

MEDIA RELEASE

Gauteng SOPA: PSA concerned about critical issues that were overlooked

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None

ENQUIRIES

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 245 000 public-sector employees, acknowledges the outcomes of the Gauteng State of the Province Address (SOPA) delivered on 24 February 2025.

Whilst the PSA welcomes commitments made by Premier Panyaza Lesufi, the PSA remains concerned about the lack of clear implementation plans to address critical challenges affecting public servants and service delivery in Gauteng. The PSA is disappointed that whilst the SOPA focused on ambitious outcomes, it failed to outline concrete strategies to resolve persistent issues such as chronic staff shortages, non-enforcement of labour inspector prohibition orders, and continued restructuring and implementation of Provincial Macro-Organisation of Government (PMOG) processes without proper consultation with labour. These challenges directly impact the efficiency and sustainability of public services. Without immediate intervention, these will continue to compromise service delivery across Gauteng.

Whilst the Provincial Government highlights investments in infrastructure and economic development, the PSA questions the ongoing failure to prioritise the urgent need to fill critical vacancies in essential sectors such as healthcare, education, and law enforcement. Public servants remain overburdened, and the lack of meaningful engagement with labour in decision-making processes exacerbates the uncertainty and instability in the Gauteng Provincial Administration.

Whilst the Gauteng Provincial Government prioritises projects such as the Tshwane Automotive Special Economic Zone (TASEZ) and large-scale infrastructure development, the health sector remains critically understaffed. Highly skilled professionals remain unemployed owing to so-called budget constraints. If there is funding for TASEZ and similar initiatives, there should be budget to fill critical positions in hospitals and clinics. The PSA supports growth and youth employment but urges government to balance investment in future markets with addressing urgent present-day needs, particularly in healthcare and other essential services.

The Premier outlined the 13 key issues facing Gauteng, including water-supply failures, crime, infrastructure decay, and unemployment. He, however, did not adequately address how these issues will be resolved given the current lack of human resources and failure to engage with labour in critical decision-making processes such as restructuring and the Provincial Macro-Organisation of Government initiatives.

The Premier's acknowledgement of the province's water crisis is noted, but the proposed solution of Eskom and City Power taking over pumping operations raises concerns. With Eskom already failing to meet its current obligations, it is questionable if it can effectively manage an additional burden.

Whilst government's efforts to shut down illegal scrapyards and arrest offenders are commendable, clarity is required on measures to prevent repeat offences related to car theft and vandalism. The identification of 400 non-functional traffic lights and the announcement of road-repair initiatives are steps in the right direction. However, transparency is needed on how these sites were selected and how the projects will be monitored for long-term effectiveness.

Identifying 400 criminal kingpins and deploying new surveillance systems are welcomed. However, the public deserves clarity on whether these initiatives have led to successful prosecution. Government's demolition of illegal structures in informal settlements is a double-edged sword. Without proper alternative housing solutions, the demolition of informal settlements exacerbates homelessness and social instability.

Whilst R1.2 billion has been invested in energy infrastructure, residents and businesses continue to suffer from persistent electricity blackouts. Clarity is required on where this money is being directed, and why improvements are not being felt across the province.

The PSA supports initiatives aimed at tackling gender-based violence, such as community support programs and court assistance initiatives. However, there is a pressing need for better policing and stricter law enforcement measures to protect vulnerable individuals. Investment in drug rehabilitation centres is welcomed but additional focus is needed on prevention strategies, job creation, and youth programs to address the root causes of substance abuse.

The PSA is concerned about critical issues that were overlooked in respect of employment and infrastructure. The PSA questions how government plans to achieve its ambitious goals without filling critical positions essential to the province's continued functioning. The restructuring of provincial government structures, including the movement of the Gauteng Infrastructure Financing Agency, has occurred without meaningful consultation with labour. The PSA condemns this disregard for fair consultation and the impact on workers' stability. Government continues to ignore orders from the Department of Employment and Labour regarding unsafe working conditions, further compromising public service delivery. Whilst the government boasts of creating 271 000 permanent jobs, it fails to address challenges faced by current employees, including salary delays, poor working conditions, and unfulfilled wage agreements.

The PSA urges the Gauteng Government to commit to genuine dialogue with labour representatives and to take decisive action in addressing these pressing concerns. Sustainable service delivery requires more than promises - it demands practical solutions that support the workers who keep the province running. The PSA is committed to advocating for the rights and well-being of public servants and will continue to engage with the government to ensure that commitments made in SOPA translate into tangible improvements for employees and the citizens they serve.

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