

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC:

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND PUBLIC WORKS,

MS MAGGIE GOVENDER AT THE WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION AT

WITTEKLIP SECONDARY SCHOOL, CHATSWORTH - 07 AUGUST

2009

- The Programme Director
- The Principal and Staff of Witteklip Secondary School
- The School Governing Body
- Representatives from various community organizations (Cheshire Homes, ABH, Senior Citizens & the Croftdene Women's Empowerment Group)
- Learners
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is wonderful for me to be here today to mark this celebration of the role of women in our society and to instill in us an understanding of how much further we must travel on our journey to arrive at a society where the talents and potential of all are realized.

It is especially special to me to be here in Croftdene as this where, thirty years ago, while still a teenager that I commenced voluntary work as a community organiser. In 1979 under the leadership of Lilly Naicker from Road 503 and under the badge of the Croftdene Womens' Group, we

engaged in consultation with all residents to give names of our choice to the roads that we lived in. Through this process Road 503 for example, was renamed Democrats Street. So renaming in this municipality is not new – we pioneered it. It is no co-incidence that the only other neighbourhood unit where people renamed streets with names of their choice is Moorton. This was achieved under the sterling leadership of Mrs Reddy. When I say it is no co-incidence, I refer to the fact that both processes were led by women. It is an achievement that this Womens' Day, we must celebrate in Croftdene as well as in Moorton and everywhere else.

It is here in Croftdene that we regularly met at the Chatsworth Early Learning Centre in Road 501 – now Croftdene Drive together with Sally Mudaly, Roy Padayachie, Shoots Naidoo, Darby Sookhoo, Joe Hoover and Mohamed Motala. We met as the Chatsworth Housing Action Committee (CHAC) to take up the civic issues faced by the residents of Chatsworth. What was a significant feature of those times was that ordinary people took an active responsibility for their own needs. Today I am dismayed by the attitude that says government must deliver for me. It is we who must build the partnership with government to accelerate delivery for all of us. Yes, Croftdene has many fond memories for me and this neighbourhood is my second home.

Croftdene was the centre of a new kind of community activism where for the first time in the country, street committees were built and activists

from all parts of the country visited to learn a new model of community organization. Later on when the then apartheid City Council decided to sell the houses to the tenants a new wave of activism arose to reduce the selling price of the houses. Women marched on City Hall and their voices were heard when a victory for the community was the result. All of this took the time and effort of volunteers.

When the ownership of the houses was transferred to the tenants we organized Wills Clinics where the homeowners, with our assistance, drafted Wills that declared to whom the houses would be left to when they departed. All of this was done by the community, with the community and for the community. We have done it before and we can do it again.

This also did not come easy. Many of us were detained by the apartheid security apparatus, in fact, my husband was shot at, arrested and detained in this very school – but we persevered and succeeded. I make these points to illustrate that as a community we have demonstrated attributes of sacrifice, volunteerism and local leadership and we will have to draw upon these to continue to progress.

I want to digress briefly to tell you a second story. When the original houses in Chatsworth were designed there was no provision for driveways for cars. Chatsworth had very few motor vehicles and the view then was that the community would not need driveways or wide roads to accommodate the flow of motor vehicles. Yet today we complain when we

are stuck in daily traffic jams. How far we have come – from no cars to traffic jams!

The points that I have made so far pertain to us all living under a National Party and apartheid government. Today we are living in the fifteenth year of the democratic dispensation where we all vote for the parties of our choice in free and fair elections.

While we understood and resisted the policies of the past, the question is: “Do we know what the policies of the present government are?” Do we know how to engage with these policies to effect community progress? I think not. From my interaction with members of the community I hear a very common theme that says: “In the past we were not White enough and now we are not Black enough.”

Let us please expel this belief. Opportunities are available to all of us. I will deal briefly with the programmes within the two departments under my stewardship and outline the opportunities that are available to you.

These are guided by the five priorities that our government led by the President, Mr. Jacob Zuma has identified:

1. Alleviating poverty by creating job opportunities mainly through the Infrastructure Development Programme;
2. Making the Education system provide students who are employable;
3. Fighting crime and corruption;
4. Rural Development, Food Security and agrarian reform; and

5. Good governance

The Department of Human Settlements and Public Works will intensify its programmes that contribute to women empowerment. In my maiden budget speeches that I presented in the Provincial Legislature in Pietermaritzburg on 28 July 2009 I mentioned that, the Department of Public Works and Human Settlements, in this period of recession will assist in alleviating poverty and unemployment through

- Meeting the needs of our people through the people being the architects and builders to satisfy their needs;
- The significant expansion of public works programmes;
- A much larger national youth service programme;
- Programmes that target the employment of women, the youth and the disabled
- Emphasizing a focus on extent to which government and social priorities are met when awarding tenders; and
- Intensification of programmes aimed at providing decent housing for people living in shacks

Our commitment to empowerment of our people is manifested in the programmes rolled out by our department. For-instance the Masakhe Emerging Contractor Development Programme (ECDP) is aimed at providing assistance to emerging contractors from the previously marginalized groups. **They receive assistance in accessing finance,**

training in construction, business management, mentorship support and are registered on the Masakhe database. Under this programme 40% of work is given to women and 20% to youth. To date 2573 women have benefited from this programme. Now you too have access to this programme.

Another programme is the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP). This is a labour intensive, poverty alleviation programme. Under this programme the government encourages the use of labour intensive methods of production instead of machines. **In the financial year 2009/10 the department will provide employment to 9600 women under this programme. Again where are applicants from Chatsworth? Yet we complain that we are excluded.**

The Department also initiated another poverty alleviation programme called Izandla Ziyagezana (IZ). **Under this programme all the government owned vacant land is cleared using locally based people from the poorest of the poor families. They work 12 days a month and receive a salary of R720.** The department works with councilors and the community in selecting these people. Our Department is committed to intensifying this programme so that more families will benefit. **Are your Councillors submitting names for this programme?**

The National Youth Service is another programme which is aimed at instilling the culture of serving among youth while equipping them with

construction related skills. **They undergo a 6 months theoretical training and receive a monthly payment of R600 a month. On completion they proceed to a practical training under the supervision of a well established contractor and receive a stipend of R1,000. They receive NQF level 3 qualifications on completion.** Many youth have benefited from this programme and some of them are already self-employed and they provide job opportunities for others. **In the financial year 2008/9, 99 female learners graduated under this programme.**

As part of skills development, the department also has the bursary and internship programmes. The beneficiaries are students from previously disadvantaged communities who specialize in **architecture, quantity surveying, engineering, construction, project management and property valuation**. The bursary is available for students who have passed their first year in a tertiary institution. The internship is given to students who have completed their degrees in the above fields but lack experience. They receive one year training under the supervision of a consulting firm.

The above programmes bear testimony regarding our commitment to ensure a better life for all. I therefore wish to encourage you to seize all the opportunities available in my Department and the government in general. The government is passionate about women and youth empowerment but you also have the responsibility to play your part

because though opportunities are there you will not benefit then you sit back and not apply for these.

To achieve social and community progress we have to draw on the lessons of the past, apply them to the present conditions and renew our spirit of volunteerism and self-help, engage with government and be active agents for social progress.

In conclusion I wish to encourage you support the “one garden one home” initiative. The Premier of the province Dr Zweli Mkhize launched this programme in July 2009 at Inkandla. This programme calls for all households to have gardens where we plant vegetables and fruit so that we can reduce costs on groceries especially in the climate of job losses. We can each of us do this in our homes and even at our schools. It means working together.

I also wish to convey my special thanks to all community organizations that work tirelessly to assist our people, especially the needy. The partnership between government, civil society and the private sector is indispensable for our country to prosper. Your contribution to nation building does not go unnoticed.

With those words I wish you all a wonderful Women’s Day Celebration.

I thank you all.