

**Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo
on the Thanksgiving Ceremony at McCord Hospital**

01 November 2013

Members of the Clergy

The Hospital Board

Hospital Management

Dear Healthcare workers

Friends of McCord Hospital

Invited guests and patients

Greetings to all

I highly appreciate your gesture of inviting me to grace this important ceremony whereby we all humbly ourselves before the Almighty and thank Him for all the Blessings he continues showering us with.

As the staff of this historic institution that has given mankind so much but in recent past months faced a calamity of closing down; you are indeed wise to invite The Lord, our Supreme Saviour to continue giving wisdom

and guidance to the team that is working on saving this Hospital.

Indeed, an arduous journey has been travelled since the beginning of the year. It has not been easy at times but we thank level headedness and guidance of our former Premier, Honourable, Dr Zweli Mkhize who when all was bleak gave us direction.

Our former Premier reminded us of the significant role McCord Hospital has played over the years in nurturing Doctors of all races and of its stance in admitting black patients during the hard days of Apartheid. Dr Mkhize called for all the mudslinging and misrepresentation of facts that was the order of the day in our media to come to an end.

He then presided over a meeting that amongst other people included myself; officials from the Department of Health; the Chairperson of the McCord Hospital Board, Prof Paulos Zulu and the Management of this glorious Hospital. The outcome of those talks was very positive and resulted in an agreement that the Department of Health would take over McCord Hospital.

I am not going to bore you with details of the modalities of those discussions save to say that in September 25 we had a joint statement where the KZN Provincial Government represented by myself and MEC for Finance, Ina Cronjé and McCord Hospital Board led by its Chairman, Professor Paulus Zulu; we made a statement that finally we have found each other.

As we begin the month of November, I am glad to stand before you here knowing that all your jobs are safe because the talks between the Department of Health; the McCord Hospital Board and the Treasury are finally bearing fruits.

For the benefit of all present today, allow me to inform you of the two most important milestones that have been achieved in our talks:

- The Department of Health and the Board of McCord Hospital have finally reached an agreement and that a Service level Agreement and an Interim Management Agreement has also been signed.

- Since last week, October 24, McCord Hospital has been ready to reopen its doors to the public for limited general Outpatient Services. This service will be available from Monday to Friday from 08h: 00 to 17:00 only and at the moment would not include public holidays or weekends.
- Patients with emergencies and conditions requiring surgery or admission will be referred to their nearest public sector hospital.
- Limited in-patient services will be provided for patients transferred from other government hospitals for step down care.

We are thus welcoming all of you to be ready to serve the people of KwaZulu Natal as employees of the Department of Health and further assist us as we prepare to take over the operations of this facility and to run it as a government institution.

Eventuality is that McCord's Hospital will become part of the EThekweni District Hospital pool.

The long and reach legacy of McCord Hospital will be retained and preserved.

Again we thank of our former Premier, Dr Zweli Mkhize, who by the way did his internship here for the guidance he gave us that resulted in the survival of the Hospital.

We thank the Hospital Board for its positive attitude in the handling of these difficult talks.

We thank the friends and patients of McCord Hospital for their prayers that have resulted in the success of our negotiations.

We thank the workers for their perseverance during the difficult times when their future was very, very uncertain. Today we are elated that in them we have an added force to work towards the attainment of the vision of ***A Long and Healthy Life for All South Africans.***

Lastly, let us all work together to ensure that the name and Spirit of McCord' Hospital is retained for centuries to come.

I thank you