



**SPEECH NOTES BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIASON MR BHEKI CELE AT THE SOD
TURNING OF THE WELA BRIDGE ON THURSDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2007.**

Protocol Observed

- It was on the 24th of February this year when I came to Mhlabathini area to discuss safety issues with the community and various stakeholders on P700. The community had an opportunity to discuss issues of development within the area.
- What also came out of that meeting was the fatal incident where a bakkie with people in the canopy was washed away by Wela River during December 2006 floods. The river water was flowing in its maximum capacity hence the low level structure was submerged in water while the bakkie attempted to cross. The people killed including the youth were on their way to attend the traditional event.
- Today we are here at Wela area for a sod turning ceremony to facilitate the construction of the Wela River Bridge with an estimated cost of R8.2 million over a period of nine months.

- This structure will serve more than 200 households around the area who use D1708 road. The existing community facilities near the bridge include a Primary School, High School, Community Clinic as well as Supermarket.
- As per our government's policy, another important aspect of the construction of the bridge is that its cost remains an economic benefit to the communities it will serve. To this end, the prospective contractors will be compelled to source all materials from the Ulundi/Mahlabathini area and employ all artisans and labour from the nearby communities.
- It has come to my attention that some officials are politically bias when they employ people for these projects. I want to emphasize that these projects are for people irrespective of which political party they belong to. Therefore, I am appealing to you as communities to refuse to be manipulated by politicians and officials who use your weakness for their political gain.
- 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 prepared to assist municipalities with capacity when planning road infrastructure. We have been requested by some municipalities to maintain their roads, but only to find that those roads were not properly designed and to maintain them will be like reconstructing them entirely. We say now we will not maintain municipal roads that were not planned in consultation with us as the Department of Transport.

- In closing, I want to emphasize that the Department of Transport has a constitutional responsibility to ensure that our people have a safe and reliable transport system in the province. I am emphasizing road safety here because it has become clear that there is no use to build roads that will kill our people.
- We need to strengthen our road safety awareness campaigns wherever we are, so that we build roads in order to develop people, and not to kill them.
- I am aware that some people say that they are tired of Cele, he talks too much. Fortunately, I am not alone, but I am just one of the many ambassadors of road safety in our province and indeed our country.
- Ambassadors of safety on our roads are not only the many celebrities we work with, including soccer stars and radio DJs. But our real road safety ambassadors are the members of the bereaved families who carry the permanent scares of losing their loved-ones or having to take care of maimed and disabled loved ones.
- We believe that one of the best ways to convey and reinforce the safety message on our roads is to use our role models, people we like or look up to in society because we see them on television or listen to them speak on radio.

- My Department has also produced a documentary that shows our people, our mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers and relatives and friends dead on the road. At least you can see it on DVD, we see it live; not once, but many times.

- I would like to urge all road users to respect one another; pedestrians must give the necessary respect to motorists, and vice-versa. We at the DOT say one dead is one too many. Each person that dies or is seriously injured on our roads is a tragedy for the individuals, the families and communities, and for the nation as a whole.

I thank you