

ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR PAT NGOMANE, MPL, DURING A MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF MPUMALANGA ECONOMIC REGULATOR (MER) HELD AT EMNOTWENI SUN, CITY OF MBOMBELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Tuesday, 23 July 2019

Chairperson and Members of the MER Board.

1. Good afternoon and thank you for honouring this invitation.
2. This is just a **courtesy call** to come and meet you, in order to express my appreciation for the excellent work, you continue to do in guiding the work of MER.
3. I am in fact, on a roadshow, to **meet and engage with all the Boards of our three (3) Public Entities**. On Friday last week, I met the Interim Board of your sister Entity – MEGA – and expressed my expectations from them as part of My First 100 Days in Office.
4. Let me begin by expressing our appreciation, for your sterling leadership role you played in guiding and realising the successful merger of the erstwhile **Mpumalanga Gambling Board, and the Mpumalanga Liquor Authority**.
5. It appears you are cut-out for the job; hence the merger was smooth sailing for you. This is a job well done which deserves an applause. It makes me very happy that MER is one stable organisation, and this has led to its previous Boards finishing their terms in office.
6. I must confess that you indeed run a well-oiled machine. You have all your ducks in a row – as **all governance issues in the Entity are in order**. You continue to be our Province's shining star, as far as financial management is concerned.
7. Therefore, like you have performed in many previous financial years, I trust that **you will give us yet another clean audit**, when the audit outcomes of the 2018-2019 financial year are released at the end of this month. You can't regress on this one – you have set the trend, so continue on the same path.
8. Go further, and **share your modus operandi** with your sister Entities, including your mother Department, on how to get a clean audit. We wish to one day celebrate together, as *the dedt* family, when the Department and all its Entities receive clean audit outcomes.
9. Chairperson; you **regulate two (2) essential industries**, which continue to contribute meaningfully towards the fiscus of the Province.

10. At the same time, you are also concerned about the social-ills associated with both gambling and liquor. We thus appreciate the **education and awareness campaigns** which you continue to roll-out in our communities, in this regard.
11. Ours is a caring government – even if we derive revenue from these two (2) industries, which some may label as sin industries, we remain concerned about their impact in society. Please continue with these awareness campaigns, as they are essential within our societies.
12. Notwithstanding your excellent performance, our biggest concern continues to be the **slow transformation** of especially, the gambling industry. The **industry continues to be mostly run by white people**. We need to do something to turn things around.
13. Now, here's my challenge to you – I need you to **transform the industry, by making sure that more black people enter the industry**. I can only say you have done it all, once this is realised.
14. **How much time do you think you need to turn things round?** – Well, you will set the timeline for yourself, but this should be done within a short space of time.
15. Another challenge I need you to urgently resolve, is the issue of coming up with an **integrated licensing system for gambling and liquor licenses**. I am aware that we are the second Province, after Free State, to have a regulatory body which have merged both gambling and liquor licensing administration.
16. You must, on the same breadth, **produce one central database for all liquor licenses** under operation in the Province. I am aware that we cannot, with certainty, indicate how many liquor licenses were ever issued in the Province.
17. If we need to address the problem of illegal liquor trading in the Province; we need to start by ascertaining the number of legal liquor traders we have. This will also **assist us to check the legality of liquor premises operating in close proximity to schools and places of worship**.
18. As I indicated, *MER* is not a problem child; hence I believe your work is very simple. Please help me to address just the issues I have raised. Otherwise, I am satisfied with the work you continue to do.
19. I implore you to continue to work together as a united team – for unity results in a successful story.
20. If you start to check what is in for you – that is, if you put your personal interest before the interests of the Entity, we will lose the plot. You will derail from the right track you are already traversing.
21. Let's hold each other's hand in pursuit of **economic transformation and job creation**.

22. Chairperson, *Let's grow the economy of Mpumalanga together.*

23. I thank you!