

**ADDRESS TO COUNCIL BY CLLR MONDLI GUNGUBELE,
EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF EKURHULENI,
GERMISTON COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 28 AUGUST 2014**

Madame Speaker, Cllr Patricia Kumalo;

Chief Whip of Council; Cllr Robert Mashigo;

Members of the Mayoral Committee;

Leaders of Political Parties;

Honourable Councillors;

City Manager – Khaya Ngema;

Leaders of Business;

Leaders of the Labour Movement and Organs of Civil Society;

Members of the Media;

Residents of Ekurhuleni;

Our hearts go out to the builders who lost their lives when a house collapsed at the Meyersdal Eco Estate last week, and the family of little Cuburne van Wyk (3) who became the latest crime victim in the area of Reiger Park/Ramaphosa a few weeks ago. It is my sincere hope that the investigations that are underway will lead us to the truth in terms of what really transpired in both these incidents.

Fellow Councillors, I wish to kick-start my speech by bragging about our recent success in the Gauteng leg of the Bontle ke Botho Clean and Green

Awards. The awards recognize sustainable environmental practices in communities including schools. It also looks at environmental initiatives that can assist in the fight against poverty and promote sustainable living practices.

Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality scooped the accolade as the cleanest and greenest city in Gauteng at an awards ceremony hosted by the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development at the Lakes Hotel in Benoni on Friday. This feat propels Ekurhuleni to represent the province at the Greenest Municipality Competition run by the National Department of Environmental Affairs later this year. This victory demonstrates that our interventions in environment management are on the right track.

Indeed we are the greenest and cleanest city which also boasts the best drinking water in the land with a blue drop status, let alone being the city with the best credit rating because of among others, our sound financial management.

Let me also congratulate the Department of Health for the successful relocation of hundreds of patients from the old Natalspruit Hospital in new facility in Vosloorus. The new multi-million rand hospital is a much needed intervention as the government continues to broaden quality health care to our people. The new hospital is being officially opened as we speak and has been operational for almost two weeks already.

It also gives me pleasure to announce that we recently witnessed the graduation ceremony of 131 new members of the EMPD in a move that augurs well for our quest to tighten the grip on criminals. These new members have been deployed in various precincts throughout the metro including our national key point – the O.R. Tambo International Airport.

Madam Speaker, Fellow Councillors

As we welcome Heritage Month, I thought it would be proper to remind our people about some of our stalwarts as a city. We have been fortunate to have had several prominent national icons who in their lifetime have called Ekurhuleni their home. Bertha Gxowa, Oliver Reginald Tambo, Dr Adelaide Tambo, Margaret Gazo and Chris Hani are some veterans of the liberation struggle that have ensured Ekurhuleni is recognized as a region of historical significance.

The duo of Bertha Gxowa and Margaret Gazo represented a generation of women who pioneered the universal suffrage of women in South Africa. Their legacy has ensured that women play a critical role in the economy, politics and community activities.

Residents of Ekurhuleni

The bones of one of Africa's most prominent international statesmen and diplomats are buried within our own backyard. Such was the stature of O.R.

Tambo that his legacy led to the realization of the principles of fighting for a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. Tambo led at great personal cost, the crusade that culminated in the evil system of apartheid being declared a crime against humanity at the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 in New York.

His intellect, oratory skills and organizational acumen paved the way for a generation of diplomats that has ensured that South Africa does indeed occupy its rightful place on the global stage since the advent of our democracy in 1994.

In Comrade Chris Hani, a brother, a friend, a husband and a loving father we had a grand military tactician whose skills were considered a major threat to the apartheid establishment. Although he was a highly disciplined military strategist, he became a target for elimination despite his numerous assurances and undertakings that negotiations were the only means to usher us into a non-racial and non-sexist society. Comrade Chris was never reckless in dispensing with his knowledge and military precision to destabilize our country. He was a man of peace and advocated reconciliation on many platforms.

His ideology was intentionally misrepresented by those who wanted to sow divisions and hatred in our society. Notwithstanding these slanderous and unfounded claims, Comrade Hani continued to be an inspiring towering figure that was prepared to play a meaningful part in a new democratic dispensation.

Madam Speaker

As we celebrate our heritage, it is very important that we remember who we are, where we come from and where we are headed. It is this identity that will help us draw wisdom from these great leaders of our revolution and inspire us to do our best to improve the lives of our people.

Fellow Councillors

The history of our country is characterized by brutal conquests of systematic dispossession of Africans from their land. This resulted in the establishment of townships throughout the country. As the population continues to grow in these townships, more and more of our people are becoming landless hence the escalation of backyard dwellings. Issues of poverty, under-development and landlessness are some of the common features of our townships today.

Ironically for our area, due to in-migration we have seen the mushrooming of over a hundred informal settlements in our space – thus increasing the demand for housing. These informal settlements are a result of thousands of South Africans coming from all over the country seeking job opportunities in Ekurhuleni.

In the past week I was exposed to the harsh reality that as government we seem to have prioritized people living in informal settlements over those in backyard dwellings in the townships when it comes to housing. It was the youngsters of Daveyton, who when engaged about the recent protest for housing and land, said to me: "It looks like as government you want us to illegally occupy land first before we can get houses, because every housing project benefits those in informal settlements many of which are illegal."

In applying my mind to this statement, I actually concluded that there is an element of truth in it. This is the reason as the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality we have decided to do something about this situation, which by the way is universal throughout the country.

Fellow Councillors

Daveyton was recently in the news as a result of a service delivery protest. I must, however, congratulate the politicians and officials who were involved for their prompt and decisive reaction which resulted in the amicable resolution of the protestation. Their efforts laid the foundation for constructive engagement between the Metro, aggrieved community and other relevant stakeholders. On Sunday we had a mass public meeting at which I shared the progress made thus far and our plans going forward with the community.

As a result of our timely intervention, I am proud to announce that we have made great strides in resolving the matters. In this regard we have already

established a task team known as the Daveyton Land, Backyard Dwellers and Housing (DLBDH). The task team comprises MMCs Cllr Queen Duba, Cllr Aubrey Nxumalo, Cllr Mthuthuzeli Sibozza; various community structures; the SAPS and the EMPD – among others.

Among the resolutions reached to date are the following:

- There shall be no more land invasion;
- Improved police visibility;
- There must be investigations to all claims of fraud and corruption in housing and land matters in the area;
- There will be no more service delivery protest until early next year when council is expected to give feedback on studies being conducted on available pieces of land identified in the area;
- No looting of local businesses including those belonging to foreign nationals; and
- That an audit of all people with Form Cs be carried out within the next 11 days.

As we speak, the situation is steadily normalizing in Daveyton and the task team will continue with its work until all issues are resolved.

However I would be failing in my duty Madam Speaker, if I do not lambast some political parties who capitalize on the plight of our people to pursue their own selfish agendas. In Daveyton we had hundreds of people who were keen to listen to the Municipality's message only for a few rowdy characters who unsuccessfully tried to disrupt proceedings. I doubt that these

harlequins are from Daveyton and they clearly had other intentions but that of the needs of the community.

Residents of Ekurhuleni

When we came into office in 2011 we adopted the theme: ***Strengthening social maturity by advancing social cohesion in pursuit of a prosperous city***. We opted for this theme because it is our contention that Ekurhuleni is indeed a socially mature city. After years of enduring plunder, neglect and violence, the city is now a 'place of peace'. Our residents are now an embodiment of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

However, I thought today I must remind the house that for us to maintain the status core and realize this theme we ought to communicate more with each other as politicians, with officials and our people at large. In all the service delivery protests that I have been, I have reached one conclusion – we are not communicating enough. **Communication** is an essential tool for any organization. If applied correctly it can promote accountability, deracialise our communities, get us closer to our stakeholders and communities, and improve inter-party relations even in this Council.

Our late President Nelson Mandela once summed it up during struggle against apartheid when he said: ***“One of our strongest weapons is dialogue”***.

Fellow Councillors

Government work is essentially a public activity. We should continually challenge the paradigm that government work is a secret activity that goes public from time to time. Rather, the approach should always be how to manage the flow of information in the interest of Ekurhuleni.

Everyone in government is a communicator including the officials. However politicians are the principal communicators. Therefore there should always be a deliberate effort from us to understand the communication environment, including target audiences, mediums, platforms and forms of interaction when compiling campaigns and programmes. After all these programmes are about and for the communities.

Madam Speaker, if we do not communicate, the people are left in a state of uncertainty which easily results in irrational decision making and behavior. This is why you will find thousands of our people taking to the streets in anger because they do not know what we are doing and/or plan to do about their future.

Another good example of the effects of communication is the Ekurhuleni Call Centre. For years our communities were complaining tirelessly about poor levels of service delivery in our city, and they always anchored these sentiments around the malfunctioning call centre. Because they could not get through to the call centre, to them this was a clear indication of a

Municipality that was not taking them seriously, was not too concerned with their frustrations and did not care about service delivery.

The Municipality then invested almost R7 million into upgrading the call centre, and went on to recruit 260 call takers who were given high quality training. The result of this intervention has been a Call Centre with a much improved performance especially in critical areas like waiting time, call abandonment rate and the number of queries that must be logged on the system.

Madam Speaker allow me to share the following statistics about the Call Centre as at the end of July:

- Waiting time has improved from more than 20 minutes to less than a minute;
- Abandonment rate of calls has improved from more than 80% to less than 10%.
- For the first time ever in the history of the call centre, the Municipality achieved both call waiting time and abandonment rate targets;
- All customer service requests are logged on EMIS irrespective of the origin; and
- The Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality Call Centre now handles in excess of 2500 calls a day.

Our intervention at the call centre has also resulted in a massive leap in opinion and community satisfaction levels graph according to the latest Gauteng City Region Observatory research results. Our people are becoming more and more satisfied and confident in our City.

Residents of Ekurhuleni

As a Municipality we are aware that communication is a two-way process that must result in a shared meaning between role-players. It is because of this understanding that we have resolved to introduce mechanisms that will improve communication with our people. In this regard we resolved to host izimbizo every six months, we introduced Service Delivery Fridays and went on to deploy Members of the Mayoral Committee throughout the 20 customer care centres of Ekurhuleni. We have also introduced a troubleshooting team called the Rapid Response Task Team with the clear mandate to urgently respond to service delivery interruptions.

It is through these efforts that we were able to make timely interventions in hot spot areas like Zonk'zizwe, Mayfield, Winnie Mandela, Thokoza and now Daveyton. Although some progress has been reported in most of these areas, this is work in progress and will not stop until we have delivered on all our promises.

The core of our strategy is simply to communicate the progress we are making to our communities so that they are kept abreast of every step of the way. The community must know that we are a government that cares and understand the mandate they gave us in 2011.

As we continue with our resolve to improve communication with our people, we recently carried out our second izimbizo for the year. We met thousands of residents and shared our programme of action, successes and challenges while at the same time listened to them. Our people agree that we have done a lot as the ANC government in the past 20 years but they also reminded us of other areas that still need our intervention. We have heard

them and we will soon be sharing with them our plan of speeding up service delivery in the region.

Madame Speaker

In closing, this Friday we will be hosting a Women's Dialogue as a closing event for Women's Month. We have invited retired professionals and seasoned community leaders of yester-year to engage with our youth who were born in 1994 and beyond. The whole idea is to get the elderly to share their wisdom with their younger counterparts in an attempt to restore moral fibre in our society.

Our guests will include ladies female students FETs and those who have had some nasty experiences in life who seek guidance. On the side of the elderly professionals we will have veteran politicians and retired nurses, doctors, teachers, principals and business women. It is our hope that this event will result in the establishment of mentors and protégé set ups – a project we intend to start, grow and monitor going to the future.

This dialogue takes place at the Alberton Civic Centre from 10am.

Together we shall turn Ekurhuleni into a Livable City.

Ndiyabulela!