

Budget Vote 2017: Minister Nhleko commits the DPW to creating 6 million work opportunities by 2019

By Nolwazi Ndhlovu

Public Works Minister Nkosinathi Nhleko, MP, has re-committed the Department of Public Works (DPW) to the creation of 6 million work opportunities by the year 2019.

He was delivering his DPW maiden Budget Vote Speech in Parliament on 16 May 2017.

In his speech, the Minister said the focused outcomes of infrastructure development was around job creation, poverty eradication and income generation through an Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) approach, using labour intensive methods of construction, development and maintenance.

“Through EPWP, we have facilitated a total of 2.3 million work opportunities in the infrastructure, social, environment, culture and the non-state sectors. In the financial year under review, a total of 660 000 work opportunities were created in all spheres of government. In the 2017/2018 financial year, we have set a target for ourselves to facilitate an additional 1.4 million work opportunities.” the Minister said.

Furthermore, Minister Nhleko said the Department would disburse the EPWP Integrated Grant worth R 1 billion to eligible public bodies and incentivize Non-Profit Organizations (NPO’s) among other implementers. “This will also allow the poorest members of society to generate income by providing services to their communities,” he added.

He said DPW had been embarking on a special programme aimed at providing socio-economic infrastructure to rural communities. This, he said, included the implementation of Rural Bridges Programme in partnership with the Department of Defence and Military Veterans, which intended to provide Bailey-type Bridges to the needy communities.

“We piloted the project in the Eastern Cape Province and delivered four (4) bridges, bringing to eleven (11), the number of bridges that were under taken during the period under review. These bridges are cost effective and highly useful in the rural areas as they connect villages and create access to amenities for socio-economic development. Bridge sites have been identified in Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape for prioritization,” he added.

Radical economic transformation was at the centre of the Minister’s speech focusing on the strides the department had taken to deliver such.

Minister Nhleko pointed out that DPW was focusing on the transformation in the construction and property sectors, which had started in earnest and was gaining momentum. He said in order for the Department to speed up efforts on the radical economic transformation agenda, it would during the current financial year, move from planning to implementation by:

- Finalisation of the Baseline Study on the Transformation of the Property Sector;
- Obtaining approval on the Sector Codes from the Ministry of Trade and Industry;
- Launching of the Construction Sector Codes and Charter;
- Integrating all initiatives aimed at transforming the procurement processes to be in line with the Charter.

“In the built industry, we are focusing on promoting skills development through the Skills Pipeline Strategy in order to support the roll out of infrastructure delivery in the country and address skills shortages in the built environment which remains a challenge.

“We also implemented in the financial year under review, a programme to place interns for work place training working in partnership with the universities of technologies and the private sector.

“As part of strengthening our work and supporting our mandate, professional councils and entities have been established; and among others we have passed the CBE Act, CIDB Amendment and other pieces of legislation over the years to professionalize the construction and built environment sector.”

Furthermore, the Minister took the opportunity to assure the assembly that the department was still committed to developing a sustainable economy and state infrastructure that will progressively improve the quality of life of all South Africans.

The Minister said that the State infrastructure served as an important socio-economic lever to exert visible impact in driving capital formation, investment growth and social development. “As a catalyst to development, the State’s immovable assets and lease portfolios, continue to hold extensive benefits and opportunities in respect of Government’s broader developmental agenda and socio-economic transformation,” the Minister noted.

He closed off by committing the Department of Public Works to serving the people of South Africa with honour and dignity.