



**SPEECH (NOTES) BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,  
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR. BHEKI CELE AT THE OFFICIAL  
OPENING OF OKHOMBE AND THONYELANE BRIDGES AT BERGVILLE  
ON FRIDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2007.**

**All protocol observed.**

- The provincial Department of Transport is on a mission to build pedestrian bridges all over the province. Yesterday we were opening the access road at Msinga and on Tuesday we made a sod turning for the road upgrade at Mzumbe.
- At the same time, yesterday, we also launched our 'Operation Kushunquthuli'. In this Operation we are strengthening our commitment to bring hope to those communities most in need so that they too can have just cause to celebrate a better life for all. We are changing people's lives through the construction of pedestrian bridges from the south to the north and from the east to the west.
- A study we conducted reveals that we need 146 pedestrian bridges, but the Department of Education has added 100 more. These are needed to help our school children whose lives are often in danger as a result of flooded rivers and are forced not to attend school during the summer months, especially when it rains.

- This Operation means that no one, neither individuals nor organisations, will stop us from restoring the dignity of teachers who have to undress when they cross rivers.
- Today we are here at Bergville to officially open two bridges, Okhombe and Thonyelane River Bridges that have been constructed at the tune of R3.4 million and R6.8 million respectively.
- These bridges will serve the community residing on both Okhombe area and Sandlwana area. The areas consist of two primary schools with approximately 500 across the Tonyelane River.
- There are approximately 240 households across the Tonyelane River Bridge and there has been no commercial activity on the community's property. The taxi operators are now able to alight their commuters next to their households
- Teachers are no longer going to half undress in order to cross either of the two rivers to get to school and begin their teaching duties, also there should be no more absenteeism for both educators and pupils because of flooded rivers.
- Women who are in labour they will now be able to reach medical treatment through either mobile clinic or nearby clinics and hospital, other than to die in labour which used to happen before.
- The development of access roads and pedestrian bridges and the promotion of labour intensive construction methods are important focus areas that enable our government to provide the much needed infrastructure in remote rural communities, and ensure that jobs are created where they are needed the most.

- Very few, if any, governments in history have been able to tackle manifold challenges such as we do in South Africa. The combined oppression of Colonialism and Apartheid left our communities on the verge of disintegration, stagnation and doom.
- Our rural communities, in particular, were facing a social and economic crisis in spite of their potential in terms of agriculture and tourism. Therefore, the challenge for our democratic government is not only to address imbalances of the past but also to face new challenges imposed by crime, AIDS and poverty. It is in this context that we set our self a goal of achieving a better life for all.
- As government we will continue to do everything possible to assist our communities in whatever challenges they face in their areas. But my appeal is that you use proper structures that we have put in place in all three spheres of government.
- My Department is always ready to assist municipalities with capacity where necessary as part of the integrated development plan. What we want to avoid is using political affiliation at the expense of our people.
- Finally, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the community of uThukela District on all road and bridge projects they have received and yet to receive. Our goals are indeed centred around the lives of our people.

**I thank you.**