

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, MR SIKHUMBUZO ERIC KHOLWANE, MPL, DURING THE OCCASION TO CELEBRATE THE PROVINCIAL DISABILITY RIGHTS AWARENESS DAY AT DAYIZENZA PLAZA IN HAZYVIEW**

**Saturday, 21 November 2015**

- **Programme Director;**
- **Acting HOD for Economic Development and Tourism, Mr Jacob Mgidi;**
- **Deputy Chief Whip of the ANC in the Provincial Legislature, Honourable Pat Ngomane;**
- **Councillor Morris Mazibane from the Mbombela Local Municipality;**
- **Councillor Jimmy Mnisi from the Ehlanzeni District Municipality;**
- ***uMfundisi* David Mdluli – thank you very much for linking us with our creator through prayer;**
- **The representative of the National Credit Regulator (NCR), Mr Jimmy Golele;**
- **The representative of the Council of Medical Schemes, Ms Carol Buthelezi;**
- **The representative of the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa (ICASA), Mr Mavhundu Makatu;**

- The representative of the Financial Services Board (FSB), Mr Elliot Modisa;
- Treasurer of the Masoyi Protective Workshop, Ms Jeneth Mbuyane;
- Officials from the Department and government at large;
- Members of the media;
- Distinguished guests;
- Ladies and gentlemen;

## **San'bonani/ Good Morning!**

1. Article 1 in the **Disability Rights Charter of South Africa** states that, and I quote:

***“There shall be no discrimination against disabled people, and they shall enjoy equal opportunities in all spheres of life, and they shall be protected against exploitation and all treatment of an abusive or degrading nature”*** [unquote].

2. This is in line with chapter 2 of the **Bill of Rights** in our country's progressive Constitution which **guarantees equality** for all people who live in South Africa, thus **outlawing any form of discrimination on the basis of disability**, amongst others.
3. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities also require that governments protect and promote the rights of Persons with Disabilities as consumers of both public and private sector services.
4. I am therefore humbled and honoured to be part of this campaign, and to address you during the **National Disability Rights Awareness Month**.
5. This occasion is in line with our mandate to establish enabling environment where all society can live in harmony with each other.

6. The ANC led Government has accepted the role of being the leader of the whole society irrespective of class, colour of your skin or greed.
7. The ANC's policies also bear testimony to this fact and the commitment to ensure that People with Disabilities share in the economic wealth of the country.
8. It is for this reason that the government has dedicated this period to heighten awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and to protect them from all sorts of unfair discrimination, including **unfair business practices**.
9. Let me assure you that your rights are no less important as others.
10. You have the same and equal rights like any other person in the country, and you must fully exercise them.
11. No one is allowed to restrict you from exercising those Rights as they are protected by our country's progressive Constitution.
12. Programme Director, I will briefly talk to **NINE (9) CONSUMER RIGHTS**. by the Country's laws

13.

- You have the **Right to Free and Unlimited access** to goods and services, meaning that suppliers are not permitted to limit your access to goods and services just because you are disabled;
- You have the right to **revoke or opt-out** from receiving direct marketing services, and once you have opted-out, service providers and marketers of goods are not allowed to continue to send you such messages. If they do, they are trampling on you Consumer Right. **Do not hesitate report them to the Department for swift action.**

We are aware that many people with disabilities who receive disability grants, have been subjected to unwanted marketing practices and deductions. The Minister of Social Development is working with SASSA and our law enforcement agencies to stop these illegal practices.

What is important is that you should never sign contracts before shopping around for best deals;

- You also have the **Right to cancel or renew a fixed-term agreement** upon expiry, with penalty or charge, and you don't need to give reasons for your decision.
- Thus suppliers of goods and services are **not allowed to mislead you in terms of pricing and so forth**. This right also means that marketing campaigns must make the same information available to you as a disabled person, as the information that is provided to other citizens.
- The suppliers are **not permitted to take advantage of you** because of your mental or educational status, including inability to understand the language which is not your mother tongue.

It also means suppliers are not allowed to keep you ID book or SASSA card if they have given you credit.

- The Government has established Consumer Court. The Court and its officials must respect your right to reasonable accommodation support such as South African Sign Language Interpreters, intermediaries if you find it difficult to speak, ensuring that you have full access to the buildings in your wheelchair, etc.
  - We want you to demand **quality service, and safe quality goods.**
14. It is your right and the Government of the ANC is on your side.
  15. I merely highlighted some of your Consumer Rights, but if you require more details, you can consult Officials from the Department who deals with Consumers Affairs. They are right here next to me.
  16. I am also calling on our disability organisations to advise us as how best to make the services at our Consumer Affairs Offices more accessible for persons with disabilities and their families.

17. Programme Director;

We are seriously committed to **protect consumers from unfair business practices**. This has been proven by our success stories in the previous financial year.

18. During that period, we **resolved 1615 reported consumer cases**, and in turn **successfully recovered R7, 6 million** on behalf of consumers, and that money went back to its pockets.

19. We are however concerned that very few people with disabilities make use of these services.

20. We therefore urge you to **Know Your Consumer Rights** and exercise them fully. If you require recourse our Department is always ready to serve you. If you have a complaint or concern at how you have been treated as a consumer, let us help you.

21. As I close; we are fast approaching the festive season, and I want to warn you not to be lured into buying what you do not need.



22. You have serious pressing issues in January, like **school fees and necessities.**
23. Your children's future is far important than indulging in unnecessary things during the festive season.
24. Therefore my advice to you for the upcoming festive season is:
- **Draw up a budget before spending;**
  - **Buy only what you need and not what you want;**
  - **When entering into a contract, read it carefully before signing it;**
  - **Insist on getting a copy of the contract once you have signed it;**
  - **Avoid buying goods on credit.**
25. I also take this opportunity to also wish you and your families, a **Merry Christmas and A Prosperous New Year.**

26. ***Together We Move Mpumalanga Forward*** – by protecting Consumer Rights of People with Disabilities.

27. **Ngiyabonga/ I thank you!**