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Department of Public Works  
North West Provincial Government  
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**Address by MEC Jerry Thibedi, delivered at the graduation ceremony of EPWP and NYS beneficiaries in Bojanala District, Ben Marais Hall, and Rustenburg.**

***Date:*** Tuesday, August 05, 2008

- Programme Director: Mr A Makaba
- The Reverend: M S Tledima
- Councilor Sam Lobelo
- Head of Department: Mr Obakeng Mongale
- Regional Director and host: Mr Albet de Witte
- Senior Managers of the Department of Public Works present
- Our Honoured Guests – the EPWP and NYS graduates
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me say first of all, that I am privileged and humbled to be at this occasion.

With so many men and women-young and old- for whom I have got the utmost respect and the greatest admiration.

Let us continue, beyond this occasion, to turn the tide against poverty and joblessness. We are in this together.

My sincerest greetings indeed and welcome to you all on this important day and indeed, a very important occasion.

Programme Director:

I am absolutely thrilled and delighted, that as we march on as the department of the Public Works, North West, to realise our mandate, already the results are there for all to see. Our eyes cannot lie to us. In a few minutes we will be awarding 184 beneficiaries in your regions certificates.

More about that later.

It is indeed a big day for our guests of honour, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the National Youth Service beneficiaries, in the Bojanala region

It is a day they have waited for with bated breath ever since they were recruited into these noble programmes around twelve (12) months ago.

Programme Director:

The EPWP and NYS remain critical interventions by our government. These programmes are bent on improving the lives of our people who continue to live below the bread line.

Unveiled in May 2004, EPWP sought to create up to a million labour-intensive work opportunities nationally over a period of five years.

Before moving on-site, to do the actual work on projects, the beneficiaries undergo an intensive theoretical and practical training.

In order for beneficiaries to afford transport costs to and from work, something to eat during the day for during the duration of the projects, beneficiaries receive a monthly stipend of R1000.

This we do, mindful of the fact that, no one can work on an empty stomach. You cannot even concentrate if you are hungry.

NYS on the other hand was launched in April last year to involve young people- the future of this country- in public building infrastructure maintenance projects encompassed by EPWP.

Pessimists have on a number of occasions tried to rubbish these programmes, saying they do not address the high unemployment.

Some even argued that the programmes do not create permanent employment.

For us, it all boils down to lack of proper understanding of the policies of our government. Or rather, people who are just too lazy to read government policies.

EPWP and NYS were never established to create permanent employment but were engineered to skill the unemployed so that they could be competitive in the labour market.

These energetic men and women who are here today have passed through all the processes of training under both EPWP and NYS.

As a result they will be receiving certificates to mark their graduation and exit from EPWP and NYS.

The certificates attest to the fact that these graduates are now ready to enter the labour market as either employers or employees.

They are legitimate documents, which have been endorsed by the Construction Education Training Authority (CETA).

When my department called on interested individuals to participate in these noble programmes, the response we got was overwhelming.

It painted a picture of enthusiastic men and women who were eager to learn and seize this precious opportunity.

The selection process culminated in the recruitment of two hundred and seventy-seven (277) beneficiaries, who immediately kick-started their training.

Out of this total, eighty-seven beneficiaries made up of thirty-nine (39) males and forty-eight (48) females were attached to EPWP.

They received a comprehensive theoretical training in paving over a fourteen day period before moving on the sites of the following four projects for their practical training:

- Public Works District Office in Rustenburg
- Social Development District Office in Rustenburg
- Public Works Regional Office in Rustenburg
- Public Works District Office in Mogwase

On the other hand, NYS accounted for one hundred and ninety (190) beneficiaries comprising seventy-three (73) males and one hundred and seventeen (117) females.

This group received training in different trades including carpentry, tiling, plumbing, painting, electrification and paving over fourteen (14) to forty-five (45) days.

They worked on the following three projects:

- Renovation of the Transport, Roads and Community Safety Regional Office in Rustenburg
- Conversion of the Moretele College to office space in Moretele
- The Construction of the Moses Kotane Hospital in Rustenburg

However, as things stand, only one hundred and eighty-four (184) of the initial two hundred and seventy-seven (277) beneficiaries are graduating today.

This means that ninety-three (93) beneficiaries left these programmes half way through. Out of this total, thirty-two (32) beneficiaries were from EPWP while sixty-one (61) were from NYS programme.

This is not bad news. I am informed that most of those who dropped out did so after getting greener pastures in a form of permanent employment elsewhere.

We must take into account that, naturally, the Bojanala District and Rustenburg as a predominantly mining town is a hive of economic activity hence the current situation.

I am also informed that the late payment of stipends, which is not exclusive to this District, is also to blame for the drop out of a few beneficiaries. We are working on this problem.

In terms of the treasury regulations, a service provider must be paid within thirty (30) days of having completed the job.

In this regard, my department is preparing to embark on an assessment of how it has been paying service providers.

The results of this assessment will point us to the critical areas, where we need to tighten up the rope so that such occurrences do not resurface.

I am informed that few NYS beneficiaries dropped out because of lack of commitment and discipline.

I would like to take this opportunity to caution those who misuse rare opportunities like these with this popular saying: "Time lost is never regained".

I call on young people to grab with both hands the opportunities that this government continues to avail for them so that they can change their own socio-economic status.

This I do because I do not subscribe to notions that label our young people the "lost generation". I do so because in them I see the leaders and architects of the future.

In spite of all these challenges, these two programmes have generally done very well. I would therefore like to congratulate all the beneficiaries here today and wish them all the best for the future.

I thank you very much indeed.

ENDS

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