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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

TO : ALL MEDIA  
DATE : SUNDAY, 01 MARCH 2020  
ATTENTION : NEWS EDITORS/REPORTERS AND PR WIRE

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### **MEC NTULI STEPS IN TO END VIOLENCE-PLAGUED LADYSMITH PROTEST**

Water provision and transport services have been restored in most parts of Ladysmith following KwaZulu-Natal Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, MEC Bheki Ntuli's constructive engagements with community representatives from Ubumbano Lokuthula Organisation and taxi industry stakeholders.

MEC Ntuli led a high-level intervention team to Ladysmith yesterday, 29 February 2020, which included senior officials from the Department of Community Safety and Liaison and the South African Police Service, following protest action which resulted in the disruption of business operations and closure of state institutions such as the South African Social Security Agency and Umgeni Water.

Commenting after the successful engagement, MEC Ntuli deplored violent protest and shutting down of the Ladysmith town, saying this has a negative impact in all other small towns such as Dundee and Newcastle.

**“Our intervention as government is yielding positive results in addressing the challenges faced by residents in Ladysmith. In our engagements with the disgruntled community representatives we agreed that the Umgeni Water Ezakheni Plant which was shut down by protestors should be opened to ensure that residents have access to water. Taxi operators also agreed to resume transport operations in the area. Our intervention is not aimed at attacking other structures of government nor to take a defensive approach on the grievances raised by residents. However, our approach is intended at finding a lasting solution that will ensure peace and stability in Ladysmith,”** said MEC Ntuli.

MEC Ntuli said government will take the necessary steps to ensure that law and order is maintained in Ladysmith. Police reported that about 21 suspects have been arrested for public violence.

**“Whoever is on the wrong side of the law including those responsible in any acts of criminality such as the burning of Municipal infrastructure and destruction of property will be dealt with harshly. The South African Police**

**Service will continue to maintain high visibility and arrest those involved in criminal acts. Police have been tasked to isolate and deal decisively with all criminal elements that are the source of instability in Ladysmith. As government our core mandate is to promote safer communities and build effective and mutually beneficial partnerships with all stakeholders in order to promote peace and stability in our communities,” said MEC Ntuli.**

MEC Ntuli called on a strengthened working relationship between government, business stakeholders and civil society.

Government will convene a follow-up meeting with the community representatives and taxi industry stakeholders later this week to address issues affecting the industry in the area.

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