## ROLL-OUT OF FREE INTERNET ACCESS TO CREATE SMART MUNICIPALITIES

In order to keep up with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which will see technology changing the way we live and relate to the world, Cogta-KZN has embarked on a new revolutionary new bid that will enable easy access to free internet services across the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube has announced that her department is to work closely with municipalities to ensure that all Community Service Centres, which include Thusong centres and Traditional Administrative Centres, are fitted with a free Wi-fi service that will enable community members to access the internet freely.

"The ripple effects of this technology revolution are being felt already, as evidenced by the fact that the biggest companies in the world today are those that are driven by technological innovation," said MEC Dube-Ncube.

"As the sphere of government that is closest to the people in the province, we cannot afford to sleep through this revolution, but we must harness it to ensure that we create municipalities that are at the cutting edge of technological invention and that use the state-of-the-art technology and which will push the boundaries of innovation. In this epoch where sustainable development is at the heart of human endeavour, we need to ensure that we become trail-blazers in creating smart municipalities, with technology at the centre of their evolution," she said.

"It is for this reason that one of the initiatives that we want to pursue through municipalities with vigour is the roll out of free public Wi-Fi zones throughout the province of KZN. Our vision is to ensure that in the fullness of time, we can have Wi-Fi zones where, whether you are in a public area such as a taxi rank, you can be able to access internet. To this end, we will partner with municipalities to ensure that all Thusong Centers and Traditional Administration Centres have Wi-Fi."

She said internet connectivity was not only the biggest economic enabler of our time but it had given the world technological products such as Google, Facebook, Twitter etc.

"For us to have our very own Mark Zuckerberg in the province, we need to have

municipalities that begin to embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution which must find expression in everything they do including in their IDPs."

"We want to create municipalities that are able to harness the power of technological invention to deal with their day to day challenges, using technology as an enabler and a catalyst for development. To this end, we will pilot an initiative that will ensure that all new infrastructure installed in municipalities will have GPS coordinates so that it can be located easily.

"Such is the power of technology that we should live to see the day when warnings about an impending disaster, for example, can be simplified and sent to everyone in an affected area before the disaster. This becomes even more critical because research shows that even in rural areas, there is the highest levels of cell phone penetration, as evidenced by the fact that almost everyone has a cell phone. Our duty as policymakers is to ask ourselves questions about how we can create municipalities of the future by not changing how our people live, but by using technology. For example, we want to ensure that this year all municipalities have created applications that are used by ratepayers to pay municipal bills and are used to inform, educate and collect revenue. For this purpose, we will launch a "smarter municipality campaign."

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