

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON, MR WILLIES MCHUNU, DURING THE
RTI PASSING OUT PARADE
RTI TRAFFIC TRAINING COLLEGE, PIETERMARITZBURG
FRIDAY, 5 JUNE 2015.**

- Programme Director, Principal Provincial Inspector Maharaj;
- Honourable Nhlakanipho Ntombela, a member of the Transport Portfolio Committee, who is representing the Chairperson, Honourable Mxolisi Kaunda;
- Head of Department of Transport, Sibusiso Gumbi;
- Chief Executive of the Road Traffic Management Corporation, Advocate Makhosini Msibi and his team;
- The Provincial Management of SAPS;
- Members of the JCPS Cluster;
- Mtubatuba Local Municipal Manager, Mr. Mathaba;
- The leadership of all our stakeholders including SANTACO, KWANABUCO, CRSCs and PTPAs;
- Representatives from organised labour;
- Department of Transport Management;
- Road Traffic Inspectorate, RTI, management and staff led by its head Victor Chetty;
- Families and relatives of our newly graduated officers;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

I greet you all this morning with a sense of pride, seeing these young men and women who are now ready to serve our country.

I am certain that as parents and relatives you are also harbouring a deeper sense of pride. Indeed hope has been built with the arrival at this important passage – from training in theory and practicals to real-life at the coalface of our road traffic environment. More so, given our country’s unemployment challenge, today we confirm that 93 young people have been assisted by this government to make a clean living. We trust that, when they do, they will exercise utmost responsibility and look back to where they come from, their families.

It is therefore fitting that this “Passing-Out Parade” takes place during the month of June, which we celebrate as “Youth Month”, when we highlight the plight of and opportunities available to young people, across all sectors of our economy.

Recruitment process tragedy

It is, however, worth mentioning that the road to this day was a long, protracted one, complicated by the tragedy of December 2012. When the Department of Transport started the recruitment process for the 91 trainee traffic officers, this was done to beef up our provincial road traffic law enforcement. It was also part of fulfilling a critical part of our mandate, which is to save people’s lives on our roads. The department’s process was aimed at selecting suitable candidates who

would assume the noble responsibility of enforcing our traffic laws. They would therefore, in turn, be employed and empowered to provide for their families.

However, in the course of normal processes, an unfortunate eventuality occurred, which resulted in the loss of eight (8) lives of prospective candidates. This, we regret thoroughly even to this day. Having gone through the difficult time, including the Commission of Inquiry established by the Premier, and the subsequent release of its findings and recommendations, we wish to commit that we will do all in our power to prevent such an incident from happening again.

We must learn the hard lessons and move forward.

Progress in implementing RTI Commission's recommendations

To this end, we have made progress in implementing the recommendations of the Commission. Already:

- There are 19 applicants who were hospitalised and suffered trauma, who have since been compensated with R10, 000.00 each;
- R100, 000.00 in compensation has been paid to one of the applicants who was hospitalised for a long period of time;
- Specific matters with possible criminal implications have been referred to the SAPS for further investigation;
- Investigation into the institution of internal disciplinary proceedings still continues and is being conducted by an independent party; and
- The development of the RTI recruitment policy is in progress.

We realise that this process has taken longer, but it has to be done thoroughly and correctly to bring closure to affected families.

Road safety is our collective responsibility

Ladies and gentlemen; we remain extremely concerned about the continuing road carnage in South Africa generally, and in our province specifically. As I stand here, a memorial service is underway in Nongoma, for seven (7) victims of a road accident that took place on Sunday, the 31st of May near Vryheid. These people lost their lives while travelling on R618-P49/1 from Vryheid to Ngome from a wedding. It saddens me more, that the bakkie they were using carried 16 occupants, which implies an overload. But it is worse that all occupants could not refuse to travel in a vehicle whose 27-year old driver had been drinking alcohol. Almost daily, a fatal accident is reported in our province.

The time has come for all of us to realise that, indeed, "Road Safety is Our Collective Responsibility". Death on the road should not define our life as a society. Working together as stakeholders and members of society, we must generate, much needed, national consciousness about the devastating impact of road crashes and fatalities in our province and country.

Our drive for a collective effort calls on all stakeholders to play their respective roles.

The government will lead from the front and work with business, labour movement, churches, freight industry, public transport (buses and taxis), driving schools, private vehicle owners, cyclists, and passengers, to raise this consciousness.

Ultimately we wish to see strengthened laws and regulations that punish those who break the road traffic rules. Individually and collectively we should define, agree, commit to, and institutionalise specific areas of responsibilities and a Code of Conduct.

All of us must become ambassadors of road safety, because if we don't, we will not enjoy our hard-won freedom. If we think road safety is someone else's problem, our province and country will not grow socio-economically, because it will be continuing to lose critical human capital.

The time is now, when we should all realise as citizens that, truly, safety on our roads and in communities, is paramount, and it is my and your responsibility!

Fighting Crime and Corruption

Our nation is also confronted by the ills of crime and corruption. Our society also has propensity for violent crimes, which are committed indiscriminately, against the young and old. We have also seen traffic officers becoming victims of hit and run cases and attacks while on duty. Yet, we have also had cases of our officers being caught taking bribes from road users they should apprehend.

These are the realities of the task you are about to take. I ask you to strive to be the best, the model traffic officer we all yearn for, and one that will effectively and consistently enforce the law.

You must help us enforce the law in the public transport sector, too, in taxi ranks, where we still have instability in areas including Maphumulo, Port Shepstone and Newcastle.

Broadly and fundamentally, your call of duty is to help our country rid itself of evils in society, and not to become the bad apples.

You are now called upon to actualise the theory of your 12-month long course that taught you the National Road Traffic Act, National Land Transport Act, Firearms Control Act and the Constitution, which has the Bill of Rights.

Congratulations

I take this opportunity to congratulate all of you, the 93 graduates –including the two (2) who joined from Mtubatuba Local Municipality. But I take my hat off to those students who excelled in the course, and have received special awards today for their performance. We say keep it up, because excellence is what we seek to promote within the ranks primarily, hence our introduction earlier this year of the annual RTI Awards. We expect excellence from all 1 238 of you,

including the entire RTI staff, the Public Transport Enforcement Services and you, the graduates.

Finally, I want to state that as a man or woman in uniform; society expects the best behaviour from you. We expect extreme discipline at all times. Congratulations – go serve your people, in your respective areas of deployment across the province.

Go serve South Africa with commitment, integrity, and selflessness.

May you all have a safe journey as you go back home.

I thank you.