



SPEECH (NOTES) BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, MR. B.H. CELE AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF JOJOSI RIVER BRIDGE HELD ON THURSDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2005.

All Protocol Observed.

- Our gathering here today once again bears testimony to our government's commitment to ensure that we create a balanced road network in KwaZulu-Natal.
- I have always stated that during my tenure as MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison, I will endeavour to defend the weakest in our society by empowering them to participate in government programmes and in our market economy.
- A common policy for my term of office is that it will be unashamedly pro-poor with the upfront intention of bridging the gap - indeed chasm – between our first and second economies.

- The present government has realised that nation-building is linked to reconstruction and development, and the key to this link is an infrastructural programme that will provide access to modern and effective services such as electricity, water, telecommunications, transport, health, education and training for all our people.
- This programme must meet both basic needs and open up previously suppressed economic and human potential in urban and rural areas. This in turn will lead to an increased output in all sectors of the economy.
- There is no doubt that an infrastructure programme is more than just providing electricity, water and telephones.
- Our government has also realised that better transport systems can link up rural and urban areas, and at the same time contribute broadly to economic development and social upliftment.
- In a nutshell, it is not wealth that builds roads, but it is roads that build wealth. Therefore, rural community access has become an integral part in the upgrading of infrastructure in KZN.
- In this regard, the JoJosi Bridge was identified and prioritised as part of the Nqutu Integrated Development Plan.
- This area has enormous tourism potential both in terms of its typical rural setting and its significance in the 1879 Anglo-Zulu War. The Prince Imperial Memorial, a popular tourist destination, is also situated approximately eight kilometres from the site.

- The JoJosi Bridge links the moderately populated rural communities of Sofage and Mhlungwane situated on opposite banks of the JoJosi River, and provides a safe crossing point for approximately 500 scholars from the rural community attending the local primary / high school of Mgidla on the southern side of the JoJosi River.
- It is reported that six learners drowned in the JoJosi River during periods of high flood prior to the construction of the bridge. Several vehicles have also been washed away.
- The Prince Imperial Culvert was the only formal road link between the two communities, but due to the fact that it is a low level structure, which is occasionally overtopped during high flow periods, it prevented vehicles from crossing safely.
- This Bridge is not only considered important in order for people to access critical places such as home, town and school, but it is also essential for personal safety reasons. People who travel on foot are further exposed to dangers such as rape, theft and so on.
- The JoJosi Bridge is situated on the JoJosi River at kilometre point 1, 8 on Access Road 1988, approximately 20 kilometres north east of Nqutu. The bridge carries road A1988 across the JoJosi River providing access off road D1303 to Dulini.
- A Stage 4 Vukuzakhe emerging contractor was utilised for the construction of this bridge which was successfully completed during March 2004. **The value of this project was R3, 8 million.**
- This project provided numerous employment opportunities and construction skills for the local people of the community, including women and youth. The project resulted in the provision of:
 - 90 person hours of employment for the Engineer's site staff per week;
 - 585 person hours of employment for the Contractor's site staff per week; and
 - 800 person hours of employment for the Sub-Contractor's site staff per week.

- In addition to the R3, 8 million for the construction of JoJosi Bridge, the lives of the residents in this area will be improved through other road infrastructural projects costing millions of rands.
- These additional projects include routine road maintenance, Zibambele contracts, regravelling, the provision of access roads through Vukuzakhe contracts and so on.
- Therefore, through the construction of the JoJosi Bridge we have not only linked these communities to social, cultural and economic amenities, but this project is yet another practical demonstration of government's commitment to "create a better life for all".
- This project is yet another example of our government's commitment to accelerate the pace of service delivery in KwaZulu-Natal, particularly with regards to infrastructural development in rural and historically disadvantaged areas.
- There can be no doubting the fact that the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is well advanced towards achieving its objective of creating equitable and sustainable transport systems in KZN.
- Much has been achieved over the past ten years. Much more needs to be achieved in the years ahead.
- Masisukume Sakhe – Let us Rise Up and Build.

THANK YOU.

