

**SPEECH NOTES FOR THE KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,  
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR WILLIES MCHUNU DURING THE  
MPUMALANGA ANNUAL PEACE CELEBRATION EVENT**

27 MARCH 2010

**Protocol Observed**

It is a great honour for me to be part of this celebration with so many of you. Your coming in numbers shows how much you value peace in your lives. It shows how passionate you are about your development. Therefore, it is gatherings such as this one that always give me a sense of hope about the future.

It is befitting that on behalf of the Government of KwaZulu-Natal, I thank the residents of Mpumalanga Township and Hammarsdale as a whole for having preserved peace that was achieved 18 years ago. In fact you need to give yourselves a big round of applause in that regard.

The history of Hammarsdale dates back to the early 50's when the people went through a very painful experience as the apartheid government introduced border industries, which were aimed at preventing black people from going to big cities and towns to seek greener pastures.

Local people were moved from their land and forced to go to the township, which was to serve as dormitories or construction camps for cheap labour. On the other hand Hammarsdale became the home of the ANC activists who were running away from the special branch in their areas such as KwaMashu, Lamontville, Clermont and other places.

In 1959 South African Congress of Trade Union members who were employed at Brivix Clothing Textile organized a wage strike. Activists like Joshua Ndlovu, Johannes Hlongwane, Patience “Gogo” Molefe were very instrumental in that strike. They were also very close to the high leadership of the ANC in Natal. They worked with leaders such as Inkosi Albert Luthuli, Steven Dlamini, Moses Mabhida and others. Hammarsdale strike is known as the first industrial strike in Natal.

Among other stalwarts who emerged from this area were Mathews Meyiwa, Zakhele Mdlalose and Gaphtar Luthuli who became active members, contributing to the sabotage campaign of the ANC. Meyiwa, Mdlalose, Luthuli, our President Jacob Zuma and others were sentenced 10 years imprisonment. In 1974 when Meyiwa and Mdlalose were re-arrested, President Zuma managed to escape the country and went to Mozambique. This time Meyiwa and Mdlalose were sentenced to life imprisonment.

In 1985 the Southern Natal areas reported a widespread of violence incidents between political parties in the townships. The community of Mpumalanga would always read, hear or see on TV people dying and houses being burnt down because of political violence in other townships. But in 1986 the residents of Mpumalanga began to experience first hand political violence.

As a result of that violence, ± 2000 people were killed, houses and properties were damaged. Lots of interventions were made from various leaders i.e Frank Mdlalose, Nqobizizwe Nkehli from the side of Inkatha and President Zuma who was the provincial chairperson then, Archie Gumede and myself Willies Mchunu.

From locals we had Meshack Radebe and Sipho Mlaba among others. These interventions resulted in the peace agreement that was signed in 1992. Today it is history that in 1993, the African Centre for Constructive Resolution Disputes awarded the community of Mpumalanga with the Africa Peace Award. I am going through this history to give you a sense of how rich Hammarsdale is in history, especially of struggling for a better life for all.

Today we have a democratic government that was fought for by the heroes and heroines of this area. But what does it mean to you as ordinary residents of Mpumalanga and to us as citizens of KwaZulu-Natal? It means that as we acknowledge their contribution to our liberation, we must also work hard to ensure our next generation will one day say that indeed we did do our part during our time. However for this to happen, we need a foundation which is peace, democracy and development.

I am pleased that in commemorating peace that we achieved in terms of political violence, the Mpumalanga Peace and Development Trust is also making effort to bring about an end to taxi violence that has claimed many lives in this Township. I take this opportunity to also appeal to the taxi industry here to please stop being a thorn in government's side. It cannot be correct that instead of having meetings to address issues of service delivery to our communities, but we are found to be addressing taxi conflicts that usually emanate from greed, jealousy and lies.

I want to assure you that the intention of this government is to improve the industry to be better than before. We realize that in KwaZulu-Natal and in South Africa generally, we are still faced with a situation where previous town planning did not accommodate our public transport. This is a task that municipalities must respond to squarely in designing their public transport plans, infrastructure development, and land use policies.

But while that is happening, the taxi industry needs to change the damaging perception that they are murderers. This must be by exposing those bad apples among themselves so as to protect the industry. As Government, we cannot allow the killing of innocent people simply because various taxi associations can't agree on which one should use which route. In some cases, Government has to act firmly and decisively in dealing with taxi conflicts so as to protect the lives of innocent people.

With the 2010 Soccer World Cup upon us, the relationship between transport operators and commuters must be amicable otherwise we risk the danger of failing to accommodate and transport comfortably our people and visitors for this prestigious event. I therefore urge and encourage transport operators, to conduct their businesses with due care for the safety and security of the public and also ensure that the working conditions for their employees are better. We must ensure peace, stability and prosperity towards 2010 and beyond, especially in the taxi industry.

In conclusion, I am sure that we are dealing with mature business minded people who only want economic progress here. Your industry is the single biggest black economic empowerment sector. As government it is our duty to assist this and other entrepreneurs to prosper, but we cannot do it without your cooperation.

Finally, the KwaZulu-Natal Government is fully equipped and ready to deal with any form of misbehaviour. If you think of breaking traffic laws this Easter Holidays, please bid your family farewell and start preparing for your long prison sentence. You may run but you may not hide.

**I thank you.**

