

MEC gives hope to local contractors

ABONGILE SOLUNDWANA

Komani contractors demanded that the department of public works MEC Babalo Madikizela enforce the 30% policy on big contractors who prevented local contractors from benefiting from construction projects.

The SMMEs also demanded that bigger projects of more than R30-million be unbundled into smaller portions in order for lower grade contractors to qualify instead of companies from other provinces.

They also wanted more information on why 12 of the 18 district projects were left halfway and were not completed.

The contractors were voicing their complaints in a meeting with the MEC at the Gali Thembani Youth Centre on Friday.

Madikizela agreed that the department had failed local contractors by slacking in its role of holding the main contractors to account and to implement the 30% policy to boost the local economy.

The MEC said it was also the duty of the department to make sure the work was given to local contractors.

"The department has now taken responsibility to make sure that when contractors are given 30% of projects their rates are reasonable and market-related.

"You cannot have a contractor



LOCAL ECONOMY: Public works MEC Babalo Madikizela addressed local contractors at Gali Thembani Youth Centre on Friday

Picture: ABONGILE SOLUNDWANA

from outside the district benefit from the 30% which is meant to benefit the local economy," he said.

Concerning the lack of capacity among Eastern Cape contractors, Madikizela said: "We have not done well in ensuring that we produce higher grades such as grade 8.

"We introduced an incubation programme which will assist grade 1 to grade 6 contractors to advance to higher grading levels."

He said contractors who were not awarded tenders should be sub-contracted to receive an opportunity to upgrade their levels through the Construction Industry Development Board and have a continuous cash flow.

Madikizela said that municipalities must create jobs that suited local people.

Addressing the issue of projects left incomplete, Madikizela said: "We will terminate agreements with contractors who are not producing quality work.

"We are also planning to have a panel of professional contractors to replace those who leave projects incomplete.

"This will prevent the lengthy tendering system. Our priority is to bring service delivery to the people."

He said contractor SMMEs should receive their due payment within 30 days.

"I was briefed by the province that they are even paid in seven days and the longest outstanding is now 20 days."

The MEC had gone to check how far the Frontier Hospital project had progressed which, according to him, had begun after being put on hold by its main contractor.

He said the project was expected to be completed in three months.