part of the economic mainstream.

Great strides have already been made in mainstreaming the township economy. Our task is to work together to ensure that more and more township entrepreneurs access opportunities to grow their businesses.

Together we must also respond to the problem of youth unemployment, currently standing at an uncomfortable 40% in Gauteng. Our flagship intervention to resolve this problem is the Tshepo 500 000. Through this programme we will create job, skills development and entrepreneurial opportunities for 500 000 young people by 2019.

I wish to take this opportunity to urge members of SALGA to work with us as we roll out the Ntirhisano outreach programme. We want all Ward councillors to know that we will support them through Ntirhisano to respond to the concerns and complaints

of residents regardless of party political affiliation. We are doing this for the benefit of our citizens who demand an accessible, visible and responsive government.

Programme Director, I have no doubt that this Conference will begin a process to consolidate the gains our citizens have made thus far, while addressing the challenges that remain.

As the Provincial government we stand ready to work with local government towards this fundamental task. Our citizens have more to gain when we work together than when we work against each other.

Let us remember that politics is about citizens, not pomp and ceremony that "celebrity politicians" are so accustomed to. Let us not allow our titles and the associated protocols run to our heads. We are servants of the people. Without serving the people honestly and diligently, we are nothing.

I wish you a successful Conference.

Thank you.