



**SPEECH NOTES BY KZN MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR. BHEKI CELE AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF MBALANE BRIDGE AT MUDEN ON SUNDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2009.**

**Protocol observed**

- On the 13<sup>th</sup> of January we were here at Umsinga for the sod turning of P368. I was happy on that day when Inkosi Mchunu made his remarks and emphasised what I have always reiterated that people must not confuse government work with party politics.
- But I am aware that such confusion has surfaced in relation to the project at Umhlangana which has resulted in the Project Liaison Committee being dissolved (a social responsibility structure). Today I want to put it clear that the KZN Department of Transport has a legislative mandate to manage the transportation system in the province.
- This includes amongst other things, the construction, upgrading, maintenance and control of the provincial road network. Therefore, we do not necessarily depend on someone to tell us when we can do road infrastructure. However, this Department is prepared to assist municipalities with capacity when planning their road infrastructure.
- We all know that Umsinga is one of the areas in the province that have been declared as priority areas for service delivery due to the high rate of poverty and unemployment.

- We also know that the people of Umsinga were victims of apartheid government strategy of pushing people to areas not conducive to farming, which resulted in a fierce competition over land and other important resource.
- This led to misunderstanding between communities and, ultimately to wars fuelled by apartheid's divide and rule tactics. But when the democratic government took over in 1994, the challenge was not only to address historical imbalances but also to face new challenges such as crime, diseases, poverty, unemployment etc.
- It is in this context that we set our selves a goal of achieving a better life for all. As a democratically elected government we have an obligation to serve our people irrespective of which political party they belong to. We say everyone has a right to a better life.
- However, a better life will not just float in a foundation-less space. It is based on certain fundamentals and preconditions which include peace, democracy and development. Therefore, as communities you must not allow yourselves to be used by politicians for their political gain.
- To this end, the KZN Department of Transport has invested more than R258 million in this District to deal with the challenges of road infrastructure. We have injected cash in projects such as Dicky Bridge, Sphongweni Road, Nxamalala Road, Nyonini Road, Ezingulubeni Road, Mbalane Bridge, Matimatolo Road, Nhlesi Road, P32, P368, Zonyama Road and KwaLeje Pedestrian Bridge, among others.

- I am extremely delighted to be part of the opening ceremony for Mbalane Vehicle Bridge and KwaLeje Pedestrian Bridge. The vehicle bridge was constructed at the cost of R 10,5 million and the pedestrian cost about R4,1 million.
- During construction, the concrete work for the deck, approaches, pier protection work and earthworks for the approaches was done by contractors on the Vukuzakhe Database of the Department. A large number of labour was engaged during the construction of these bridges.
- This resulted from our policy that says the cost of the project must remain an economic benefit to the communities it will serve where contractors are compelled to source all materials from the area and employ all artisans and labour from the nearby communities.
- These projects are of uttermost importance to the local community because they provide:
  - Safe vehicular access to the community's property;
  - Safe access for pedestrians especially school going children;
  - Commercial opportunities to the community;
  - Agricultural development opportunities to the community;
  - Access to the nearby commercial centres (for example Greytown)
- Pedestrian bridges are central to the provision of access and the improvement of the quality of lives of people. Indeed in communities where these were constructed, people bear testimony of how much improved their lives have been.

- The figure for pedestrian bridges to be built in KwaZulu-Natal has increased dramatically to more than 400. Unfortunately, the problem of limited funding continues to face us, hence we are unable to deal with our backlog as quickly and expediently as we would want to.
- In conclusion, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the community of Umsinga on all road and bridge projects they have received and yet to receive.
- I want to assure you that this government is ready for another term of office to ensure that together we can do more to defend the week.

**I thank you.**