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Speaking notes for the media conference by NW Public Works, Roads and Transport on Tuesday, September 06 held in Mahikeng, Lowe Board Room, Old Parliament Building.

Date: Tuesday, September 06, 2011

- Greetings and welcome

Women's Month ends on high note

- Congratulations are in order, to one of our emerging woman contractor, Ms Meadow Tlhapi, of Wonderkop near Brits.
- She became the first woman in the province to win the 5CE to 6CE category of the Construction Industry Development Board (Cidb), during the award-giving ceremony held in Centurion, Pretoria on Thursday night.
- The profile that won her the much sought-after award was ironically the work she did for us in Tosca, Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati district, under the banner of our women in the road construction project called, Rephelele.
- We awarded Ms Tlhapi a contract to construct a 3.2km road in Tosca in August 2009, which she finished on schedule in April 2010.
- Judges found her project to be of quality, completed on schedule and addressed the critical area of job creation in the area of Tosca.
- It is indeed encouraging, that the support we continue to give to our emerging contractors, especially women, is seen to be bearing fruit albeit at a slower pace which needs some serious attention.
- However, it indeed fulfilling for department to end Women's Month on such a high note, with the full knowledge that Ms Tlhapi, will count us among those who have made it happen for her.
- Specifically with regards to that, which informed her nomination, and her subsequent graduation from grade 5CE to 6CE.

- Ms Tlhapi has agreed to be interviewed and has given me permission to pass on her contact numbers to you in case you wish to interview her (082 5781219).

Appointed contractors now on site on the Koster-Lichtenburg road to complete the remainder of the work.

- We are also pleased to announce that the appointed contractors: Down Touch Investments (Pty) Ltd and Jodan Construction (Pty) Ltd, are on site as we speak, to finish work on the two portions of the road within the next 12 months.

- Down Touch Investment is to complete within seven months, the 50km stretch of road from outside Lichtenburg towards Koster at the cost of more than R93.5m.

- Jodan Construction would work on the 10km portion from Koster town towards Lichtenburg for five months for the contract value of R32.5m.

- It will cost the department more than R126million to complete the remainder of the rehabilitation work on the road between Koster and Lichtenburg.

Ultimatum issued to contractors to finish Mafikeng Revitalisation road projects.

- We have just issued an ultimatum to five road construction companies that were contracted to rehabilitate five road projects we identified, as part of our own contribution to the revitalisation of Mahikeng.

- Following an urgent meeting convened by the MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport, Mahlakeng Mahlakeng this past Friday, attended by contractors and representatives of a firm of consultants appointed to oversee and monitor the work on our behalf:

- A directive was issued to all contractors that the remaining work on all the five road projects ought to be complete and handed over to the department by Friday, September 23.

- We are pleased that at least one of the projects, which was the rehabilitation of a portion of the N18- from Mahikeng to Magogoe Bridge- by the company, M Civil (Pty) Ltd, is now complete.

- It is also important to emphasise the point that this project was two months ahead of schedule, when a decision was taken to open road for traffic even though we are yet to open it officially.

- In view of the ultimatum, the 2.1km rehabilitation works which includes sections of on Ngaka Modiri Molema, James Moroka and Sekame roads must be handed over by September 23. This is the project awarded to the company Ultrasonic Express.

- The same applies to Onkgopotse Tiro (2.8km); Joe Slovo and Dorothy streets (2.4km) as well as the 2.1km on Moshoeshoe and Sekame roads awarded to IBD Civils JV

Phenno Business Enterprise respectively.

- None of the companies raised any objection to our ultimatum, the move we interpreted as a commitment by them to deliver on or before September 23 rather than turning the projects into a camp site.
- We have also made a commitment to contractors that we will fast-track all payments due to them in order to enable them to meet the deadline and deliver on quality.

Position with regards to the road in Madibogo (Ratlou Local Municipality)

- We have never made any commitment whatsoever to the community of Madibogo, to the effect that a portion of the gravel road which is 9.8km long, will be tarred.
- This road was never in the plans of the department and is not on the list of prioritised roads earmarked for paving in the near future.
- We do not know the origin of the promise purportedly made and have no records suggesting that such a promise was ever made by the provincial government to provide a tarred road to that community.
- However, the department, as part of the routine maintenance has re-gravelled and bladed the road in question to make it trafficable, as has often happen in the past.
- We are not in a habit of making promises which we cannot deliver on. It is therefore malicious to put blame on the department for failure to deliver on what was never our commitment in the first place.
- We are on record in saying that, the backlog for the maintenance of roads, whether such are in urban or rural area is a national crisis.
- It is not only peculiar to North West province. As a department we are trying very hard to do more with less and it is not an overestimation to say, we at least require about R2.5billion to adequately address the existing road maintenance backlog.

- This excludes the money we would require, to construct new roads and to reconstruct several bridges in rural areas, which were damaged during the floods of last year.

Concern over the poor response by public servants occupying state houses and flats.

- Public servants occupying state houses and flats in Mahikeng and Mmabatho, had until end of August to renew their lease agreements with the custodians of such properties which is the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport.
- Of the 1 248 houses we are in charge of in the province, 257 are in Mahikeng and Mmabatho.

- We are deeply concerned that only 71 out of the legal occupants – excluding the MEC's- of state houses and flats in Mahikeng and Mmabatho have heeded the call and renewed their lease agreements by end of August.
- In total, 136 deemed legal occupants before end of August, have not responded by the time this press conference convened. We are yet to decide what action to take in view of the poor response but an extension is ruled out.
- We can confirm that there are more than 40 cases pending at the office of the State Attorney with the view to eventually evict tenants.
- These cases include illegal occupation, sub-letting and defaulting on payments.
- The demand for state residential accommodation in Mahikeng and Mmabatho, is very high. Allocation is made on a first come first serve basis in accordance with the waiting list compiled internally by the Allocation Committee.
- We have 38 applicants in very senior position in government who are yet to be allocated state residential accommodation. There are 220 from levels of deputy director downwards also on the waiting list to date.

Pressures on office accommodation

- Provision of suitable office space to other departments is also one of our responsibilities.
- We have written to all heads of departments in the province to give us by September 12 their respective office accommodation needs and what informs such a needs.
- The information sought would assist the department in dealing with the demand for office accommodation in a more holistic manner as opposed to dealing with requests by client departments when pressures for office accommodation suddenly becomes evident.
- We will deal with the challenge of office accommodation in a manner that will not compromise service delivery and take decision that make business sense for government.

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