



**Keynote Address by  
Mr Jeff Radebe, Minister of Energy of the Republic of South  
Africa on the launch of the Bushbuckridge Intergrated Energy  
Center, in Mpumalanga, South Africa on  
12 April, 2019**

Programme Director: Cllr Ruth Raganya, Speaker of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality

Hon Refilwe Mtshweni, Premier of Mpumalanga province

Hon Eric Kholwane, MEC of Finance, Economic Development and Tourism

Cllr Sylvia Nxumalo, Executive Mayor of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality

Cllr Jester Sidell, Executive Mayor of Ehlanzeni District Municipality

Mr Yusa' Hassan, CEO of Engen

Kgosi N Chiloane of Sethlare traditional council

Mr. Velley Mokgato, Chairperson of SANCO Bohlabela Region

Senior Government Officials;

Esteemed Community Members;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning.

I am honoured to be with you today on the launch of the Bushbuckridge Integrated Energy Centre (IeC), the first in Mpumalanga. Department of Energy has a mandate to ensure secure and sustainable provision of energy for socio-economic development. The IeC is a community project aimed at enhancing access to energy in rural areas and is also one-stop energy shop owned and

operated as a community project. leC provides energy solutions to communities; access to affordable, safe and sustainable energy services.

leC programme is an initiative of the Department of Energy (DoE) in response to White Paper on Energy Policy which advocates for increased affordable energy services to disadvantaged communities, stimulate economic development by creating investor friendly climate, and securing energy supply by encouraging diversity of energy supplies and energy carriers.

Implementing leC programme contributes to job creation, poverty alleviation and rural enterprise development. The DoE has aligned the leC programme to Comprehensive Rural Development Programme which is aimed at improving socio-economic conditions of rural communities. Noting the critical role of energy in improving the quality of people's lives, leCs are targeted at rural areas of our country, which are generally plagued by energy poverty.

His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa on his state of the nation addresses of 2019 highlighted that "we must accelerate inclusive economic growth and create jobs ... we are duty bound to improve the conditions of life for all South Africans, especially the poor. ...Our greatest challenge is to create jobs for the unemployed of today, while preparing workers for the jobs of tomorrow". This event today confirms that indeed as Government and private sector we are working together on implementing the programmes aimed at inclusive growth and job creation especially targeting the youth.

I am pleased to note that Engen has come on board and that this is their first leC. This strengthens the existing relationship between government and the private sector, particularly energy industry. The leC provided petrol and diesel, LPGas, a convenient shop and an information and telecommunications centre where our children can access the internet as well as sit in and do their

homework. Business people in the area can also support the leC by using the services of the ITC centre. The leC project was built at a cost of R19 million. The project has created 17 permanent jobs for young residents of Bushbuckridge Municipality. This is true empowerment of black South Africans and I call upon more energy companies to invest in the programme as part of a transformation agenda.

We believe that through the leC, we are contributing to uplifting socio-economic conditions of our people. The leC is an enterprise development initiative and I appeal to the Trustees to manage it in a sustainable manner. The leC programme augers well with the National Development Plan (NDP) which seeks to promote social equity through expanded livelihoods and development of rural economy. The NDP sets out various methods to tackle unemployment, poverty, inequality and other challenges facing our country. The leC programme as initiated by the DoE is one of the vehicles to eradicate poverty and reduce unemployment.

Access to modern energy services by poor households underlies many of the objectives of the NDP including poverty reduction and improved quality of life, the health and safety of all citizens, the delivery of adequate services and infrastructure, as well as overall economic development for the country particularly in under-serviced communities. I understand that 98 percent of household here in Bushbuckridge are electrified. This is a success story as we are close to eradicate energy poverty in this municipality.

Rural communities are faced with deepening poverty exacerbated by high unemployment and inequality. This is the challenge that all of us should work together to alleviate. Furthermore, access to energy is closely related to quality of life. Due to limited energy services in rural areas, the poor households spend

a significant portion of their income travelling long distances to purchase energy services and products.

Let me turn to the Trustee members. As trustees, you should define this project as a **community enterprise** that should generate profit in order to continue to contribute in the development of your area. You need to be visionary and vigilant at all times. You must ensure that you have systems in place to ensure that this business does not fail. We are certain that you will work together with other stakeholders to ensure that the people of Bushbuckridge do not travel long distances to access energy services. Engen is here to support you.

I would like to see this leC business grow and have other sources of income. This is just a start, where you learn how to run a successful business. The Department we will continue to support you, but make and keep this business financial viable and self-sustainable. This is possible. When minds come together, they are able to achieve greatness. Minds have come together for a common purpose of economically emancipating the community of Bushbuckridge, and these are the results. Instead of shrinking and yielding to doubt and failure, there has been expansion in order to reach a particular goal, a goal of community development and economic liberation. This leC initiative should be a light in Bushbuckridge which would encourage other companies to start projects like this in the province.

Working together as private and public partnership, we can change this community and have a good story to tell. As a collective, we are sure powerful beyond measure. That power was used to build and not destroy, used to liberate but not oppress, used to grow but not fail, to encourage but not to hinder. That power was used productively, and it is the results of that power that has brought us together here to celebrate. This is a celebration of rural development, a celebration of the triumph of the spirit of togetherness. It's a celebration to

communicate to the world out there that nothing is impossible when we all pull in the same direction and that private public partnership is productive.

In order to respond to the challenges facing our people, the Government has opted for a mixed economy where public, private, cooperatives and other forms of social ownership complement each other in an integrated way. Within this mixed economy, the Department of Energy re-affirms the active and interventionist role of the state in ensuring economic development. This partnership with oil companies serves as a very good example and it will deepen our democracy, the culture of human rights and people's participation in changing their lives for the better; meeting basic needs and developing human resources; as well as building the economy and creating jobs.

In conclusion, I sincerely appreciate the funding of approximately R18 million from Engen in setting up this facility I also want to congratulate Engen in completing their first leC project and encourage them to do more. I have been informed that the leC is performing well and that the tank capacity is proving to be small. I urge Engen to continue guiding the leC and encourage the Trustees to increase tank capacity to be able to do more. I hope that for you Mr Yusa Hassan CEO of Engen, this is your first project and that many more will be established. The private public partnership is what will make our rainbow nation successful. The Bushbuckridge Municipality has contributed by ensuring that water is available on site. Cllr Sylvia Nxumalo Executive Mayor of Bushbuckridge Municipality, I appreciate your contribution. Cllr Jester Sidell of Ehlanzeni district Municipality has contribute to ensuring that we are fed today. I thank you. I understand that the project had at some point a stalemate and the office of the MEC assisted in ensuring that all the stakeholders are back on the table. The completion of this project would have been impossible without the support of Hon Eric Kholwane. I thank the civic society and the Traditional Council of Satlhre who have rendered strategic support to the project during the construction

period. I urge the Mayors to support the project by ensuring that your municipal vehicles buy petroleum products from this leC. This will contribute to the development of the leC and community.

Let me also appreciate the government officials from local municipalities, provincial government, Department of Energy and Engen who have worked on this project. Your hours invested in this project have paid off. The leC roll out is not just about integration of energy services. Rather, it is primarily about integration and cooperation amongst the three tiers and structures of Government for improved (energy) service delivery to the poorest of the poor.

We look forward to a strengthened Engen partnership with the DoE in developing leCs across the country. Lastly, I congratulate all the employees of the leC, you have this opportunity please use it wisely and ensure that you keep the leC sustainable by doing your best.

I humbly appeal to the community to treat these asset the Bushbuckridge leC as well as all other infrastructure and equipment provided by Government as your own. We need to jealously guard them against vandalism, theft and other forms of misuse or abuse. The leC has been established for the benefit of you as the local community.

Lastly, I urge all of us to intensify our cooperation towards ensuring that this leC is sustainable. Together we can do more!!!

Thank you