



## agriculture & rural development

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agriculture  
& rural development  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

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### **SPEECH BY MEC FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MR CYRIL XABA AT THE EVENT TO HAND OUT FINANCIAL COMPENSATION VOUCHERS TO ST. FRANCIS XAVIER COMMUNITY LAND CLAIMANTS DURBAN CITY HALL SATURDAY, 26 JULY 2015**

Program Director Babhekile Mpisane

eThekweni Executive Council Member, Ms Fawzia Peer

Ward 26 Councillor Musa Dlamini

Chief Director for Restitution Support in the Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights, Advocate Bheki Mbili

Chairperson of the St Francis Xavier Land Claimants Committee, Mr M Xaba

Officials Present

St Francis Xavier Land Claimants

Ladies and Gentlemen

Looking at the City of eThekweni today, it is hard to believe that African people once lived on the beach front. The Community of St. Francis Xavier lived in Isibubululu or the Bluff area. Brighton Beach was right on their doorstep.

We can only imagine how traumatic it must have been for the community to be torn away from their homes and forcefully removed to live elsewhere. The St. Francis Xavier community suffered a double blow because they were moved twice. First they were moved to Glebelands in Umlazi which was a transit camp and later to other areas in Umlazi. Glebelands at the time was described as being like a squatter camp. Community members may know from older family members how painful this was because the families had to give up large homes, their land and cattle as well as living close to the sea to end up living as squatters.

From descriptions of community life in Isibubululu, we know that families were financially independent. Research by the Land Claims Commission has established that the community derived their livelihood from farming. They had expansive fields for cultivation and grazing for their large herds of cattle. All of this was lost. Living in Umlazi with no means of income they were forced to become labourers in the factories in and around Durban. Many of our mothers became domestic workers.

When the new Democratic Government came into power in 1994, it made a commitment to put right the wrongs suffered by our people who lost their homes and their land. This event today sees 152 households from the former St. Francis Xavier Community getting compensation of fourteen million six hundred and forty seven thousand and twenty four rand. The number of beneficiaries from these households amount to 912 individuals – 102 are women and 11 are disabled. We will never be able to take away the pain suffered by your forefathers and mothers, but this compensation will help their families.

The KZN Land Claims Commission has been very busy and in the past weeks and I have addressed a number of gatherings such as the one taking place today. In all, I have emphasised three messages.

The first is to remind communities that the land restitution process is not easy and it takes time to ensure that the right beneficiaries are getting the compensation. In the case of The St. Francis Xavier community, this was especially difficult because the claim goes back to the 1940's – more than 70 years ago. Advocate Mbili and the Land Claims Commission must be commended for the thorough research that was conducted. Time was spent on an extensive name verification exercise and the team also collected family trees in order to establish the correct number of beneficiaries for each claimant family.

My second message is that it is very important for our children to know our history so that they understand the suffering that their forefathers endured. This will lead to a deeper appreciation of the freedom that we enjoy today.

The older generation of the St. Francis Xavier community must be commended for preserving that history and telling their children. All of this must be written down. I myself learnt for the first time that the community can trace their claim to the land from way back to before the arrival of the missionaries. The land was tribally owned by Inkosi Joe Moli who gave the Roman Catholic Church permission to establish a mission on his land. This was so that his people could benefit from the schools that were established. Later, the British Government gave the rights to the property to the church and not to the community. This played into the hands of the Durban City Council who by the 1940's long before the Group Areas Act was passed, had already drawn up a plan on how the city was going to be racially divided. We can see the results today with the all beachfront areas going to the white community.

The Community of St. Francis Xavier were evicted from their land under a law known as the Mission Reserve Act of 1903. This Act empowered the Natal

Native Trust to have complete control of areas where Blacks lived on mission land. Missions in areas that were favoured for the White Community were known as Mission Black Spots and the Act was used to evict and relocate families. This is how the community of St. Francis Xavier lost their property which included livestock, houses, cultivation and grazing land. They were given no compensation and moved to a transit camp. Later when the township of Umlazi was established, they were moved there.

The history of Umlazi is also very interesting and it shows that our people made every effort to be reasonable with the Durban City Council, calling for consultation. Their pleas fell on deaf ears.

In fact, Umlazi itself was originally the home of the Cele clan who were evacuated to establish what the British Government at the time called "Bantu settlements." It was known as the Umlazi Mission Reserve. By the 1940's the Government announced plans to convert the area into a township. Community leaders at the time protested and delegations went to Cape Town to speak to the then Prime Minister Jan Smuts. The delegation consisted of: CCW Nxumalo, Rev Alpheus Hamilton Zulu, Rev Siveshe, Gideon Mthembu, Bob Nzimande, H.P. Ngwenya, Z.E. Maphumulo and Chief Albert Luthuli.

Chief Luthuli wrote about this in his book, "Let my People Go,"

ANC Natal Leader, AWG Champion wrote a letter of protest to the Durban City Council in 1951. This letter is preserved in the Historical Papers Research Archive at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. In the letter, Mr Champion said, and I quote, "My appeal is that before any final decision is made by your City Council, the natives should be given an opportunity to place their views before the City Council. We claim that we should have a place within the city boundaries of Durban, if zoning of races is necessary at all. We should not be driven away from Durban to a place where we are going to be reservoir of cheap labour, to supply not only Durban commercial houses and industries but farming and mining industries of Natal,"

As I said the reasonable pleas of our leaders fell on deaf ears and by 1967 Umlazi was established as a Black Township. It became the biggest township in KwaZulu-Natal and the second biggest in South Africa after Soweto.

Thank you for the opportunity to give you this brief history lesson. My aim is to show you that we have a great deal to share with future generations. While we must not forget the pain of the past, we must also celebrate the fact that our forefathers and mothers were not always labourers. They were once entrepreneurs and very successful farmers.

This takes my third and final message. As MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development in this province, I use every opportunity to encourage people to follow in the footsteps of their forefathers and go back to farming. I am hopeful that some of you or your children may want to take up this challenge. Think about life in St. Francis Xavier on the Bluff where your families enjoyed

economic independence with fields under cultivation and large herds of cattle. Today in a democratic South Africa, you have the freedom to become farmers once more... and if you chose you can live on the beachfront.

This is all cause for celebration so enjoy this the rest of today's event and enjoy your freedom! I Thank You