

Honourable Speaker of the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality council, Chief whip, members of the mayoral committee, honourable councillors of the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality, delegates from the Ehlanzeni district municipality and our sister municipalities within the district, delegates from the house of traditional leaders, special thanks to the Mnisi traditional authority for hosting this event, leaders, representatives of different political parties, the administrative leadership of the Bushbuckridge local municipality and other spheres of government, community leaders from the business sectors, different religions and cultural institutions, members of the media, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Avuxeni, Dumelang, Sanibonani, I greet you.

INTRODUCTION

Honourable Speaker, I would like to open by extending warm and fraternal greetings to all stakeholders, who came to share with us this important occasion of the State of the Municipal Address. It gives me pleasure to speak before leaders of our communities who always support the programmes of the institution. We value your presence in our function.

SERVICE DELIVERY CONTEXT OF THE MUNICIPALITY

Honourable Speaker and members, let me take this opportunity and extend our appreciation as members of this council to the ruling party, the African National Congress for paying homage to the heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle as we continue to celebrate the centenary of this liberation movement. In his State of the Nation Address, the President of the country his Excellency President Jacob Zuma dedicated the introduction to his speech to our former Presidents. Allow me to join the President in saluting these former great leaders. In his State of the Nation Address the President said "In marking this occasion, we are recognizing the work of all South Africans in bringing about a truly free, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous country. We wish to single out the former Presidents of the ANC who led our struggle for liberation and creating better life across generations. We salute John Langalibalele Dube, Sefako Makgatho, Zaccheus Richard Mahabane, Josiah Gumede, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, AB Xuma, Dr J.S. Moroka, Chief Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki.

Honourable Speaker

In his State of the Province Address, Premier Mabuza stated also that "the centenary event was a befitting moment to celebrate the contributions and sacrifices made by the sons and daughters of the soil, including our friends in Africa and beyond in our struggles for liberation and democracy" The Premier went on to state that "we will forever be indebted to our liberation fighters for the sacrifices that they have made so that me and you could be free and enjoy the fruits of democracy. Honourable Speaker, as a way of acknowledging and appreciating the sacrifices made by our liberation fighters, I would like to commit this municipality to the total eradication of poverty in our communities through job creation, access to basic municipal services, building of safer and integrated communities, building of a financially viable municipality, and enforcing massive community participation in all activities of the municipality.

Honourable Speaker as I address this opening session, Bushbuckridge Local Municipality is faced with a number of challenges which require a very quick response from all of us. These challenges include, inter alia, infrastructure development backlogs. These backlogs were worsened further by the most recent natural disasters that were caused by heavy thunder-storms that befell us. Bridges, roads, houses were destroyed. In some cases, the disaster robbed us of human lives which are regrettable. Our condolences to the families that lost their loved ones. The infrastructure that was destroyed was obviously not budgeted for. Consequently, we will have to elicit assistance from the treasury and other funders in order to rescue this situation. Honourable Speaker, let me be quick in acknowledging the joint quick response from the municipality, Ehlanzeni District and Provincial departments in efforts to assist the affected communities and to generally bring life to normality in the affected communities at a very high cost. Honourable Speaker the total cost of the damages to roads and bridges is estimated at R216 293 000.00.

Honourable Speaker and members, while progress has been made in responding to the infrastructure needs of the municipality, a sizeable number of the communities still survive without acceptable water infrastructure and portable drinking water. This is a challenge that must be addressed with speed because we cannot tolerate this status quo in our 18 years of democracy. We cannot afford to have this challenge continuing in all terms of municipal council. We need closure in this very important deliverable. In the state of the nation address, the state President Jacob Zuma has made special emphasis on infrastructure development as catalyst in dealing with a number of challenges facing the nation. One of the challenges is job creation. It is estimated that between 80 000 to 100 000 employable people of Bushbuckridge remained unemployed by 2008. This figure is more likely to have risen sharply because of the global recession that affected all economies in the world two and half years back. The above figures translate into just below 40% unemployment which is a major concern to the municipality. Honourable Speaker we will not be able to create safer and sustainable communities in Bushbuckridge if most of our people remain jobless. And this is a direct betrayal of the spirits of those who sacrificed their lives for the total liberation of this nation, South Africa. As we celebrate the centenary there is a need that as a community of Bushbuckridge we harness our joint efforts and resources to contribute to job creation.

Honourable Speaker and members, linked to the challenge of unemployment is the high prevalence of diseases and crime which further destabilizes attempts towards building liveable and sustainable communities. Although the ANC led government has made strides in promoting universal access to HIV/AIDS and TB prevention and treatment, the municipality continues to feel the strain of all these opportunistic diseases because of high levels of poverty. The prevalence of HIV/ AIDS infection is estimated at 29%. The biggest percentage of these estimate figures comprises adults who are supposed to contribute to the GDP of the municipality. There is a need therefore to continue to mobilize against unemployment and ultimately these diseases.

Quite recently honourable Speaker, the community of Bushbuckridge woke up to homes filled with terror from criminals who unfortunately believe they can take away the freedom that was earned through many years of struggle for liberation. There are thugs who break into families, rob, rape, kill, high-jack people, creating an atmosphere of fear and terror. This cannot be justified. We need to deal with these undesirable elements without compromise. While the security forces are tirelessly dealing with this challenge, the municipality should speed up the delivery of services that will deter these regrettable criminal tendencies. We also need to develop powerful community systems through our ward committees

and Community Policing Forum (CPF) to help detect criminal activities before they happen, because prevention will save us a lot of human life and property. Honourable Speaker and members, it is out of outrage that I cite the case of an alleged serial killer, rapists and house burglar as an example of the state of crime in our municipality. He is not above the law, he cannot be, he will not be, he must not be, he must be stopped before he causes much damage. We are pleased because already the MEC for Safety and Security honourable Shongwe has put this criminal on top of list of fugitives who must be apprehended with speed. I hope this will apply to all criminals and different crimes within the municipality.

Honourable Speaker another challenge that inhibits our efforts to deliver services to the communities is the struggling finances of the municipality. It is a fact that we are still largely dependent on grants from the national treasury in the form of equitable shares and MIG. It is also a fact that while the service delivery needs of the communities are limitless and realistic indeed, we continue to struggle to collect enough revenue to complement the grants. This particular situation places the municipality in a state of paralysis. There is a need honourable Speaker, to urgently develop an appropriate turn around strategy that will be practical given the development context of the communities, the municipality and the Local Economic activities that have the potential to create a sustainable financial base for the municipality. We need to implement the credit control policy, revenue enhancement strategy and complete the indigent register.

As we continue to work with speed towards creating a reliable economic base as a municipality, I must acknowledge honourable Speaker that for the budget allocation we received for the financial year 2010-2011, the municipality received an unqualified audit opinion from the Auditor General. While this must be appreciated as progress towards a clean audit between now and 2014, I must be quick to point out that our financial and organisational systems and processes need a complete reengineering in consideration of the limited financial resources at our disposal.

We need to introduce in this organisation the culture of professionalism and excellence where in communication, team work, discipline, collectivity and common purpose around the vision of the municipality become a basis to encourage a pick-to- pick performance practice. Linked to the performance of the organisational systems, human capital, finances, infrastructure and other assets, the municipality has over the years established a performance management system which is anchored on the municipal's Key Performance Areas. While we have made progress in tracing our organisational performance, more still needs to be done to get this system to effectively benefit the municipality as expected. There is a need to re think its composition and functionality in order to maximise the performance of this municipality.

PERFORMANCE AND PRIORITIES HENCE FORTH

Honourable Speaker, work is in progress, Ntirho wu ya emahlweni, Umsebenzi uya qhubeka, Mošomo o tswela pele. In my official mayoral inauguration address at Living Waters church in Mkhuhlu on the 29th of July 2011, I unveiled our programme of action for the next five years (2011-2016). In the said address I prioritised the following key service delivery areas:

1. Build Local Economies to create more decent employment and sustainable livelihoods:

- The unemployment in Bushbuckridge is growing and is more likely to exacerbate poverty and other social ills.
- Resuscitation of the following projects : Champaign Citrus Farm and Chicken abattoir , Lisbon Citrus Estate, Bushbuckridge Clay Bricks, Bushbuckridge Nature Reserve , Allandale Citrus Farm , Irrigation Schemes (New Forest ,Dingledale and Hoxani) Cork – Thulani Tourism Development and the five LED projects (Aqua-Culture, Essential Oils, stone crushing , manufacturing incubator and rural accommodation.

2. Improve Local Public Services and Broaden Access

- Establishment of land fill sites and solid waste recycling.
- Four (4) public libraries , four public parks , two additional DLTC's , naming of streets and public building , acquire electricity distribution license from eskom , acquire housing accreditation, full functioning of the disability centre.
- Tarring of access roads.
- Completion of the bulk pipe line from Acornhoek to Manyeleti and Dwarsloop to Acornhoek.
- Upgrading of Sewer treatment plants.
- VIP toilets.
- Fencing of sites.
- Housing
- Electrification of outstanding areas and extensions.

3. Building more United, Integrated and Safer communities:

- Implement spatial development framework
- Full functioning of the Disaster Management Centre
- Erect High Mast Lights in outstanding areas
- Strengthening of community structures such as CPF's, MAM and Local Safety Forum e.tc.
- Monitor the implementation of the service standards as per Batho Pele Principles.
- Improve the turnaround time for public queries.
- Strive for transparency in the supply chain process
- Strengthening of programmes and structures designed to empower the target groups.

4. Promote more Active Participation in Local Government

- We will ensure that ward committees are established and functional in all the wards.
- Provide administrative support to ward committees.
- Ensure that ward committees have report back meetings of 14 days after every Council Sitting.
- Implement capacity building programmes for both Public Representative and ward committee members.
- At least 8 mayoral Izimbizo per annum
- Communication department will ensure that Citizens are at all times informed about municipal activities.

5. Ensure more Effective, Accountable and Clean Local Government that works together with Provincial and National Government

- Strengthening of the following committees: MPAC, Oversight Committee, Audit Committee and Performance Management Committee.
- To strive for a clean audit by 2014.
- Monitor the implementation of the Fraud and Prevention Strategy.

I am delighted to report back some of the work done in respect of the Programme of Action which addresses in part some of the challenges highlighted earlier on. In this current financial year through our Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), we have managed to create 416 temporary and 96 permanent jobs. Almost 13 cooperatives have been established with 134 participants in different fields such as Carpentry and Brick Making. This programme is ongoing and is funded by the Provincial Departments.

On the Community Work Programme (CWP) about 100 participants from the Bushbuckridge Beekeeping project have been absorbed. This project is focusing on health, education and infrastructure. About 2220 job opportunities have been created and participants have been spread around the above sectors. The Bushbuckridge Agro processing Hub (formerly known as Champaign Chicken Abattoir project has been resuscitated with the first phase which includes poultry processing completed in this very project. Infrastructure upgrade has been completed which created 75 short term opportunities. You will be happy to know that poultry processing operations have commenced and 45 job opportunities have been created. The second and third phase includes vegetable and fruit processing and the activities' will commence once funding has been secured.

Honourable Speaker we shall not rest until our people live a better life, We shall not rest until our people find jobs. The Bushbuckridge SMME Hub has seen 10 local entrepreneurs receiving support which created 60 job opportunities. The hub is operational and is based at Bushbuckridge Shopping Complex assisting Small Medium Micro Enterprises with financing, mentoring in order to expand business activities and start up businesses.

The Bushbuckridge Nature Reserve to date has created almost 286 jobs and funds for this project have been secured and it will be implemented by the South African National Parks (SANParks).

Bushbuckridge Tourism Safety Monitors and Ambassador's Programme have also started. This programme is funded by the national department of Tourism and it is aimed at empowering participants with skills on various tourism related programmes such as Tour guide, Housekeeping and hospitality for a period of one (1) year on a learnership. Furthermore, Tourism Ambassadors Programme commenced on the 01st of March 2012 and 15 participants have been appointed.

About 38 participants have been appointed as Tourism Safety Monitors and the programme has commenced on the 02nd of April 2012. The Agricultural and cooperatives Support Programme has since created almost 80 job opportunities in the following schemes " Phaphama Agricultural Cooperatives, Masakeng Agriculture Project and BT Timber sawmill.

We are on the verge of resuscitating citrus estates: Lisbon, Champaign and Zoeknog. Honourable Speaker, I am delighted to announce today that application for funding have been submitted to the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) through the jobs fund and infrastructure programme and we hope funding will be approved.

The resuscitation of the New Forest, Dingledale, Saringwa, Hoxani, Allandale and Dumphries irrigation schemes have secured funding and technical support from the department of Rural Development and Land Reform, the department of Agriculture and Bushbuckridge Local Municipality. This honourable Speaker, will breath life to the subsistence livelihood of our communities.

Honourable Speaker and members, Work is in progress, the Mnisi Resort project is near completion and has created 141 job opportunities. Huntington Tsonga Village phase 3 of the project has commenced and 31 job opportunities have been created. Bohlabela Cultural Village project is near completion and about 58 job opportunities have been created.

The long awaited Bushbuckridge Local Municipality Disaster Centre has just been handed over by the contractor and I have been assured by the Administration that the Disaster Centre will be officially launched soon. The Disaster Centre will enable the municipality to respond to disasters with the necessary speed required. I have no doubt that the centre will also help the municipality to create jobs as there will be a need for the centre to have the necessary staff complement.

These are some of the projects which have been completed in this financial year.

- Sandford bridge at Marite
- Marite center for disabled
- Ka Shere bridge at Hluvukani region
- Urban renewal project phase II – upgrading of the Bushbuckridge CBDv(streets and storm water)
- Acornhoek bulk pipeline is under construction and some communities around Shatale are already benefiting.

I have just shared with you some of the achievements, strides the municipality has made towards achieving on the municipality's vision "we strives for a developmental and prosperous life for all. It is evident that we are indeed hard at work.

Honourable Speaker, moving forward the municipality is in the process of finalizing the budget and IDP for the next financial year (2012-2013). This council must make sure that every single cent of the amount goes into serving the community.

Honourable Speaker, in order to build on the achievements that have been announced here today. The municipality is going to focus more attention to deliver on the following key projects:

1. WATER PROJECTS

In the 2012-2013 financial years, the municipality aims to complete the Acornhoek Bulk Main Terminal Branch system which will benefit the following communities: Tsakane, Moripe, Brooklyn and Boelang.

Inyaka bulk water supply (B3) is to be completed and will benefit the communities of Okkernooitboom, ka Zitha and Timbavati.

The bulk water infrastructure in Marite and Hluvukani will also be completed in the next financial year in our quest to reduce the backlog in the provision of portable water to our communities.

2. SANITATION PROJECTS

The municipality has planned to build 1038 VIP toilets in Hluvukani (ward 30, 33, 34 and 36) through a CRDP programme to be funded by the national Treasury in the 2012 – 2013 financial year. Another R42m has been set aside from the MIG funding for the next financial year to build more VIP toilets for all regions.

3. ROADS, BRIDGES AND STORM WATER DRAINAGE PROJECTS

The municipality has planned to construct amongst others the following road in the next financial year 2012/13

- Rehabilitation and construction of road from bridge way to Tintswalo village.
- Tarring of road D3931: Buffelshoek phase1.
- Bridge construction in Rooibooklagte A to B.
- Tarring of road from Rolle / Oakley via Ximhungwe.
- Tarring of road from Arthurseat via Mkhululine to Green valley phase 2 and 3
- Construction of bridge from ka –Jeke to Freddy Sithole
- Urban renewal project phase III (streets and storm water)

4. ELECTRICITY PROJECTS

The following areas will benefit from the 2012-2013 budget for the Electrification of households, namely: Maviljan 30 housing units at College View, 38 in Sgodiphola, Mkhuhlu 13 housing units at Cork, Acornhoek 120 housing units in chavela gaza, Marite 40 units in Waterval and West (Nkanini), Casteel 250 units in Sefoma/ Matsikitsane, Mkhuhlu –Malubane 349 units and Mountain view in Maviljan 42 units.

5. SPORTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION

- Mkhuhlu stadium phase 2
- Fencing and electrification of Thulamahashe old stadium.

6. COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

- In the 2012-2013 financial year, we plan to complete fencing of cemeteries in all the regions.
- Together with the department of Corporative governance and Traditional Affairs we planned to establish a Thusong Service Centre at Ximhungwe in our quest to bring services to the people.

These plans will be communicated further during the mayoral outreach programme that will kick-start very soon. My office has planned six public participation programmes (Izimbizo). The dates and areas or

venues where this izimbizo will take place will be communicated in due course. Our first imbizo will be held on the 18th of April 2012 at Wales.

We welcome the announcement by the honourable Premier DD Mabuza to build Traffic College in Mkhuhlu.

In concluding this address let me congratulate learners, teachers, and the communities of Bushbuckridge for heeding to the national call to improve the performance of our schools because both our current and future development challenges will only be addressed if we take education seriously. In particular, let me acknowledge Mr Davis Masinga, the school principal of Masana High School. He, as part of the collective in the education fraternity, represented Bushbuckridge and the Mpumalanga province in the annual national teacher's awards where he obtained position two nationally, this achievement cannot go unnoticed, we also congratulate Mr D.J. Mthethwa the veteran principal of Orhovelani High school for winning a life time award, Magigwane High school for obtaining 93%. We appeal to all leaders in all sectors to excel in everything they do.

Therefore we call upon all sectors from business, Non Governmental organizations (NGO's) to come forward and be counted as change contributors and partners. This government believes that alone we cannot win the fight against unemployment, poverty, communicable diseases etc, but that through public private partnership we can do more in addressing these social and economic challenges.

I thank you