

**SPEECH BY THE MEC FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY, SECURITY AND LIAISON
MEC PETRUS NGOMANE ON THE OCCASSION OF THE PROVINCIAL ROAD
SAFETY DEBATE FINALS ON SATURDAY, 27 AUGUST 2016 AT MAKAUSE
SECONDARY SCHOOL IN OGIES**

Programme Director, thank very much but please allow me to appreciate the presence of the Mayor of Emalahleni Local Municipality Mayor, Clr. Lindiwe Ntshalintshali, Head for Community Safety, Security and Liaison, William Mthombothi, SAPS Provincial Commissioner, General Mondli Zuma and his team, Transport Regulation General Manager in the department, John Nkuna,

Mr. JL Thubane from the Department of Education

Ms. M Bekker from Road Traffic Management Corporation,

Mr. S Pitso from Systax and senior managers from all government departments present here today, esteemed participants, representative from National Department of Transport, Road Accident Fund officials, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen.

Sanibonani

Ladies and gentlemen, road safety is important, can we all say in unison: #BEING SAFE IS COOL.

The importance of being safe on the road cannot be overemphasised and that is why it is essential that young people are actively involved in this regard.

I know today is a culmination of so much hard work by these learners, their coaches and officials from road safety in my department.

I am aware of the gruelling processes that started with schools competing against each other, which led to the debates that we have here today.

Today officially makes all of you Road Safety Ambassadors. Regardless of who will be chosen to go to the national competitions, you are all winners and there is no turning back because you are now our Road Safety Ambassadors.

It does not only end here with you showcasing your skills on road safety but this is the beginning of a lifetime of work of spreading road safety messages in homes, schools, churches, taxis and everywhere you go.

I am saying this because of the number of road crashes that continue to claim the lives of many people and those who are affected are young and old.

Young people do not only use the road as passengers but they are also pedestrians and cyclists and some are novice drivers and they are therefore inexperienced and still learning how to drive.

They often become involved in driving at an early age unlike many of us who grew up in an era when it was unheard for young people to drive cars, let alone own them.

The death of pedestrians and cyclist is still alarmingly high despite many interventions that government is embarking upon in order to drive home road safety messages.

It is therefore critical that young people are also given an opportunity to add their views to matters of road safety. It is this context that we applaud the existence of this and many other initiatives that involve young people in road safety.

Some young people are involved because they do not become injured on the road but they are directly affected when they lose their loved ones. Their parents for example who many of them are bread winners in their families. When young people lose parents, they families become dysfunctional.

It is often younger drivers who are texting while driving, it is often young people who have just bought cars who often drag-race on the road and who are constantly driving at excessive speed after night of partying and this often explains the surge in the number of crashes that often occur on weekends.

I was once a young person myself and I am aware that it is fairly natural for them to want to experiment and try out new things. Unfortunately, they also experiment on the road and they often put the lives of other road users at risk.

Ladies and gentlemen even the transport particularly taxi industry is dominated by young people. What is sometimes unfortunate is that they also copy wrong tendencies by older drivers who they find at taxi ranks. This needs to stop.

That is why I am reminded of the words of a great man and **Isithwalandwe** and former State President of the Republic of South Africa, Dr. Nelson Mandela when he once said: ***“Be the script of your destiny and feature yourselves as stars that showed the way towards a brighter future.”***

Therefore young people should seize the opportunity and become part of the leaders of brighter country that is free from death and injury on the road. We will be failing in our duties as leaders, parents and society if we fail young people. And that is why we should applaud good initiatives like this one.

This initiative does not only give learners an opportunity to debate among themselves, it also give us older people an opportunity to tap into their wisdom so that we can gain an insight as to how they view road safety.

I am a firm believer in young people because I was once a young person myself who has also led young people before. I know how much influential they are in our society if they live an appropriate life.

The existence of these debates seeks thus to give an opportunity once to contribute to a good cause in our society and that of making of making our roads safer. The joy of the programme provides learners with an opportunity to research various road safety topics while also offering an opportunity to share valuable information with their peers.

These debates also build learners’ confidence in public speaking and analytical skills while also enhancing their ability to work in teams and enhance their listening skills.

We want road safety to become fashionable and we want all people in our society to assist Government to create safer roads and communities.

We should therefore ladies and gentlemen encourage more young people to also play a role in road safety. ***Khumbula sintfu sitsi “Inkunzi isematholeni”***. We can and we should learn more from these young and intelligent minds.

Road safety is everybody's business and therefore young people should also become active participants in road safety and crime prevention, Programme Director. It is with efforts like this that we encourage them to internalise sound road safety practices.

I am therefore appealing to all the learners who participated in these debates that issues of road safety should not only end here in this hall but they should go out there and spread the gospel of road safety among their peers. They should not passively watch reckless and blatant disregard of the rules by some drivers but they should report them.

We need all of you to be there tomorrow because the future belongs to you and in you we have future leaders and therefore you should not copy any wrongfulness that you may see old people doing on our roads. Remember you are our road safety ambassadors and there is no more turning back.

As most of you are aware, I am new in this portfolio, but what makes me happy about this noble idea of road safety debates is that it started in this province, The Place of the Rising Sun.

What is encouraging is that over the years we have been able to produce winners at national level. In 2014 at the National finals that were conducted in East London, the winners came from the province. Mpumalanga is indeed the province of the winners.

These debates, ladies and gentlemen come after few weeks after the launching of a partnership between the department and Services Seta. The initiative which was hosted by my predecessor, Honourable Vusi Shongwe before I joined the department seeks to empower identified learners with driving skills so that their chances of being employed are enhanced once they leave school. This beautiful initiative is called Youth Capacity Development Programme.

Most of you are aware that most of the jobs that are available require people with driving licenses over and above the qualifications or skills that they possess. Ladies and gentlemen, I am glad to report today that since the inception of the project, all the regions have started with the induction of the learners.

The Transport Regulations component in my department is hard at work in order to prepare the learners to write their learners licenses. The process will see them through until they do the actual practical tests in order to obtain licenses to become drivers.

Having said that Programme Director, I am appealing to the participants in the Youth Capacity Development Programme to grab the opportunity with both hands and ensure they prepare thoroughly so that they do not fail their learners licenses and driving licenses tests because if they fail any of the tests on two occasions, they will be immediately taken off the programme.

I must take this opportunity and congratulate all the participants in the debates because in my view, you are all winners in this important competition that we have as Government. We are committed to the achievement of an accident free Mpumalanga and South Africa.

Sekwanele Bopha!

I thank you