

***KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM,
MS MC MASILELA, MPL, DURING THE OCASSION OF BUSHBUCKRIDGE HEALTH
AWARENESS TOURNAMENT GALA DINNER HELD THULAMAHASHE,
BUSHBUCKRIDGE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY***

Friday, 23 August 2024

Programme Director, DJ Matt;

Our host, the Executive Mayor of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, Councillor. Lydia Moroane;

My colleague in the Executive, MEC for Health, Ms. Sasekani Manzini;

Bushbuckridge Community Radio Station Manager, Ms. Carol Kintu;

Government officials present;

Members of the media present;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good evening

1. Programme Director; thank you very much for inviting me to address this prestigious occasion, convened to celebrate and congratulate the participants of the annual **Bushbuckridge Health Awareness Tournament.**
 2. In the same breath, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate both the ladies and the men's soccer teams which have made it through to the final, scheduled to take place tomorrow.
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3. In fact, as the MEC responsible for economic growth and development matters in this Province, I am much more delighted to have been invited to this gathering which is meant to promote and inculcate the spirit of a healthy lifestyle, because economic growth hinges on a healthy and fit workforce and communities.
4. This gala dinner is held during a significant month in the history of our country, where we pay homage to the fearless and uncompromising women of 1956. The contribution of women in the fight for liberation cannot be overemphasized.
5. Before I go further, allow me to pay a special appreciation to the ladies and grannies who participated in the tournament. As the saying goes - ***Malibongwe Igama Lamakhosikazi***
6. I must say, that the fact that the station manager of Bushbuckridge Radio Station, is a woman, gives me hope that the torture suffered by the likes of ***uMama Nomzamo Madikizela-Mandela*** and many others, at the hands of the brutal apartheid regime, was not in vain.
7. I am proud to indicate that the Department has created meaningful platforms for women to be actively involved in growing the economy of our Province. Women are the cornerstone of societies, and without them, our communities would cease to exist.
8. Programme Director, we are invited here this evening to come and speak about **health awareness as an economic driver**. Our understanding of the subject matter is that we are expected to give proper analysis on the impact of leading a healthy lifestyle in relation to economic development and growth.
9. No one can dispute that for any society to realise full economic growth, it requires a healthy citizenry and healthy workforce, to drive economic activities, which will culminate in job creation and alleviation of poverty.

10. Let me hasten to confirm from the onset, that it is scientifically proven that leading an unhealthy lifestyle has a negative impact on one's life and society in general.
11. Programme Director, according to the World Health Organisation, obesity is on the rise at an alarming rate, with about 16% of adults aged 18 year and older worldwide suffering from the phenomenon.
12. The sad reality is that, this global phenomenon is posing a serious threat not only to our life expectancy, but also to economic development globally.
13. What gives me hope, is that your Health Awareness initiative tournament is in line with the World Health Organisation's global strategy on diet, physical activity and health.
14. The World Health Organisation strategy is geared towards the promotion and protection of health by guiding the development of an enabling environment for sustainable actions at individual, community, national and global levels that, when taken together, will lead to reduced disease and death rates related unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.
15. Fortunately for us, we are blessed with good Samaritans like yourselves, who are preoccupied with the noble agenda of promoting and encourage a healthy lifestyle in our communities. As government, we are encouraged to have private institutions like yourself in Mpumalanga.
16. I can confirm without fear of contradiction that government share the same mission and vision with the Bushbuckridge Community Radio Station, of encouraging and promoting a healthy lifestyle to all citizens.

17. Accordingly, we are going to continue to support this kind of noble initiatives through collaboration with organisations that share our vision.
18. The ANC-led government takes health issues very seriously, and our investment on health bears testimony to that.
19. Programme Director, the Department that I am leading is mandated to oversee the nurturing and growing of the economy of the Province, as to create the much-needed jobs for our people. Our role, as government, is to put in place policies and strategies which will pave the way and accelerate economic growth.
20. Accordingly, through collaboration with Finance Development Institutions, we offer financial and non-financial support to SMMEs and Cooperatives. We are committed to forge partnerships with the private sector, to enable our small businesses to participate in the private sector value chain.
21. True to our commitment, it gives me great pleasure to indicate that, today before we came here, we started the day by donating tools of trade to hair salon and car-wash operators from the Nkomazi Local Municipality. ***(I thought you will give the Department a round of applause)***
22. Programme Director, I am raising this in order to indicate to you that the government of Mpumalanga, as led by Premier, Mandla Ndlovu is hard at work. The governing party, the African National Congress, has instructed the 7th administration to work tirelessly to dismantle the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.
23. During the tabling of the 2024-25 Policy and Budget Speech of the Department, I announced that we are planning to create 100 000 new and sustainable jobs every year.

24. For us to realise this commitment, and many other commitments made, we require a healthy workforce and healthy communities to grow the economy by increasing production in all sectors.
25. Therefore, initiatives such as this health wellness tournament should be harnessed and supported throughout the Province, as it has great potential to mitigate sicknesses and diseases associated with leading a poor lifestyle.
26. As I move towards conclusion, I must indicate that I am humbled by the fact that amongst the participants we have senior citizens, who participated in the tournament.
27. May I therefore request you to give a huge round of applause to all the grannies and the legends who participated.
28. As I close, I want to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude and appreciation to Bushbuckridge Community Radio Station for placing the health of our communities at the top of your agenda.
29. ***Leave No One Behind; as we Grow the Economy of Mpumalanga!***

Ngiyabonga!