

**SPEECH BY MEC FOR COGTA, HON. R.M MTSHWENI DURING A DEBATE ABOUT THE PREMIER'S STATE OF THE PROVINCE ADDRESS (SOPA) ON TUESDAY, 1 MARCH 2016 IN ACORNHOEK, BUSHBUCKRIDGE MUNICIPALITY**

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**HONOURABLE SPEAKER, BT SHONGWE  
HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKER, MR D DUBE  
HONOURABLE PREMIER, DD MABUZA  
HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,  
ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL  
LEGISLATURE  
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

1. Madam Speaker, the State of the Province Address tabled by the Premier, Hon. DD Mabuza has given an account of progress in dealing with challenges facing the Mpumalanga Province. It takes an honest leader to present a fair and a balanced account of a government that enjoys the support of the majority, to the people, irrespective of their political persuasions. True to this custom, the Honorable Premier must be commended for this.
2. Madam Speaker, access to basic services remains one of the focal points of the ANC-led government. It is anchored on the manifesto adopted by the ruling party, in an effort to make the **'better life for all'** commitment, a reality. The Hon. Premier's expression that this body of work remains on our agenda, gives us hope that a better life for all will be pursued to the latter until is achieved in our life time.
3. His commitment was loud enough to draw the attention for all of us. He summed it by saying: **"Basic services such as electricity, water, sanitation and refuse removal provide the glue that will hold our integrated human settlements together."**

***Plainly stated, the provision of new services and addressing the backlogs will always remain uppermost on our agenda in the context of challenges such as a growing population, rural and urban migration, safe energy generation, water scarcity and drought.”***

4. Madam Speaker, a major milestone achievement has been recorded in the provision of water to our people in Mpumalanga. Our people in the Bushbuckridge municipal areas are enjoying access to water as a basic right, as enshrined in Chapter 2 of our Constitution. However, we are not shy to indicate that a lot of work still need to be done. As the Hon. Premier correctly pointed out in the State of the Province Address, a collective contribution of R2.7 billion by National, Provincial and Local Government during the 2015/16 financial year, was disbursed to address water challenges in all our municipalities. Out of this total allocation more than R600 million was dedicated to adress water challenges in Bushbuckridge Municipality.
  
5. A team of technocrats from the three spheres of government worked tirelessly, under the watchful eye of the Hon. Premier to source funding from MIG and MWIG for the provision of water in 24 villages, as part of Phase 1.
  
6. Madam Speaker, our water intervention in Phase 2 have improved the supply of water in about fourteen (14) villages.
  
7. Madam Speaker, the Hon. Premier has shown no mercy to the water shortage challenges, especially in this region. Notwithstanding the limited resources due to a tight fiscal allocation to our province, the steady increase of households with access to water, is testimony to this. Our people can be rest assured that we will navigate around every obstacle in an effort to provide clean water in this region and elsewhere in our province.

8. The persistent drought is a major impediment towards our sustained water provision plan. Part of the intervention for water is the drilling of boreholes as an interim measure. As the Honourable Premier has pointed out, we will be drilling 582 boreholes in the 2016/17 financial year, some of which will be drilled in the Bushbuckridge Municipality to cushion our people against the acute water shortage, compounded by the drought.
  
9. Madam Speaker, these intervention will be in vain if our people do not protect the infrastructure against vandalism. Furthermore, Mpumalanga's contribution to the expressed target of access to clean water by all, come 2030, as set out in the National Development Plan (NDP), will be under threat if the investment for water is not looked after.
  
10. Saving water, Madam Speaker, is no longer an option. We **MUST** all use water sparingly. Any wastage of water will no longer be tolerated! (**#Water wastage must fall**). We must all frown at those who waste water. The reality of this matter is that no rain is predicted anytime soon, and the sharp decline of water in our rivers and our dams is a reality we have to face. We appeal to our communities to fix leaking taps and to adhere to the water restrictions issued by our local municipalities.
  
11. Madam Speaker, we may encounter challenges and obstacles in pursuit of these goals of making our people's lives better. However, the innovative means we are employing, are propelling us to make them a reality. I can assure members of this august sitting and our people at large that a **Better Life for All** is certainly within our reach!!!

I thank you.