

**SPEECH NOTES FOR ACTING KZN MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON
HONOURABLE DR SIBONGISENI DLHOMO DURING THE OPENING OF P487 KWACEZA ON
THURSDAY 09TH DECEMBER 2010.**

Programme Director;

Amakhosi aseNdlunkulu;

Members of the Legislature;

Your worship the Mayor;

Councillors;

Izinduna;

Officials from government departments led by HOD Mr Chris Hlabisa;

All our stakeholders, including Rural Road Transport Forums (RRTFs), Community Road Safety Councils (CRSCs), Public Transport Passenger Associations(PTPAs), Vukuzakhe Emerging Contractors and Zibambele;

Members of the media;

All protocol observed.

I wish to begin by apologising 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.

Our HOD has just presented an overview of what our government has done thus far and is still to do for this part of the province. We thank you HOD and all the officials of the Department who work tirelessly towards providing the best possible service to the citizens of our province. This confirms that we have a government that walks the talk – we always follow up on our commitments.

It is non-negotiable indeed that if our budgets are not reaching grassroots communities and making a real tangible difference in the lives of impoverished people - who are our majority citizens and our majority voters - then we, as government, will have failed in the mandate we have been given by the people of this province.

It is also true that the bridges and access roads are central to the provision of access and the improvement of the quality of life for our people, especially in the rural areas. In communities where this much-needed road infrastructure has been provided, people do not stop appreciating that at last our province has a government that responds to the needs of the people and many rural communities bear testimony to that.

The long and short of what I am saying is that previous colonial and apartheid governments have come and gone in South Africa, but for the first time in the history of this province we are seeing people's lives improving. An access road and a bridge are very precious things to someone who has not known the convenience of having them, and you of all people know too well what we mean by that because you have suffered neglect for centuries and nobody cared.

You know that for the first time you can now go to work, school, shop, clinic or visit relatives and friends, because your government made it easy for you to do so by providing road infrastructure. We know what that means to you and we are glad that you elected a government that understands and takes care of your needs.

Here in Ulundi area, we have seen a substantial improvement to road conditions which has also improved the quality of life in the area. Many communities within the Ulundi area now have easy access to things that people from the cities and townships that are nearby big cities take for granted.

For instance, people are able to walk or drive to bury your loved ones, to get social benefits for old people, the sick and the unemployed, get services from the police station, take children to school, hospital or clinic without the threat of river floods or the absence of a road that can take you there.

We have also seen employment opportunities increasing with each road infrastructure project implemented. Stage 1 contractors within the Ulundi jurisdiction have benefited from the stage 1 project and have thus gone further to become bigger construction companies. In some cases, construction companies have employed people from the Ulundi area permanently because of their hard work and we are proud that you are taking advantage of opportunities provided by the government that you elected.

Today we are here to officially open the completed part of P487 that has been surfaced to blacktop. The total length of the road is 33 km and it will cost R115 million on completion. The Department has completed the 17 kilometres of upgrade to the tune of R62, 4 million and is now committed to surface a further 10 kilometres which will be completed at the end of the current financial year i.e. early 2011. There have been more than 300 job opportunities created during the construction of this road, and a number of emerging contractors have benefited.

We therefore take this opportunity to congratulate our communities in the Ulundi area and Zululand as a whole on all the projects they have received and are still to receive. Indeed as the government under the leadership uMsholozzi nationally and uKhabazela in the province, we are proud of you for working closely with your government make your lives better.

We are the government that truly transforms your lives. What we ask from you is patience. Don't allow negative influence from people who want you to lose hope. Remember that this is not the first time we have government in the history of South Africa, and KwaZulu-Natal in particular.

Do not forget also that when our country was transformed into a democracy in 1994, the challenge was not only to address historical imbalances but also to face new challenges such as crime, AIDS, poverty, unemployment etc.

It is a fact that some of the challenges in KwaZulu-Natal had to wait until 2004 to be addressed when this ANC-led Government took over. But at least in six years, as I said earlier, our people are now giving testimony that they see change in their lives through our democratic government's development programmes.

Before I conclude, let me take this opportunity to thank all of you as the community for coming in numbers to witness a milestone recorded in your lives. Your attendance indicates that you accept development that takes place in your area. I emphasise this because in some areas development is delayed by communities themselves who read politics into government projects.

As a democratically-elected government, when we bring these projects we do it for people irrespective of which political party they belong to. I also want to warn you as communities not to allow yourselves to be manipulated by politicians who use your weakness for their political gain. Always remember that the challenges we face in our country can only be addressed under certain circumstances which include peace, democracy and development. There can be no development if there is war. So anyone who asks you to fight does not want development.

Finally, as the festive season begins, which is a period synonymous with increased physical movement of people in their vehicles as locals, visitors and tourists traverse the length and breadth of our province, there is usually an unacceptably high level of deviant driver behaviour which contributes to the high levels of carnage on our roads.

As the Department of Transport that is responsible for their safety on the road, we are continuing to reinforce our "100 % compliance" policy which includes programmes that inform and educate the community at large about correct road safety behaviour.

Don't drink or walk and drive on the road because by so doing you are putting your life and those of other road users at risk. Alcohol reduces the capacity of your mind to function normally. You react poorly to an emergency situation if you are a driver under the influence of alcohol or drugs. If you are a pedestrian

you think that the car is far and you will cross the road quickly, only to find that your judgement was poor because you were intoxicated. Even as we build roads we know that we also invite accidents because drivers like to speed on a good road and that is why we put speed deterrents or humps.

We therefore appeal to all road users to obey the rules of the road and just do right. Alufakwa KwaZulu-Natal *lubuya nesaphulamthetho!*

I thank you.