

**SPEECH NOTES BY KZN MEC FOR TRANSPORT,  
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LIAISON MR WILLIES MCHUNU  
AT THE SANTACO AGM GALLA DINNER AND AWARDS  
CEREMONY ON FRIDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2015.**

Programme Director;  
MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental  
Affairs: Mike Mabuyakhulu;  
Provincial leadership of the Taxi Industry;  
Members of the Taxi Industry;  
Representatives of all business partners;  
Distinguished guests;  
Protocol Observed;  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you for allowing me to join you here this evening to celebrate and give honour to the work and dedication demonstrated by the taxi industry in our province of KwaZulu-Natal under the body of SANTACO.

The provincial SANTACO Annual General Meeting (AGM) comes at a very important time as we have just received marching orders from the State President Honourable Jacob Zuma on what to expect and what is expected of us as the citizens of this country.

The President has said and I quote “The year 2015 is the Year of the Freedom Charter and Unity in Action to Advance Economic Freedom. It is the year of going the extra mile in building a united, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa.

It is also the year of rededicating ourselves to eradicating racism and all related intolerances in our country,” close quote.

I am also pleased tonight that I have this opportunity to address the people who have often demonstrated that they maintain this objective, despite hindrances here and there.

This is on the premise of the journey we have travelled together as government and the taxi industry under the leadership of SANTACO KwaZulu-Natal, displaying your commitment to being businesspeople who are not only respected but who also respect themselves.

We are aware that like any other, this industry cannot be perfect under current circumstances. But the time will come when, in gatherings such as this, we no longer whine about areas or associations who continue to draw us back by fighting and killing one another.

It is unfortunate indeed that as we meet here, there are still route related problems in areas like KwaMaphumulo and KwaDukuza. It is disturbing that this happens despite legal routes that people are allowed to use when they have these disagreements.

The time must come where, as government, we ensure that your operations are regulated and protected by law, and you also ensure that you comply with the law, for it is not meant to harass you but to ensure that you work in an organised fashion.

We must also remind ourselves that the cooperation we refer to here is in line with the resolutions that were adopted at the Provincial Taxi Indaba which was held in Durban in September 2012.

As part of our implementation of those resolutions, we have started to decentralise our Provincial Regulatory Entity (PRE) offices so that we are able to reach out to you efficiently and effectively.

Services are now taken to districts as opposed to being based at Head Office in Pietermaritzburg as was in the past.

This will also address the issue of finger-pointing that used to happen between the government and public transport operators about the delay in the issuing of operating licences.

On that score, this initiative forms part of taking government and services closer to where the people are.

In October last year, we officially launched two offices in Empangeni and Ladysmith and I am pleased to say that these are currently making a positive impact.

As we committed on that day, we have secured a space at the Bhomela Thusong Centre in Port Shepstone where our technicians are currently installing network systems.

I can also reveal that we are currently engaging with COGTA to secure the space at the Mbazwana Thusong Centre, which we intend to have operating in the next financial year 2015/2016.

In our efforts to bring about and sustain stability in the taxi industry, we agreed with SANTACO on an initiative of Cooperation Agreement.

We sign this agreement with conflicting associations so that we deal with their problems.

This agreement entails, among others:

- To rid the industry of hit-men
- To audit all finances
- To audit membership
- To have court interdict on illegal operators
- Security companies must work with SAPS

When we say that this year is for unity in action to advance economic freedom, we want to appreciate the step you took as the taxi industry in KwaZulu-Natal last year when you acquired a 10 percent stake in Halfway Toyota dealership in Howick.

This deal, among others, cemented our strongly held view that taxi operators are an important business sector that deserves to participate across the transport industry and beyond.

We have always reiterated that from our perspective as the provincial Department of Transport, we wish to see taxi operators also growing to become major bus operators.

Another issue I must mention here is the scholar transport, which has been in headlines following a bakkie accident in Pietermaritzburg recently.

I want to challenge all stakeholders in the industry to come up with suggestions and recommendations on how the issue of scholar transport should be handled within the ambit of the law.

Apart from the fact that using bakkies to ferry learners puts their lives at risk and is unlawful, there has been incidents of confrontation between *omalume* (bakkie owners) and taxi operators in some areas.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your initiative to reward drivers who excel in the execution of their duties. This will go a long way in the promotion of drivers' good behaviour and road safety as well as building good relationship between commuters and drivers.

On that note ladies and gentlemen, I wish to once again thank you for your efforts in the prevention of unnecessary deaths on our roads.

We are aware of activism against road carnage and how you have rallied behind our Operation Valingozi. Your Operation Hlokomela has not gone unnoticed with its positive impact in decreasing road fatalities.

Today we walk tall because we know that the government is not alone in this task of promoting safety on our roads. We now have leadership in the taxi industry that is not shy to conducting roadblocks on their own to monitor their own members on the road.

Therefore there is no turning back *bafowethu* - you have shown the way your children must take when they enter into this business in the future. They will know what to do to promote road safety because you stood up and showed the way.

As we speak today, notwithstanding the unacceptable number of road fatalities, indications are that many public transport business operators in KwaZulu-Natal are heeding the call to revive their consciences and regard themselves as people who have a role in the safety of other people.

We cautiously note that there has been a drop in the number of accidents involving minibus taxis, especially where five or more people lose their lives in one accident.

May I therefore conclude by assuring you, ladies and gentlemen, that as the KZN Department of Transport we remain committed to playing our mandated role of providing a safe, integrated, reliable, efficient and affordable transport system.

With these words I wish to once again thank you for this opportunity. The struggle continues. Let us unite in action to advance economic freedom in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

**I thank you**