

Honourable House Chairperson,

Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Hon Dean Macpherson;

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure, Hon CM Phiri;

Honourable MEC's of Public Works and Infrastructure;

Honourable Members;

Director-General and Senior Management;

CEO's and Chairpersons of Entities;

Introduction: We Dare Not Linger

As we mark Nelson Mandela International Day on July 18, we must draw inspiration from his courage, commitment and resilience towards building a truly non-racial, non-sexist, equal and prosperous society.

We dare not linger to deliver on our government's commitment to use infrastructure development as the flywheel of the South African economy, job creation, and skills development.

Investing in Skills and Professionalisation of the Built Environment

Honourable Members, as the department, we will accelerate all efforts aimed at transforming and growing both the property and construction sectors. It is a staining and concerning fact that the industry still resembles effects of apartheid and colonial system which requires resoluteness to address.

The Department, led by the Council for the Built Environment (CBE), finalised and adopted the Built Environment Professionalisation and Skills Development Strategy for the Public Sector in December 2023 which revealed that only 14% of registered professionals in South Africa are women, 62% of registered professionals are white, followed by 25% African males, 9% Indian and 4% Coloured.

The CBE has identified at least 11 interventions which to address these challenges.

Through Professional Services, the Department contributes to the skills pipeline by supporting the teaching of Maths and Physical Science through our Schools Programme. In the previous financial year, the Department supported 27 schools and 191 learners enrolling into the programme. In addition, 12 career expos were supported, totalling 30 600 attendees.

During the 2023 academic year, 132 students were enrolled in the University Bursary Scheme. Twenty-six (26) students successfully completed their studies in 2023 academic year while 97 students are continuing with their studies into the 2024 academic year. One hundred (100) bursaries were awarded for the 2024 academic year, but only 57 students accepted the bursaries, meaning that a total of 153 students are funded for the 2024 academic year.

Through the Artisan Development Programme, the Department supported 101 trainee artisans, with 15 successfully acquiring their trade certification in 2023/24. Through the Candidacy Programme, no less than 98 candidates were supported in the 2023/24 FY, and at least 16 professional registrations were achieved.

During the 2024/25 FY, the Department is targeting 1200 beneficiaries to be supported through the Schools Programme, Bursary Programme, Internship Programme, and

Candidacy Programme. In addition, we will establish and maintain twelve (12) Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and private organizations to strengthen support for these interventions.

Honourable Members, over the medium-term, the CBE will focus on the following key initiatives that will shape the future of the Built Environment:

(a) Implementation of Professionalization Framework aimed at launching a comprehensive professionalization implementation plan for built environment professionals working in the public sector.

(b) Inclusivity and Diversity aimed at creating more opportunities for women, People Living With Disabilities, and youth to ensure a workforce that reflects the broader community.

(c) Advancing the Built Environment National Logbook aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and data-driven decision-making.

In response to the George Building collapse, the CBE has developed a structured protocol on the method of investigation and facilitated the collaboration of the 6 councils in the investigation.

CIDB & B.U.I.L.D. Programme

Honourable Chairperson, the rollout of the cidb B.U.I.L.D Programme gained momentum in the 2023/24 year. The B.U.I.L.D Programme involves the acceleration of skills development through infrastructure projects and the structured development of emerging enterprises. The cidb has developed the applicable best practice standards and guidelines that infrastructure clients are required to integrate in their procurement and delivery processes. The Best Practice Standards, Construction Management Systems, Contractor Competence Assessment and Centre's of Excellence at Wits and UJ are the first phase of the rollout of the development strategy enabled through the B.U.I.L.D Programme.

Through this programme, in the 2023/24 year 160 women-owned contractors underwent Construction Management Systems training. This will be ramped up to 2000 women-owned contractors trained and certified over a five-year period.

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

Honourable Members, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is a government-driven initiative that cushions the vulnerable poor through income transfers and skills development to alleviate poverty.

In the 2023/4 financial year, 960,658 work opportunities were reported, reflecting, a 92% performance against the annual target. Other key achievements include:

- 45 contractors were established through the Vukuphile Contractor Development Programme.
- EPWP conditional grant disbursements for the NPO programme achieved 100% of their targets.
- No less than 12,452 participants were trained in 2023/24, surpassing the target of 9,000.
- Cabinet approved EPWP Phase V, which started on 1 April 2024, and ending March 31, 2029. His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa launched Phase V of the EPWP programme in Buffalo City, Eastern Cape.

- Phase V will strengthen coordination, enhance service delivery, and ensure fair recruitment processes while scaling up efforts to create 5 million work opportunities.

Of the 1,004,746 work opportunities to be created in this financial year, the infrastructure sector will contribute 309 434, environment and culture sector 186 491, social sector 201 014; and non-state sector 307 806.

In 2024/25 FY, the EPWP will coordinate and support the implementation of these priority areas: Waste Management; Removal of Alien Invasive Species and Clearing of River Streams; Cleaning of Public Spaces; Road Repair, Block Paving, Maintenance including Pothole Patching. The EPWP will also develop a plan to implement a One Township-One Recycling Centre Plan in partnership with the private sector.

We will further strengthen enterprise development, hence 100 Enterprises to be supported during this financial year.

Independent Development Trust (IDT)

Honourable Chairperson, we also wish to recognise the contribution that has been made by the Independent Development Trust (IDT) in creating employment opportunities through the EPWP programme.

The entity created a total of 77, 235 work opportunities through the EPWP NSS Programme against an annual target of 64, 000 work opportunities, which equates to a 21% performance level above the target.

The IDT awarded R7.217-billion worth of infrastructure project contracts during the period under review. R 2.4349-billion of the total programme contract awarded were allocated to the designated groups - 79% (R1.9163bn) was allocated to women-owned entities, 20% (R495.2024-million) was allocated to youth-owned entities and 1% (R23.4645 million) was allocated to People Living With Disability.

Agrément South Africa (ASA)

Honourable Members, our entity, Agrément South Africa (ASA) continues to be driven by its vision of becoming the leading regulator on non-standardised construction-related products and systems in South Africa.

During the 2023/24 FY, ASA spent R12,2 million on level 1 B-BBEE SMMEs.

A total of 32 projects were completed and created jobs through procurement that benefited designated groups (Women: 37 and Youth: 56).

Highlights of achievements registered in the 2023/24 financial year:

- The ASA issued 12 certificates covering road products, building systems, paint, and bridge deck joints.
- The ASA conducted inspections and audits on 116 of 207 certificates, representing 56% performance.
- Invoices paid within 30 days was at 99%.

Honourable Members, in the current financial year, ASA plans to perform the following key Strategic Projects:

- Implement Eco-label Scheme.
- Implement a Green-Building Rating Tool.

- Implement ISO 17065 to improve compliance with existing prescripts.
- Review the ASA Act.
- Acquire testing sites and laboratories to ensure compliance with the requirements of technical assessments.

Conclusion

We dare not linger! As elected representatives of all the people of South Africa, we carry the hopes of more than 60-million people, many who live in abject poverty.

Through equitable infrastructure development and prioritising rural infrastructure development, we can connect South Africans and undo the legacy of apartheid spatial planning.

We must intensify our efforts of building the Welisizwe Rural Bridges to improve safety of communities and school children, especially during rainy seasons.

It is in the national interest to attract investment in the Oceans Economy and the development of Small Fishing Harbours in coastal provinces of the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal as we draw lessons from the work we have already done in the Western Cape.

Fellow compatriots, the struggle for socio-economic transformation remains a loadstar towards the attainment of a truly non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society.

The high level of unemployment and poverty requires our resolute efforts, centred on decisive and practical interventions. This requires commitment from all stakeholders, in particular government, public servants, the private sector and civil society.

Addressing thousands of people at Trafalgar Square in 2005, Madiba reminded the world that:

“Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice.”

Our work is not done. Let us all roll our sleeves and get to work to build our country, together.

I thank you