

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,
COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, THE HONOURABLE MR. WILLIES
MCHUNU, DURING THE ROAD TRAFFIC INSPECTORATE (RTI) OFFICIAL
OPENING OF THE (RTI) TRAINING COLLEGE AT PIETERMARITZBURG
ON 7 AUGUST 2009.**

Programme Director. Chris Hlabisa,

Head of Transport in KwaZulu-Natal

Members of the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature,

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Members of the Media

Thank you, for attending this Official Opening of the (RTI) Training College, for our Trainee Traffic Officers. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport, through its Traffic Training College, aims to provide appropriate training and development in order to ensure the delivery of professional road safety, and law enforcement service. This is a daunting task, hence the course itself is demanding - it covers over 36 modules over a six- month period.

During this period, the students not only learn theory, but, they are dispatched to roadblocks, and perform some practical tasks. Upon completion, graduates are certified to use breathalysers, firearms, speed timing machines and in minimum use of force.

It is clear therefore that the students who have graduated from this course are competent, confident and well-trained officers whom we hope will serve our province with pride. In fact, they must serve with pride. Failure on their part will be unacceptable.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport is fully committed to saving lives by creating a safe road environment. Our efforts have not only received national acclaim but they have also attained international recognition. It is estimated that 25 per cent of all heavy vehicles travelling on South African Roads are overloaded yet this figure is less than half in KwaZulu-Natal. It is clear to everyone, therefore that our Traffic Training College is a huge asset not only to the province and the country but also to the international community, judging by the constant streams of African & overseas visitors coming here to compare notes with our RTI team.

Today, I feel honoured that as a new MEC for Transport, Community Safety & Liaison – I've been asked to officially open this state-of-the-art training facility. The opening is a historic occasion in that it is for the first time since my appointment as MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison to actually address you, let alone to celebrate some of the achievements of the Road Traffic Inspectorate.

This revamped traffic training college today confirms the fact that the Department of Transport takes its constitutional responsibility to ensure the safety of our people and managing a reliable road transport system in the province very seriously. It was in 2006 that the green light was given to the Department of Transport to proceed with substantial renovations to this complex. I would like to thank all the officials who made this dream a reality. It is heartwarming that my predecessors, the Honourables S'busiso Ndebele & uS'khokho Ndosini were the trendsetters in this regard. I am particularly pleased that as learner myself in this new role of being MEC, I've not only comrades-in-arms, but, superb teachers in Manzankosi & Ndosini.

On behalf of the people of KwaZulu-Natal, I would love to thank them for the work they did for our province, and equally congratulate them for availing themselves to serve our country in their new capacities. Indeed, KwaZulu-Natal is unstoppable as the former Premier uBaba uNdebele was wont on saying.

I am told that the revamped of this facility cost the taxpayer some R20 million. I want to reassure our people that this was a wise investment. It is an investment in knowledge production, an investment that posterity will be proud of. In 2005 this college became the first to receive full accreditation from LGSETA in terms of SAQA legislation. The college is also accredited with the Safety and Security SETA for the training of traffic officers in the use of firearms.

I urge officers to treat their customers – road users with respect. Handle all firearms with due care. They belong to the state – the people of South Africa. Do not use them to commit crimes or maim and murder innocent civilians. Just do right – deal with transgressors of our road rules as per your training toolkit.

Since its humble beginnings in 1966, this college now boasts of a capacity of training about 120 trainee officers at a time. Presently, there are 102 trainee traffic officers enrolled for the Traffic Management Course here. They are the first lot to enjoy the benefits of the new facility. They started their six -month training programme on 29 June 2009. By 2010, a total of 520 new traffic officers would have been trained at this college. It is therefore fitting Programme Director to reiterate that this was a wise investment. It is an investment in knowledge production.

In conclusion, I want to ask a question – are millions of rands spent on public awareness campaign effective? Are we getting value for money? More appropriately should the taxpayer be saddled with this huge bill of paying for the rich to be reminded of the rule of the road such as *Wear your seatbelts*

amongst others? Is it really fair? I humbly request the relevant directorate to present a convincing case before me on the impact of these campaigns.

More importantly, can we afford them (these expensive campaigns) in the context of a global downturn, and our own challenges as a province? Are they not actually part and parcel of acquiring a valid drivers' license. I await your learned input in this regard.

Finally, I want to pay a special tribute to the RTI and the leadership of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport. I thank all those who have just joined us as trainee officers. We hope that you made your choice not because you were unemployed but because you are determined to tackle the task of road safety with energy of Ndosi & sophistication of Ndebele.

Commenting about education in general, a Brazilian philosopher, Paulo Freire, once said, "education is a two edged sword, it can be repressive or liberating." I want to reassure the people of KwaZulu-Natal that the education being received here by our trainee officers (past & present) is indeed liberating for it will help liberate our province and indeed our country from the ugly scenes of road carnage.

I thank you.