

**Speaking notes of Hon Sasekani Manzini (MPL), MEC of Public Works, Roads and Transport, to the Mpumalanga Provincial Taxi Council AGM.**

Program Director

Chairperson of MPTC,

Secretary of MPTC,

The entire leadership of MPTC and different stakeholders.

I am deeply honoured to be given this rare opportunity of addressing, one of our department's most valuable stakeholder, the Mpumalanga Provincial Taxi Council. My sincere gratitude for this opportunity, which no words can describe, is informed by my understanding of the important role the Taxi industry has played in the evolution of the South African society, in particular in the struggle against apartheid. I am glad that, 16 years after your launching meeting which took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2001, you are still able to gather and check the progress you have made from that day to date. Ngiyazi qhenya ngani, Mpumalanga Provincial Taxi Council!

Chairperson, as a MEC deployed to government, by the African National Congress which does not only have a rich history of struggle, but is the only credible parliament of African people, I take pride in addressing Taxi operators, who are the custodians of one of the few fully black owned and controlled economic industries in South Africa. It is common knowledge that the Taxi Industry is the invention of the black men to meet the needs of another black men, which the apartheid government failed to care for. With pride we can say, through the taxi industry black men and women showed there are capable of running businesses successfully, that is why this industry has been growing stronger by the day.

The South African taxi industry has always been a symbol of resistance against apartheid South Africa. When apartheid intensified from the 1960s onwards, black people were increasingly relocated to reside in areas far from the commercial and industrial centres where they worked. Public transport became increasingly expensive for commuters, who had been

moved to further places. Increasingly buses and trains operated at peak times only, and routes became less and less flexible. The growth of the taxi industry in the late 1970s was a direct response to these frustrations black people experienced.

When black taxi operators started, the apartheid government acted to protect the existing public transport systems, and prevented entrepreneurs from operating taxis by refusing to issue road carrier permits to them. It was only in the late 1970's when the wisdom of black taxi operators prevailed and they found a loophole in the Road Transportation Act of 1977 which allowed them to apply for a road carrier permit and operate legally if they left one seat of a ten-seater empty. This was because any vehicle carrying ten passengers or more for reward was defined in legislation as a bus and was therefore subject to particular controls, which were not extended to black people. From that day onwards, touch was a go and the industry has grown in leaps and bounds.

When democratic forces took over in 1994, we had no option but to support our reliable ally, the black taxi operators. After many years of thinking and working, the South African Taxi Council was born in September 2001, in order to organise the taxi industry and administer it in a way that ensures its unavoidable growth and improve its immeasurable contribution to the South African economy. The 16 years journey has been long and full of bumpy, but in the final analysis, it has been a successful one.

This success story, of SANTACO includes their immeasurable contribution to the South African economy, which according to the 2011 Census report was as follows:

- The Taxi Industry commands a turnover of over R35 billion annually
- The Taxi Industry employs over 250 000 employees who are mainly lower and semi-skilled workers consequently contributing immensely to government's poverty alleviation programme

- In addition the Taxi Industry serves ancillary economic activities such as hawkers and other informal retailers who rely on taxis for their livelihood
- The number of taxis operating on South African roads is 283 159, excluding the informal taxis awaiting permits.

The annual purchase power of the Taxi Industry is as follows:

- Fuel consumption: R15 billion
- Insurance: R2 billion
- Tyre Costs: R600 million
- Manufacturing: R2 billion
- Vehicle maintenance: R2.7 billion
- Lubricants: R110 million
- Employment Costs: R4 billion
- Passengers annually: R1.9 billion

This is an immeasurable contribution to the fight against poverty, unemployment and inequality. The Value Added Tax (VAT) and Income Tax we get from the industry enables our government to deliver, on the promise of a better life for all, because the state can only function if citizens and businesses pay their income tax. Once again, I thank the taxi industry for this contribution into the fight for a better life for all.

As the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, we are pleased to have MPTC as our only reliable ally in the taxi industry in the province and we have absolute faith in their capability to unite all taxi operators in the province. They have demonstrated this without fail in the past 16 years and we have no reason to doubt your capabilities today. If anything we see partners who will assist our resolve the problems confronting the taxi industry in the province which range from the KULDTA matter, the Whitey-Hazey matter, the Bushbuck Ridge Taxi association matter and many other known and unknown problems in the industry.

The leadership of MPTC can give testimony to this AGM, that in the few weeks, I have been in office, we have already met at least 3 times. Again, they can also attest that whenever my office receives a request to intervene on any taxi related matter, I consult them or request the leadership to join me in meetings to resolve these matters. I must, my office has cordial working relationship with the leadership of MPTC and I promise to do all in my powers to retain and improve our relationship. That is why, I have committed to meet them at least quarterly to discuss the industry and look at ways of improving it.

Program Director, I was not here to take over the AGM or lecture taxi operators, but was here to greet and wish my partners well in their deliberations. Before, I seat down allow me to extend an advice to the leadership of MPTC, which I believe if followed can strengthen the council and make it an effective umbrella body uniting all taxi operators. I believe for any organization to succeed it must follow the following principles:

1. The leadership must be transparent
2. The leadership must accountable
3. The leadership must allow criticism and conduct self-criticism at times
4. The leadership must respect the wishes and aspirations of its member or those who have elected them
5. The leadership must be honest

I have no doubt that if all organizations, including MPTC can get these basic principles correct, they will be better placed to respond to the challenges facing them and speedily deliver on their mandate. With these few words, I wish our only reliable friends in the taxi industry, a successful AGM.

Thank you!

