

SPEECH (NOTES) BY KWAZULU-NATAL ACTING MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY & LIAISON, DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO AT THE SUMMER ROAD SAFETY LAUNCH ON SUNDAY, 05 DECEMBER 2010.

Programme Director;

Members of the Provincial Legislature present;

Mayors;

Councillors;

AmaKhosi AseNdlunkulu;

Heads of various State Departments;

All our stakeholders;

Road Safety Ambassadors;

Members of the Media;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I wish to begin by apologizing on behalf of my cabinet colleague, the MEC for Transport, Community Safety & Liaison, the Honourable Mr Willies Mchunu, who could not be with us here today to address you due to other equally important engagements. We know that he is with us in spirit.

We thank you HOD for the outline you have given us. What you have said is not a threat at all but rather a warning to traffic offenders that indeed, *'Alufakwa KwaZulu-Natal lubuya nesaphulamthetho'*.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those men and women in uniform who spend holiday periods working hard to keep us all safe on the road through their visibility and by enforcing the law. We cannot forget to also thank our emergency services and health personnel who take care of those who have been involved in road crashes. We thank you for making this sacrifice for the benefit of road users. Ladies and Gentlemen, it has become a trend that as government, we step up our road safety campaigns around particular times of the year when traffic volumes are at their peak. The month of December is one such time. On Sunday the 18th of November, 2010, our National Minister Mr Sibusiso Ndebele, okaManzankosi, launched the national Summer Road Safety Campaign in the North West province.

Subsequent to that, we are launching the provincial festive season blitz today. Sekusukile loko futhi – we are ready to take care of tourists and loved ones who will be in this province in numbers during this time of year.

As the province of KwaZulu-Natal, we pledge our support of this year's campaign and its theme which says: "Make Roads Safe Campaign," that is driven by the United Nations (UN). We are aware that this Make Roads Safe Campaign will also kick-start the UN's commitment to a "Decade of Activism for Road Safety", as the whole world endeavours to curb road deaths drastically between 2011 and 2020 in line with the UN's proclamation in March this year.

In his Summer Launch address, uManzankosi said: "Road deaths are now the leading global cause of deaths for children and young people aged 10 to 24. In addition, road deaths cost the countries billions of dollars, money that could instead be spent on education, health and poverty eradication. Standing up against road deaths means we must respond to this epidemic which kills on the scale of malaria and will soon overtake it."

Here in the province of KwaZulu-Natal we have experienced an increase in the number of fatalities on our roads during the past few months. And, with the festive season officially starting today, more drastic measures still need to be taken.

As Government we need to ensure that breaking road laws is portrayed as a big deal. Ngamanye amazwi sithi emhlabeni akusadlisi ukuphula imithetho yomgwaqo, uloku ufuna ukubukwa emgwaqeni ukuthi uyingcwenge kanjani ekushayeleni usho ubeka izimpilo zabanye abantu engcupheni.

In fact as government we are readying ourselves not only to make this costly tendency to use the road irresponsibly unfashionable and old-fashioned, but it is our priority to continue to force road-users to worry about not breaking traffic laws more than they do now.

Drivers control vehicles and they have more power compared to pedestrians. However, government is equally concerned about pedestrian fatalities. Pedestrians account for the majority of the citizens of our country. As much as we expect pedestrians to be on the look out for vehicles and to use the road carefully and correctly, we are even more interested in dealing with drivers who defy traffic laws because more is expected of them in terms of caution and avoiding over-speeding and refraining from reckless driving.

It is clear to us as government that the violation of traffic laws is still not taken seriously and people worry more about getting caught speeding or drinking and driving rather than the consequences of committing these crimes. To that effect, as government we are encouraged by the support we receive through public-private partnerships that help improve our people's quality of life. We know that alcohol abuse is one of the major problems on our roads. It is quite appropriate therefore that the South African Breweries (SAB) as producers of alcoholic beverage are proactive about collaborating with provincial government in bringing road offenders to book.

The increasing number of alcohol evidence centres that SAB has sponsored in our province is adequate proof that we are on the right track to tackle deviant conduct that costs us so dearly in terms of valuable human life and property. Millions of rands are wasted on health care due to so vile a thing as drunkenness which undermines concentration and leads to countless collisions on our roads. Enough is enough!

That is why we are currently working on a partnership with an NGO known as the South Africans Against Drunk Drivers (SADD) to launch the 'Name and Shame' campaign. The proposal so far is that as the relevant authority in the province, DoT will instruct the Clerk of the Court at every Magistrates Court in KZN to collect the convicted Drunk Drivers' names, addresses, and also details like the Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) etc., on a specific form and display them in the newspaper.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the HOD has already given us an overview of what we can expect this festive season. I nevertheless would like to emphasise that our operational plan is inclusive of all other offenses that may not have been mentioned here. All transgressions will be addressed and prioritized accordingly and offenders will be dealt with severely. Efforts will be made to ensure that visible policing takes place, especially at hazardous locations and peak hours.

Vehicles travelling without registration plates or permits will be prosecuted, thus ensuring that motorists who deliberately attempt to defeat the ends of justice will do so at the risk of facing prosecution.

In conclusion, to motorists out there, I appeal to you to exercise care and patience on the road. Be patient at the various enforcement interventions and remember, the officers are out there doing a thankless task, exposed to various elements of nature like the heat and the rain and the cold, just to ensure our safety.

Finally, a special appeal goes to all of us to please drive with our headlamps on during the day. Let's keep our headlamps on the dipped beam and demonstrate our commitment and support of the RTMC "Lights on campaign".

Road safety touches all of us. We must really mean it when we say ONE DEATH IS ONE TOO MANY. If we can leave here today determined to strengthen the partnerships that we have and draw many thousands of new people into what we are convinced is a winnable battle, we will soon find ourselves embarking on the road to safety in the true sense of the word.

I thank you.