

SPEECH PRESENTED BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM, MR J.L (JABU) MAHLANGU, MPL DURING GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WEEK EVENT AT GA-PHAHLA, SIYABUSWA, DR J.S MOROKA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

Saturday, 14 November 2009

Programme Director;

Executive Mayor of the Dr J.S Moroka Local Municipality, Her Worship Councillor Ina Masombuka;

Members of the Mayoral Committee;

Traditional Leaders in our midst;

Municipal Manager of the host municipality;

Acting Head of the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Mr Paul Shongwe;

Representatives from various government public entities;

Government officials present;

Members of the media;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good Morning!

When we took over government in 1994, we made a commitment that we will together with our people, run the government to fulfil the commitments we made in the *Freedom Charter* in 1955. Our overall commitment was the **creation of a better life for all** irrespective of race, gender, political affiliation, and geographic location. This was because we subscribe to the notion that *South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity*. Furthermore, when we adopted the country's Constitution in 1996, we collectively agreed to, and I quote:

- *“.....Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people.....;and*
- *Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.”*

In addition, in terms of Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), we are obliged as government, **to be development-oriented; to encourage public participation in policy-making; to be accountable and transparent by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.** As a representative of the government of the people, I am proud to say indeed, our *government is based in the will of the people.* I am proud to say we continue to abide by the Constitution; hence we constantly encourage public participation in policy-making. Your valuable inputs in such Public Participation fora, are in most cases used to formulate policies, which will impact positively in changing your living conditions.

Our commitment towards being a developmental state as mandated by the Constitution remains unwavering; hence we are here this morning to interact with you. We are the government representing the dreams and aspirations of our people, and nothing will stop us in our quest to continue to build caring societies for a better life for all. The recently launched Presidential Hotline, is testimony that we are willing more than before, to improve your lives for the better. You have the right to access the President. However it is important that you should exhaust all available avenues, before phoning the hotline since you would be asked whether you have done so.

Working together, we can do more to facilitate access to finance for those aspiring to become entrepreneurs, thereby reducing dependency on government.

We are all mindful of the impact of the economic recession on the lives of our people, especially the poorest of the poor; hence as government we have just recently convened the Provincial Economic Summit. The purpose of the summit was to come up with ways to ease the impact of the recession, especially on job losses, since a lot of families become affected as a result. All stakeholders were consulted and at the end of the two-day summit, we collectively agreed to fulfil certain commitments in order to re-ignite our battered economy. We have amongst others, agreed to facilitate the **establishment of a University for Mpumalanga; upgrade major hospitals; establish a tertiary hospital for the province; maintain and upgrade our coal haulage road network.**

These projects are significant towards accelerating the economy of the province. Once the university is functional, we will be able to produce the skills required to revive our economy. Through upgrading of our infrastructure and the construction of a tertiary hospital, we will be able to increase our tourism medical spend hence we will no longer send our sick people to Gauteng to receive the required health care.

Programme Director, we have partnered with different stakeholders who like us, strongly believe that **an investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.** They are here this morning, to impart their knowledge for the benefit of our people. It is our responsibility together, to empower our people so that they too, can improve their lives.

It is our responsibility together; we cannot dodge it – lest we’ll be blamed for failing our people. Fortunately, the word “failure” does not exist in our vocabulary. It does not exist for the fact that our people have pinned all their hopes on us; we are their only source of hope, hence we cannot afford to fail them. Our mandate as the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, is to ensure that every resident of this province, benefits from the wealth of this country. This is a commitment that we made when we adopted the *Freedom Charter* in 1955, that “*the People shall share in the Country's wealth,*” hence we will do everything possible, to ensure that we pave the way for equal participation of all our people in provincial economic activities.

Working together, we can do more to facilitate access to finance for those aspiring to become entrepreneurs thereby reducing dependency on government.

Madam Executive Mayor, sharing in the wealth of the country also relates to people being able to save for rainy days. It is said that “**a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.**” A single step in this case, refers to you starting to save the few cents that you have. Reports indicate that our monthly household saving as a percentage of disposable income is less than 1 per cent (0.28 per cent to be exact), the lowest recorded since the 1980s at 5.4 per cent. Consequently, household debt has risen to alarming figures, accounting to over 77 per cent of house-holds disposable income.

We acknowledge the impact of the economic recession, but we cannot hide behind this, if we serious about building brighter and better future for generations to come. We must do something – Let us start now to re-inculcate the culture of saving.

There are various forms of saving at your disposal, but the one I can suggest which I am quite certain that it will yield better results, is the Government Retail Bonds. There is no risk involved because you would have entrusted your hard earned money to your caring government. Take the first bold step now on a journey towards self-sustenance.

And as we approach the festive season, may I implore you to spend your money wisely. Do not buy what you want, but what you need. Read the warning sign, it reads, *“Spend wisely – New Year ahead!”* If you do not heed the call, you will end up not being to fulfil your financial commitments like paying school fees come January next year. Turn the tempting word “Sale,” to “Save.

Programme Director, as the year slowly draws to a close, we urge everyone especially men, to observe the **16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children** annual campaign, which runs from 25 November until 10 December. Through this campaign, we aim to raise awareness about the protection of these mostly vulnerable members of our families. They need our protection, care and love. Take it upon yourself to act against abuse by reporting the perpetrators. If you do, you would have saved our communities; our province; and our country.

As I close, like President Jacob Zuma said during his inauguration as the President of the Republic in May this year, and I quote:

“For as long as there are women (and children) who are subjected to discrimination, exploitation or abuse; we shall not rest, and we dare not falter,” in our quest to provide safer and secure communities for them.

Let us jealously protect them – if we are to build safer communities and a better tomorrow for generations to come. Let us heal Mpumalanga from these barbaric inhumane acts. It is only cowards who resort to abuse.

As we engage this morning, I am confident that you will use the information given to you to develop yourself, and in turn develop your communities. It is our dream that we must be able to build entrepreneurs on note from amongst yourselves.

And when that happens, we would surely be on our road towards fulfilling the Constitutional mandate of being development-oriented.

Like the British Statesman and author, Lord Chesterfield once said, and I quote:

“If we do not plant knowledge when young, it will give us no shade when we are old”.

Indeed, **“Working together, we can do more”** to facilitate access to finance for those aspiring to become entrepreneurs thereby reducing dependency on government, and growing our economy for the benefit of all.

I wish you fruitful interaction.

Ngiyathokoza!