

MEDIA STATEMENT
04 FEBRUARY, 2008

KWAZULU-NATAL LEGISLATURE -2008 OFFICIAL OPENING

Greetings to all and compliments of the New Year.

Thanks, again for coming, and for your continued support, and interest in the work of our Legislature.

Today, as Speaker of the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Legislature, I wish to announce that the Official Opening of the Fifth Session of the Third KZN Legislature will take place on the 12 February 2008. As per our Standing Rules, I am privileged to announce that His Majesty, King Zwelithini Ka Bhekuzulu will deliver the Keynote Address, marking the Official Opening.

Venue

The Official Opening of the Fifth Session of the Third KwaZulu-Natal Legislature is to take place at the Olympia Hall, Agricultural Show Grounds in the Capital City of the province, Pietermaritzburg.

I also wish to state that it is the fourth time in a row that the Official Opening is held outside the Legislature official complex [situated at Langalibalele Street]. There are two reasons for such a move, namely:

- (i) The present Legislature situated at Langalibalele complex is inadequate as it only allows 120 guests in the public gallery. Sadly it does not comply with the new statutory requirements in terms of access for people with disabilities.

Our own Members struggle to access a building wherein they are supposed to carry out the mandate of the electorate. However, the good news is that there is now a cabinet decision [2007] to build a new KZN Legislature Complex.

- (ii) (ii) It is our firm conviction that the Official Opening of the Legislature should allow as many people as possible to take part. This is in line with our programme of Taking Legislature to the people. To us public participation is a lynchpin that defines our democracy, and is, and will remain the central part of how we run all Legislature projects.

Future State – Legislature Complex

The building of the new Legislature Complex, boasting of adequate facilities to accommodate the needs of a modern Legislature is no longer a matter of choice. It is going to be done. We have deemed it prudent to do it now rather than to continue to incur costs on rentals and lease agreements. We have no luxury of dilly-dallying, hence our decision, “do it now”. The new facility must be a pristine building that posterity will be proud of. I am pleased to announce that the feasibility study into this project has been completed. The relevant structures of government are now in the process of studying the report.

2008 Legislature Theme

The theme for this year’s Official Opening and subsequent months is **KwaZulu-Natal Legislature: the “Expression of the People’s Voice”**, which means, our campaigns giving ordinary people a voice will be intensified.

Guests

To this end, 500 guests have been invited, while more than 1500 members of the public are expected to attend. Members of the public are requested not to wear political party regalia.

Invited guests include High Commissioners/Ambassadors/Consular corps from over 30 countries, religious leaders from various denominations including the leadership of the Shembe Church [eKuphakameni & eBuhleni], Organised Business Organisations, Mayors & Speakers of District Municipalities, Mayors of all KwaZulu-Natal Municipalities, leaders Civil Society as well as high profile politicians and leaders.

To mention a few high profile guests who have been **invited** are the Deputy President of the Republic, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Speaker of the National Assembly, Ms Baleka Mbete, the Chairperson of the NCOP, Mr. Mzinwa Mahlangu, Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, KwaZulu-Natal Chairperson of the House of Traditional Leaders, and the newly-elected President of the African National Congress (ANC) uBaba Jacob Zuma, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, Blade Nzimande, first Vice President of COSATU, S'dumo Dlamini and all leaders of political parties who have presence in the province.

We are hoping that all our invited guests will accept our humble invitation to come and share with us in this august function, the Official Opening of the Fifth Session of the Third KwaZulu-Natal Legislature. Once all **acceptance/decline letters** of invitations have been received, we will update you on this by the 10 February, 2008.

Partnerships

Standard Bank

We wish once again to acknowledge the generous financial support from the Standard Bank of South Africa. They have donated R300 000 to cover part of the cost of the Official Opening. We are delighted that big business supports our initiative to make our Legislature a real people's institution. We extend an invitation to other companies to join in and help nurture our fragile democracy.

It is such acts of corporate citizenship from big business that makes us to be continuously convinced that indeed South Africa, and in particular KwaZulu-Natal is on a path to success and quite frankly unstoppable.

State of the Province Address

For the fourth time in a row, the Premier Sibusiso Ndebele will deliver his State of the Province address (13 February 2008) to the Legislature at the same venue where the Official Opening would have taken place the previous day. Moreover, the next day (14 February 2008), the debate on the state of the province will be held in the same venue, i.e. Olympia Hall.

Again, this innovative and pioneering initiative is intended to give meaning to the concept of a government by the people. We are doing all this not because, it is fashionable to do so, but because we are convinced that it is the only way to nurture our young democracy. A real democracy revolves around the people. All members of the public are invited to be part of this three-day event, a history in the making.

Closure of roads in PMB on the day of the Official Opening

We are committed in ensuring that we minimize disruption to public life because of road closures to allow certain guests to arrive safely at our Official Opening. This is purely done for security purposes. Security agencies have assured me that any road closure will be of limited time only.

Consequently, Security Agencies have requested that motorists and members of the public to use alternate routes, as the following roads will temporarily be closed.

The Howick Road between Victoria Road and Gough Street will be closed completely as of 9:30 to 11h00. The Security Agencies have also requested that, no vehicles are parked on Hyslop Road between Howick Road & Chatterton Road on both sides between (9:30 & 11:00).

RESEARCH INDICATES THAT THE KZN LEGISLATURE, “TAKING LEGISLATURE TO THE PEOPLE” PROGRAMME IS A WINNER

The most successful oversight and public participation tool that we launched in 2005, aptly titled, “Taking Legislature to the People,” will continue this year. Since this innovative programme was launched in October, 2005, in uThukela District culminating in-a-four-day sitting and a one-day- Speaker’s Social Responsibility Programme held in Estcourt.

In 2006 & 2007, we took the “Legislature to the People” of the Districts of uMkhanyakude, Ugu, uMzinyathi and Zululand. Through the innovative programme we have reached over 140 000 people.

Realising that because of time constraints and large numbers of attendees not all people were able to voice their concerns.

In-order to get as much input from as many citizens as possible, the Legislature decided to use its Research Unit to administer Questionnaires to all attendees.

These Questionnaires were intended to elicit not only demographic data, but also concerns and opinions of the people. The response of the people was overwhelmingly enthusiastic and provided the Legislature with 11500 completed Questionnaires which gave both quantitative as well as qualitative analyses.

This was done in-order to fulfill the Legislature's desire to address the issues of those on the ground who have not yet achieved optimal service delivery levels.

Exactly 8563 of these Questionnaires from the Districts of uThukela, uMkhanyakude and uMzinyathi, and were analysed with particular emphasis on the provision of water and electricity in these areas.

The analyses of the three Districts were interpreted, and written up as Reports which would give guidance to the Legislature led by the Speaker as to the needs of poorest of the poor. After these reports were completed and submitted to the Speaker and office-bearers of the Legislature, it was resolved to submit the Reports to the relevant National Ministers in-order to draw attention to dire circumstances in which many of our people in these three Districts live.

The Legislature invested over R12 million rands over the last two & half years since the, "Taking Legislature to the People" was launched.

I am pleased to share with you, not only the results of our Research Unit, but also the net gains of our interaction with the ordinary people that has resulted in the National Government making an addition R2.38 billion over an above the allocated provincial budget for the financial year 2007/8.

On the 13 September 2007, Ms Buyelwa Sonjica Minister of Minerals and Energy addressed the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature. This was a novelty for a provincial Legislature to be addressed by a National Minister in fulfillment of their duty to account to the elected representatives of the people.

The Minister addressed the House on our invitation. This invitation was in the main precipitated by a cry from of people of the Districts of Uthukela, Umkhanyakude, Ugu and Umzinyathi that we had visited as part of our most successful and innovative oversight & public participation tool, *“Taking Legislature to the People”*.

In all areas we visited, people spoke directly and passionately about relevant problems they face. If we had not taken their Legislature to them, their dreams and hopes of a better life might have been dashed forever.

During her address, the Minister said:

“Today I would like to focus on some of the plans that we have put in place to make the quest for achieving universal access to electricity a reality by 2012. I have been requested to focus on the provision of energy generally and electricity in particular in the district municipalities of Uthukela, Umkhanyakude, Ugu and Umzinyathi.

In conclusion, I must reiterate my commitment to ensuring that we fast-track universal access to electricity in KwaZulu-Natal. I am aware of the request regarding the proposed partnership between the province and ourselves in fast-tracking electrification in Umkhanyakude District. Honourable Premier, I commit to the 50:50 co-funding partnership that has been proposed and will contribute R50 million towards those projects.

I am also glad to announce that I am now in a position to commit funding for the building of additional bulk substations in Pomeroy in Umzinyathi, Mandabeni in Uthukela and Nondabuya in Umkhayakude.

Lastly, I will make available another R51 million to cover the costs of the projects listed under the KwaZulu Natal Premier's priorities."

Towards the end of 2007, the National Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, Mrs. Lindiwe Hendricks on our invitation addressed the august House of the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature on Thursday, 25 November 2007.

In her address, Minister Hendricks said:

"Honourable Speaker, you asked me to talk about what my Department has done since the discovery by your delegation of the plight of local communities during your "Taking Legislature to the People," to the districts of Ugu, Umkhanyakude, Uthukela and Umzinyathi.

Uthukela District Municipality

In May this year, I accompanied the Deputy President, Mrs. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, to Woodstock Dam in Bergville. I was deeply touched by the lack of access to water by local people, when there is a major scheme from the same area (dam) that supplies and helps sustain the economy of Johannesburg. This has prompted my Department to push for drafting of government policies that will ensure that local people benefit from their dams. This initiative has begun in uThukela where funds are going to be secured for a local scheme that would open tourism opportunities and help grow local economy. This scheme is estimated at R45 million.

UMkhanyakude District Municipality

Like the uThukela District Municipality, uMkhanyakude has a dam in Jozini (Pongola Poort Dam), but local people there do not have any drinking water. I have spoken about a sugarcane mill that is being built which will create employment opportunities and bring about economic development in that area.

Currently the municipality is being assisted by my Department and uMhlathuze Water is busy with a feasibility study that is looking into utilising the dam at Jozini to supply water to the rest of uMkhanyakude.

Ugu District Municipality

My Department contributed largely to helping uGu municipality in coming up with a proposal to introduce a water project at the Mathulini area as well as a sanitation programme at the eMalangeni area.

UMzinyathi District Municipality

In areas like Greytown and Qhudeni under the uMzinyathi District Municipality, water supply schemes are awaited with great anticipation.

The shortage of water in the Msinga and Mvoti municipalities is well known and my department, in collaboration with the uMzinyathi municipality, is busy with a feasibility study on this issue. The problems that have been identified relate to the performance of the water utility (uThukela Water) that was established by uMzinyathi and other municipalities around uThukela. I have discussed this issue with the MEC Mike Mabuyakhulu and promise to look into the feasibility study proposals and the recommendations made about the status/position of this utility.

I am also aware of the fact that uMzinyathi Municipality has had discussions with uMgeni Water with a view to get assistance on the issue of water in Mvoti.

The Minister further allocated R35 million for drought relief to the following Municipalities in the province to deal with these problems.

This amount is allocated as follows:

Municipality	Amount (R'million)
Ugu	4,0
Uthukela	3,0
Umzinyathi	3,0
Amajuba	1,0
Zululand	7,0
Umkhanyakude	8,0
Uthungulu	4,5
ILembe	1,5
Sisonke	3,0
Total	35,0

In addition, Minister Hendricks further allocated more funds for dam construction and revitalisation projects in line with the province's economic growth strategy as well as the cries from affected communities as communicated to the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature oversight and public participation initiatives. She spelled out the projects as follows:

Water infrastructure development projects

- Spring Grove Dam will be constructed in Moor River at an estimated amount of R360 million to supply water to Umgeni River.
- Hazelmere Dam will see its walls extended by seven metres at an estimated amount of R25 million. Water from this dam will supply the Dube Trade Port, the King Shaka International Airport as well as areas north of Durban.
- A feasibility study for a construction of a dam worth approximately R600 million is being conducted in KwaDukuza.
- A feasibility study is being conducted in Mvoti River near Greytown with a view to supply rural water schemes. The amount for the construction of this dam is estimated at R100 million.
- A feasibility study is being conducted for a dam that would preserve water in Ngwadini, a small water resource in Umkhomazi River. This would help sustain companies such as SAICCOR when there is drought. This dam is estimated to cost R200 million.
- The Department is playing a role in the feasibility study for a construction of a dam to deal with floods in Mzimkhulu River under Sisonke Municipality. This dam will also supply water to residents of the area.
- There is a dam that is proposed in Mpondo River near Buffalo River in Majuba district – to help emerging farmers.
- The Department is considering a request for permission by Eskom to construct two dams that will be used for generating electricity.
- Remedial work is underway in Usuthu River to keep it in an acceptable condition. The budget for this project has been adjusted to R8 million.
- Our strategies are being reviewed to effectively manage water resources and all dams, so that land can be utilised in a sustainable way.

PLAN FOR THE 2008/9 FINANCIAL YEAR

With all this information and extra resources for the people of KwaZulu-Natal, we are convinced more than ever that, "Taking Legislature to the People Programme" is not only deepening democracy but it's also bearing real fruits for our people. As a result, therefore, the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature will further hold two, "Taking Legislature to the People Programmes" this upcoming financial year, 2008/9 in uThungulu & Amajuba Districts.

OVERSIGHT FOLLOW-UP VISITS

A new feature for the upcoming financial year will be placed on oversight follow-up visits to some areas that we have visited as part of, "Taking Legislature to the People". The main aim of these oversight follow-up visits will be to gauge the extent to which commitments made by various Members of both the National Cabinet as well the Provincial Members of the Executive Council are being implemented. We will also continue calling upon National Ministers to come and account to the Legislature on their programmes in the province. The first Minister to be called in this regard will be the Minister for Land Affairs & Agriculture, Ms Lulu Xingwana. We are hoping that she will be able to give clarity to the Legislature on the land redistribution programme, land claims issues as well as the farming community related matters

SECTORAL PARLIAMENTS

We will also continue with the sectoral parliaments for Workers, Youth and Women. Funds permitting, we will also host a Disabled People's Symposium

WALL OF REMEMBRANCE

In another first for the KwaZulu-Natal Legislature, we will launch a project to mark key events that have shaped our political journey as a province. This project will be linked to major political holidays that commemorate the struggles of our people. We intend to have a Wall of Remembrance as one of the features of this project. In due course, we will indeed update the people of KwaZulu-Natal about the progress we are making in this regard.

Ends.