

## Empowering community growth: unique service station unveiled in Nongoma, championing local entrepreneurship and job creation

[Nongoma, KwaZulu-Natal] – The National Empowerment Fund (NEF) proudly announces the launch of the Astron Energy Service Station, developed by OL Family Pride Supermarket, a 100% black-owned and managed entity with 40% Black woman and youth ownership. This significant investment aims to bolster the local economy by creating 30 new permanent jobs and enhancing service delivery in the Zululand District Municipality of KwaZulu-Natal.

### Empowering local entrepreneurship

The Astron Energy Service Station is spearheaded by the father-daughter duo, Mr Kosie Ngcobo and Ms Nonduduzo Ngcobo. Mr Ngcobo, who has been a prominent figure in Nongoma's business landscape since the mid-1970s, initially established a supermarket to provide essential grocery items to the local community. "This project is not just a business venture, it's about uplifting our community and creating sustainable employment," said Mr Ngcobo. His daughter, Ms Ngcobo, added, "I'm excited to be part of this important initiative, and I'm committed to ensuring its success while supporting local job creation."

### NEF's commitment to development

Mr Phakamile Madonsela, the NEF's Rural, Township and Community Development Fund Manager, emphasised the importance of this investment: "The NEF's R15 million funding for this service station reflects our commitment to empowering black-owned businesses and stimulating economic activity in rural areas. We are proud to support a project that will not only create jobs but also contribute to the revitalisation of the local economy."

### Empowering communities and driving sustainable growth with KZN Oils

KZN Oils is honoured to be part of this tremendous achievement. As the designated Branded Marketer for Astron Energy across Northern KwaZulu-Natal, KZN Oils is committed to fully supporting this initiative from a supply and service perspective. Ms Esay Reddy extended her heartfelt appreciation to the NEF and retailers for turning this dream into a reality. "Their tireless work has not only strengthened the energy sector but also laid the foundation for greater community empowerment," she stated. KZN Oils aligns with the vision of fostering economic growth and addressing pressing socio-economic issues, remaining steadfast in their commitment to nurture this partnership for the benefit of all.

### Addressing local needs

Nongoma Municipality, the administrative seat of the Zululand District and home to the hereditary King of the Zulu people, has long faced challenges in infrastructure and service delivery. Mr Madonsela said that the Ngcobo family recognised a critical gap in the market, where existing service stations struggled to meet the fuel demand of the growing population. Traffic congestion caused by long lines at fuel stations and a lack of facilities for larger vehicles and local taxi operators, highlighted the urgent need for a new service station.

“The new Astron Energy Service Station will not only alleviate these issues but also provide essential amenities, including public ablution facilities and a FreshStop Convenience Shop, enhancing the overall service experience for the community,” he said.

### **Building a sustainable future**

Strategically located at 26 Mason Street, the service station will feature a passenger vehicle forecourt capable of servicing eight vehicles simultaneously and a commercial vehicle forecourt for larger vehicles. With adequate fuel tank capacity to ensure consistent supply, the station aims to cater to both local residents and visitors, reducing the need for long trips to distant towns for fuel.

The station will offer a variety of food options through a partnership with FreshStop, alongside essential services like ATMs and public restrooms.

“The establishment of this service station is a significant step towards transforming the landscape of the petroleum industry in KwaZulu-Natal, making it more inclusive and representative of our diverse society,” Mr Madonsela said.

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