

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON, MR WILLIES MCHUNU AT THE INAUGURATION OF UMTSHEZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, 02 JULY 2011.

Programme director;

Amakhosi and Izinduna;

Members of the KZN legislature;

Mayor of Umtshezi;

Councillors;

Distinguished guests;

Members of the media;

All protocol observed;

Today marks the beginning of a new chapter of the history of the uMtshezi area. I am talking about a chapter that all of us have longingly looked forward to. This is a time that we should all come out, irrespective of political background, and say forward ever and never backward to where we come from in uMtshezi.

It is a well known fact that the Estcourt area has always been a thorn in our side, be it as Government or as the ANC in the province, because of violence that has claimed many lives in the past.

It actually became worse ahead of the recent local government elections when we saw service delivery coming to a stand still due to what was believed to be the internal battles of a political party.

Therefore as we start on a new slate now, on behalf of the government of KwaZulu-Natal and the provincial leadership of the ANC, we want to congratulate all of you who were elected councillors. This is not an easy task. You are carrying the hopes and aspirations of your people, those who voted for you and those who did not.

But it is equally important that I take this opportunity to congratulate the people of uMtshezi, for going out in numbers to vote for your representatives. In fact you surprised all of us. I am saying this because, as I have already indicated, ahead of elections we saw incidents that created doubts about having peaceful, free and fair elections in this area.

As a result of those incidents, Estcourt along with other areas was identified for intervention by the Multi-party Political Committee established by the Honourable Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize, to promote political tolerance and a peaceful, free and fair environment towards elections.

On that note, I want to convey my sincere appreciation to all political parties that contested elections in this area for committing themselves to work for peace, political tolerance and promotion of free political activity before, during elections and even now.

UMtshezi is one of the 19 municipalities that did not have an outright winner during the recent elections which resulted in the ANC and the NFP forming a coalition to govern in such municipalities.

I want to reiterate what I said during the uThukela District Council inauguration two weeks ago, that this is only a working agreement. The ANC does not intend to swallow the NFP. As we are advocating for a democratic society, we also respect the right of the NFP to exist.

This coalition however must be interpreted in a contest of improving service delivery to the people of KwaZulu-Natal, including eMtshezi. The primary focus of this coalition is that of making sure that we provide much needed water, electricity and sanitation facilities to our people.

I have warned before and I still want to warn all our councillors here again not to use this coalition to curb others' views. Any other political party represented here must also be able to engage with you without fear on matters affecting this municipality and the people on the ground.

The Mayor and his executive will not sideline people just because they did not vote for you. That is against democratic values. You are leading everyone. We don't want to see a 'selflessness' attitude replaced by 'me first' attitude amongst you councillors.

We also want to see your municipality collaborating clearly with the provincial government to ensure that the five priorities as set by our President Jacob Zuma are effectively implemented. From now on, let's join hands in translating all theory into practice. Let's ensure that all government programs effectively reach our people on the ground.

We expect you councillors to be with the people. You are elected by them not to relocate to suburbs but to be with them everyday even during rainy days. An ANC councillor is expected to at least meet with the community twice a month to give account of his/her work.

Reporting to the people is necessary even when you did not manage to get what they asked for than going AWOL. We call for that transparency and accountability.

On Wednesday, the Auditor General Terrence Nombembe released his consolidated report on Local Government Audit outcomes, revealing that only seven out of 237 municipalities received a clean audit for the 2009/10 financial year. This figure was very bad even though we were pleased by his acknowledgement that municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal had shown the greatest improvement.

It is on that score that we appeal to Councillors here not to forget to play an oversight role in the municipality. You must commit yourselves to running a clean municipality with no corrupt activities. Those who will attempt to steal public money must be dealt with severely.

Before I conclude, I want to bring the issue of political tolerance here again. In our recent review meeting as the multi-party committee, we agreed that even if elections have come and gone the task team will continue as a build up to 2014 general elections. We must also remember that during their term of office, the councils will be having by-elections now and then.

Just before elections, we had a provincial prayer rally in Greytown, which was attended by 7000 members of various political parties dressed in their full party regalia and singing their songs and dancing together.

The committee has since then resolved to convene other prayer rallies in areas that were identified as hot spots, starting with the uMtshezi/Mbabazane precinct.

Finally, it is our hope that from now on, our strategy of pursuing co-operation and peaceful engagement will result in the forever normalisation of political activities in this area.

It is high time indeed that we all say forward ever and backward never.

Aluta continue! The struggle continues!

I thank you