

**The Deputy Minister of Public Works, Mr. Ntopile Kganyago, MP, responds to the questions and other issues of concern raised by members of the public during the NCOP visit to Parys**

Date: Thursday 09 November 2006

Venue: Parys, Ngwathe Local Municipality, Free State

- The vision of the South African government is to build a united, free, non-racial and non-sexist society living peacefully in a prosperous country.
- Poverty however, continues to pose a challenge on our way to achieve that vision. Although unemployment alone does not constitute poverty, lack of job opportunities can accentuate a situation where people find themselves living in poverty – with no access to water, shelter, basic services, education, health, infrastructure and essential government services.
- Most people in South Africa and the world, live in poverty because of the above conditions. But wars, corruption, and poor governance can make people

poor. Everyday we pledge solidarity with the peoples of Darfur, Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and the Afghanistan, who are left destitute and poor by selfish acts of aggression.

- In South Africa, the system of apartheid and its wars left most of our people in poverty. The issues of service delivery which had been raised in this forum are by and large historical legacies which could be made worse by our lack of capacity, poor management, corruption and lack of dedication.
- Otherwise, how does one begin to explain the differences in the quality of life between suburbs and townships? Just down the road to Tumahole, the legacy of apartheid becomes discernible:
  - No hospital, no recreational facilities
  - Only 1 community hall, 2 small clinics often insufficiently equipped, a dilapidated taxi rank which lacks proper shelters, a small library without enough learning / reading material

- No cemetery / graveyard, making people to rely on Parys and Schokenville cemeteries
  - Many of our workforce who cannot be absorbed by industrial sites of Sasolburg, Vanderbiljpark and Vereeniging, found themselves at the mercy of the local retail and tourism industries, given the number of lodges and other holiday infrastructure in the area.
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- The question is what do we do? What is the role of government in promoting job creation? Let me remind you that government is already the biggest employer in South Africa, with over 1, 2 million people on its payroll. At the same time government has an obligation to the electorate to work with the civil society including business and labour, to create conditions necessary for economic growth and therefore job-creation. To this end, government has meaningfully participated in the Growth and Development Summits and made a pledge to intervene to help those still outside of the formal employment.

- At the last Growth and Development Summit (2003), government presented the concept of Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as its contribution to poverty alleviation through job creation and skills development. EPWP was launched by the President in 2004.
  
- EPWP is one of the many interventions by government to alleviate poverty. Other include:
  - Free Basic Service
  - Free houses
  - Social grants
  - Abolition of school fees
  - Subsidised school transport and school nutrition scheme
  - Lowering of and eventually scrapping of income tax for low income earners
  - Free primary health for children and pregnant women
  
- With EPWP, government acknowledges that millions of rands are spent everyday to procure goods and

services, rightly so. The EPWP however, challenges all spheres of government to identify labour-intensive alternatives in the procurement of goods and services. For example, because housing development is already labour-intensive, government says during housing construction, the municipality should use labour instead of machinery to dig trenches and lay pipes (civil engineering).

- The same methods can be applied to build, repair and maintain our road network, manage our environment and take care of our terminally sick, hence EPWP has four sectors;

1. **Infrastructure** – roads, civil engineering, maintenance of public buildings, construction projects etc.

2. **Social** – formalizing the many Early Childhood Development Centres in our communities thereby creating jobs, paying volunteers a stipend and encouraging them to administer drugs, do public

awareness campaigns and provide counseling for families and individuals affected by diseases.

### 3. **Environment & Culture** – The Ngwathe

Municipality can identify cleaning and greening projects to beautify Tumahole and its surrounding areas. More dumping sites can be rehabilitated, turned into recreational areas, complete with equipment for the development of our children.

### 4. **Economic Sector** – Again here the Municipality can assist and develop willing and able young entrepreneurs to become job creators, harnessing the strength of Parys as a holiday destination.

- As government, we are confident that EPWP can work. In the last financial year (2005/06), the Programme created 26 756 job opportunities in Free State alone. This year, the Province has already spent R24 million of its R54 million to implement 177 EPWP projects. About 2 987 job opportunities were created in the first quarter of this financial year, of which 66% were youth and 70% women.

- Government's confidence in the EPWP is underpinned by the recent Cabinet Lekgotlas and their decisions to
  - i. Massify the scale and application of EPWP
  - ii. Improve capacity to spend on infrastructure at all levels
  - iii. Enforce EPWP guidelines on all infrastructure projects
  
- Our biggest challenge as a leading Department that drives EPWP is to ensure that:
  - All spheres of government and parastatals embrace the EPWP
  - Local Municipalities, given their proximity to the communities they serve, are in the forefront of promoting EPWP guidelines, namely labour-intensive alternatives of procuring goods and services
  - The community has a clear idea about the existence of an EPWP Office in their midst, the contact people and their details and the

processes involved in the recruitment,  
selection, training and exit of recruits.

- The community needs also to remember that not all municipal projects are amiable to EPWP guidelines. Some may still require a degree of use of machinery and other equipment. Let us persevere and show understanding.
- Thank You.