



**SPEECH NOTES BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIASON MR BHEKI CELE AT THE SOD
TURNING OF UMKHOMAZI RIVER BRIDGE AT IMPENDLE ON SATURDAY,
27 SEPTEMBER 2008.**

Protocol observed

- Today is a great day for the people of Impendle and the whole of Umgungundlovu District. Our government's efforts in trying to push back the frontiers of poverty are now known everywhere.
- Over the past years, the KZN Department has been gradually unlocking the economic shackles by means of innovative programmes that sought to address rural poverty.
- The official openings and sod turnings that are held all over the province highlight the very important task we set ourselves to change the lives of the people of KwaZulu-Natal.
- But, I want to emphasize that when we bring these projects we do it for people irrespective of which political party they belong to. Our government's policy says that during the construction work, cost must remain an economic benefit to the communities that project will serve.

- It has come to my attention that in some areas people are requested to produce membership cards for political parties before they are employed for these projects. But I want to warn you as communities also not to allow yourselves to be manipulated by politicians who use your weakness for their political gain.
- When the democratic government took over in 1994, the challenge was not only to address historical imbalances but also to face new challenges imposed by globalization; challenges such as crime, AIDS, poverty, unemployment etc. It is in this context that we set our selves a goal of achieving a better life for all.
- However, a better life will not just float in a foundation-less space. It is based on certain fundamentals and preconditions. Preconditions for a better life include peace, democracy and development.
- Today we have this sod-turning ceremony to mark the beginning of the construction of Umkomass River Bridge on D1357. The construction of this bridge will involve a substantial financial injection into the area with job opportunities being created over a minimum period of 10 months.
- The estimated cost of construction for this 50m long bridge, based on current construction costs, is approximately R8,5 million. The bridge forms part of the link between P27 and P127 for the communities of Loteni and Impendle.
- The current structure consists of a low level causeway that over tops in summer from 0.3m to 1.0m which cuts off the access for the two communities. This results in them having to use alternate routes which are much longer. In summer the school children are also sometimes cut off due to the high level of the water over the causeway.

- Apart from the investment in this bridge project, the Department has also injected R6,12 million during the last financial year in the construction and regravelling of local roads in the Impendle Municipality. These include the construction of Bhidla Road and Mbala Road as well as regravelling of P127-1; D1226; P127-2; D1221 and P27-3.
- During the current financial year 2008/09, we have invested about R4,15 million in this municipality for the construction and regravelling of local roads. Here we refer to the construction of Mhlophe Road and Khetha Road as well as regravelling of D1234 and P130.
- Everyday, we in the Department look for ways to meet new challenges: we have made it easier for women and children to reach schools and clinics. This alone is the true meaning of what DEMOCRACY is all about – ACCESS, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. There can be no better way we can defend the weak.
- In conclusion, I am pleased to announce that a number of roads in this District are maintained by our poverty alleviation programme Zibambele. This programme has recruited more than 3 200 contractors in the Umgungundlovu District and during this financial year we are investing R18 million in the programme. These women have formed 23 savings clubs and they have saved R1,2 million to date.
- Finally, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the community of Umgungundlovu District on all road and bridge projects they have received and yet to receive.

I thank you.