



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Year End Meeting with DDGs

17 December 2013

Year End Closing Remarks:

TW Nxesi, Minister of Public Works

Protocol and welcome

I want to briefly cover two areas:

- The funeral arrangements, and
- Priorities for 2014.

Colleagues, we have been through an extraordinary 10 days: in equal part we have mourned the parting and celebrated the life of our late President, father of the nation and international icon for peace, justice and democracy: Comrade Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

As the Department of Public Works – amidst all this emotional turmoil – we also had to organise the largest funeral that this country or the world has ever seen. And we had to achieve this in a matter of days.

And you succeeded. Public Works delivered – on a grand scale. For the first time in two years I felt confident to repeat the slogan:

“South Africa works because of Public Works!”

Thank you and congratulations on a job well done.

DG – you are the embodiment of the true meaning of the term: “public servant”. You took responsibility; you coordinated; you stood at your post and you did not sleep (*literally*) until the job was done.

CFO, Finance and the Supply Chain Management team – that first weekend I know was a nightmare. You had to procure all the items needed under emergency conditions to ensure that the programme could go ahead. Again you stayed at your posts till the job was done. [*On a lighter note: next year I am going to remind you just how fast SCM can deliver if they have to.*]

DDG: KAM (Mandla) – you were a part of this project from the beginning. Your knowledge, experience and guidance were invaluable. This experience also

reminds us of the importance of careful and detailed planning.

DDG: Projects – and all the Project Managers – you were our foot soldiers on the ground making sure that the job got done. Again, we are reminded that the best plans in the world will only succeed if we have proper monitoring and management to ensure implementation.

My thanks to all the other officials who played an important role – communications, security etc.

DG – you will add to the list if I have omitted anyone.

I think most of you who were watching the funeral will have heard that the Department of Public Works was singled out in the vote of thanks. That speaks volumes.

[On a lighter note: there was a time when my only ambition and hope was that Public Works would not be mentioned – because that usually meant something bad had happened.]

Let me hasten to add that we do not expect thanks. We do what we do because it is our job and we are here to serve – it is not done for recognition.

Again, the successful unveiling of the statue of Madiba at the Union Buildings yesterday was in large part due to the planning and work of the officials of this Department. You can be proud of that achievement.

On Sunday we buried our beloved Tata in Qunu.
May his soul rest in peace.

You can feel proud that the nation was able to bid farewell to Madiba in surroundings that were dignified and befitting. The infrastructure that Public Works provided was world class. The funeral service on Sunday – in the middle of rural Eastern Cape - was majestic because of this.

As I gazed upon the magnificent statue at the Union Buildings, I could not help but think that Madiba is back amongst us – larger than life; still a giant amongst men. I am reminded of the biblical text:

*Oh death where is thy sting,
Oh grave where is thy victory.*

[1 Corinthians 55:15]

Of course, the principles and values that Madiba espoused and lived are indeed immortal – integrity, accountability, truth, loyalty, discipline, commitment and hard work; the struggle for freedom, justice and equality. These values and goals are timeless.

It falls to all of us, to pick up the fallen spear, and to defend Mandela's legacy; to continue the unfinished struggle for freedom, justice and equality.

Let me also thank all the officials who kept the Department going during this difficult period. It would have been an easy option – in the midst of all this turmoil - to just close shop for the year. You didn't do that. You kept going.

I am particularly heartened by the reports of the strides being taken by the PMTE. The meeting held with large landlords last week – I believe – was a landmark in the renaissance of Public Works as the official Property Management agency of government.

I am told that the meeting was important on a number of levels:

- you laid down the law to the landlords – in regard to over-pricing, lack of proper maintenance and corruption;

- you also gave the landlords a chance to share their concerns – and they welcomed the meeting – the first of its kind in the history of the Department.

PMTE is getting down to core business.

That brings me nicely to the second item – ***priorities for 2014***. You know what these are. Indeed, maybe in the first meeting of 2014, we must request DDGs and unit heads to provide a one pager listing goals and commitments for the year – our own New Year’s Resolutions.

Let me summarise what we have to do:

In terms of stabilisation projects – by the end of the financial year we have to deliver on the commitments we made in relation to the Immoveable Assets Register, leases and the Clean Audit project.

We also have to continue to prioritise the work of Prestige for the coming year:

- the big events – SONA, the Inauguration, and the Budget speech;
- crucially, the transition from this administration to the next – both in terms of office accommodation and prestige housing;
- all the time striving to improve the way we do business. An important part of this is to finalise the Norms and Standards document for Cabinet.

In terms of the longer term commitment to improve the business of Public Works – we have to set clear targets for the first two quarters of 2014 in relation to the following:

- Fully operationalising PMTE and all that that involves in terms of an asset management framework; and effective property and facilities management;
- The implementation of a multi-year planning system and coordinating structure for infrastructure projects;
- Part of this is having in place an effective SCM that is both transparent and delivers timeously.
- Linked to this, is the need for a fully-functioning Risk and Compliance Branch to oversee the systems of the Department so that it becomes easy for good people to comply, and impossible for bad people to prosper.
- EPWP – you have to tie up Phase 2– and prepare for a seamless transition into Phase 3.
- We need to finalise the new structure and organogram and an appropriate HR Plan.

- All of this has to be underpinned by a robust ICT strategy –which is also realistic in terms of dealing with the legacy of where we come from.

We will need those commitments and plans, and we will need to closely monitor implementation in the closing days of this Administration. In that way we can say proudly that we are handing over a greatly improved Department of Public Works to the new Administration.

Let me close on that note.

Again congratulations and thanks for the hard work. Take a well-deserved holiday. Travel safely.

Until we meet again in 2014.