

## **Speech Delivered at Cash & Carry Official Opening Black Economic Empowerment and Development in Rural Areas**

Honourable MEC ....., Our honourable chief Kekana the II, Zebediela Cash and Carry management, businessmen, ladies and gentlemen; my warmest greetings to you all.

I feel very excited to be addressing you on this important event and talk about issues of bread and butter for our people. Launching of business initiatives in rural areas are very rare because many people believe that businesses can only flourish in towns. I would therefore like to applaud Zebediela Citrus (PTY) LTD for their continued contribution towards Local Economic Development of the Municipality amid infrastructural challenges in our rural areas.

Local Economic Development (LED), is one of the local government's key priority issues to ensure economic growth and development within its jurisdiction. Central to the concept of LED is to lock all major economic activities within our municipal boundaries in order to foster economic growth and development of our area.

Key programs towards achievement of LED are Black Economic Empowerment, SMME support, Infrastructural development, etc. Our municipality has in its Integrated Development Plan (IDP), outlined LED and related programs as one of the priorities to embark on towards improving quality of life of our people.

Being a predominantly rural Municipality, Lepelle-Nkumpi supports Black Economic Empowerment policies as these are going to directly benefit our rural masses like Zebediela Cash & Carry does. The government has embarked on rigorous measures to develop infrastructure in our rural areas in order to lay conducive environment and attract investment for socio-economic development.

The role played by business in reconstruction and development of our country cannot be emphasized. SMMEs play critical role in job creation amongst our people. We would therefore like to call upon private sector to join us in the partnership to improve lives of our communities through creation of more sustainable business initiatives in our previously marginalized areas.

As a municipality we are committed to helping the private sector in identifying and exploiting business opportunities. This is to our mutual benefit. As business you will benefit and as a municipality we will be assured of the fact that our people we have access to more job opportunities. We therefore call on the business sector to work closely with us in this process. The involvement that we seek from you is to identify those things that hinder the advancement of private sector investment initiatives. We seek to be a municipality that is investor friendly. We therefore welcome your contribution as business and the community at large as to what you believe we should do to ensure that we are an investor-friendly municipality.

This calls for your close involvement in the IDP process of the municipality. You should be aware that the IDP is the "business plan" of the municipality and directs all our activities. We are at present at that stage of reviewing our IDP for the 2005/06 financial year and for this purpose we will greatly value your contribution in this process. Remember that the document that we are going to produce will be what the community is saying we must do and should therefore embody your contributions. If you do not let your ideas be known as a municipality we can never know what it is that you require. I would therefore like to urge you to get involved. You are free to get a copy of our present IDP document from the municipal offices in order for you to see the areas in which you can make your contribution. We will value it greatly.

Let me end by saying that we hope that this will be an indication to other businesses that opportunities abound in Lepelle Nkumpi Municipality. Again a special word of thanks goes to Cash and Carry for the trust they have placed in this municipality and its people to the extent that they were prepared to make this investment here. We hope and believe that you will get a massive return on your investment.