

## KZN Public Works 'talks the talk' for the Youth... *Vusi Shabalala reports*

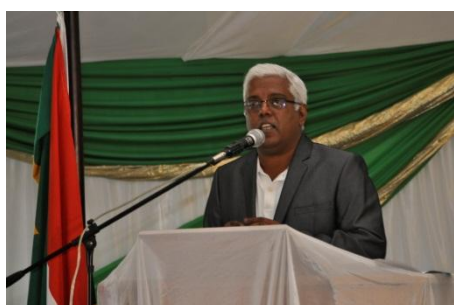
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June month marks a special period that focuses on the Youth around the globe. As the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Public Works hosts and celebrates the Youth in Construction and Property Summit 2012, the whole world ponders around the same footsteps and shadows. From the UNESCO Youth Summit 2012, the NATO Youth Summit 2012, the G8 and G20 Youth Summits 2012, the Euro-Africa Youth Summit 2012, the UNESCO Youth Summit 2012 to the KZN Public Works Youth in Construction and Property Summit 2012 under the theme *"Together We Can Do More to Build Infrastructure and Fight Youth Unemployment, Poverty and Inequality."*



**Mr Jeremy Redfearn, Public Works' Chief Financial Officer (CFO) giving remarks and introduction of MEC Pillay**

The event promises to be the most exciting and unique one as one noticed how the young people from and around KwaZulu-Natal heading all the way to eThekweni Region in Durban where the MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Mr Ravi Pillay graced the occasion. There is that feeling of elation that the summit aims to achieve continued diversity, positive deliberations and sustainability.



**MEC Ravi Pillay delivering the keynote address**



**Mr L Naidoo, Speaker of eThekweni Municipality giving a welcoming address**

It is all systems go for the KZN Public Works. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 the acting Head of Department, Mr Jeremy Redfearn and his EXCO team members steered the ship as he officially announced the nominated two winners who will be representing Public Works at the Premier's Excellence Awards during July 2012. This time around the ship cruises towards another shorelines, the tune that sounds towards the Youth celebrations.



**Representatives from KZN Public Works**

As the event unfolded, the programme commenced with an introduction of special guests by the General Manager for Operations, Mr Thulane Mdadane. Amongst guests introduced were Ms Mbali Fraser, Chairperson of the KwaZulu-Natal Portfolio Committee on Public Works, the Speaker of eThekweni Municipality who proffered a welcoming message. Be reminded that the day's programme was conducted and managed by two staunch individuals with positive touch of esteem, Ms Thobile Masondo and Mr Mandla Sithole.



*Guests during the registration at the Youth Summit*

At about 10h00, the MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works, Mr Ravi Pillay was showered with a standing ovation as he delivered his positively awaited speech by the guests.

In his message, MEC Pillay was explicitly clear and fathomable that “The annual Youth In Construction and Property Summit is an opportunity for the Department to expose our young people to the numerous enterprise initiatives in these two sectors capitalised at tens of billions per annum.” The summit therefore aims at achieving its objectives of ensuring that the youth in the Province remain at the centre of the Department’s core mandates. “Ironically, Government in all its three tiers remains the major client to these cartels. The role of Public Works in procuring office space for client Departments as well as facilitating infrastructure development such as schools, hospital and clinics inevitably demands that it engages with the main players in construction and property management. It is therefore imperative that we broaden this construction and property management pie so that new entrants particularly young entrepreneurs also begin to play a meaningful role if we are to make a serious dent to the scourge of youth unemployment and those who lack skills” he emphasised. Opportunity is never lost, once you lose it, the next fellow takes it. This remark is quite indicative that the onus is on the youth to take ownership of and embrace this opportunity with purpose and commitment. Notwithstanding the challenges that the youth faces in this province and country, the KZN Public Works and the Provincial Government have their own fair share of positive spin-offs in supporting the youth in addressing such challenges.

The Department of Public Works has programmes in place that address the interests of the youth. These programmes include amongst others the following:

*Expanded Public Works Programme:* As the lead Department in rolling out government infrastructure, Public Works is central to the job creation objectives of government. The Expanded Public Works Programme provides employment opportunities to unskilled and unemployed people and increases the economic growth by means of improving skills levels through education and on-site training;

*Izandla Ziyagezana Programme:* This programme is a Departmental initiative aimed directly at poverty alleviation and job creation through identification of the poorest of the poor communities as beneficiaries, focusing on labour intensive methods for manual clearance of vacant land owned by the Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal. The objectives of the Izandla Ziyagezana programme are to:-

- ✓ Provide job creation opportunities to the poorest of the poor households in poor communities, with special emphasis on women and mostly the youth;
- ✓ Empower women and youth by providing basic training on site clearance and life skills;
- ✓ Provide a cost effective system of maintaining provincially owned vacant sites pending the future use or disposal;
- ✓ Instil a sense of pride and ownership in the community through keeping a safe and clean environment.

*KZN Integrated Greening Programme:* This is a partnership programme which focuses on greening activities through employment creation for unskilled people thereby enabling communities to take charge of the environment and by so doing become economically independent.

The programme provides for:

- ✚ “Tree-preneurs” – growing and planting indigenous and edible plants
- ✚ “Waste-preneurs” – collecting recyclable waste
- ✚ “Green-preneurs” – trading bicycles, water tanks, solar energy devices
- ✚ Reforestation projects, restoring community forest assets

*Developing Future Property Managers Through The Property Incubator Programme (PIP):* The Property Incubator Programme is an initiative aimed at addressing the pressing challenges of scarce skills where youths are afforded training and business development opportunities in the property development and management sector. This programme came into effect after the realization that very few people from the previously disadvantaged communities have skills in the property management sector. It focuses on imparting knowledge and skills development in property management, property development, real estate agency, property ownership and facilities management.

*Positive Results Through National Youth Service Training Programme:* The National Youth Service (NYS) programme is one of the sub-programmes of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). The NYS focuses mainly on skills training and youth development through a formal and accredited skills programme consisting of four months of theory and eight months of practical active participation on a construction site. Among others, the youth receive training in bricklaying, carpentry, plastering, as well as business and entrepreneurial skills to ensure that the beneficiaries are put in a position to establish and run their own businesses in the future.

*Bursary and Internship Programme:* The Bursary and Internship programme are initiatives of the Department in that they are a means to address the scarce skills shortage in the Engineering, Quantity Surveying, Architecture, Construction Project Management and Property

Development fields. Graduates are given the opportunity to obtain practical work experience in their respective disciplines they have studied in order to be registered as Professionals in the relevant disciplines. Bursary holders are required to work with consulting firms during the vacation periods in order to obtain valuable work experience with a view to integrating theory and knowledge in their field of study.

“I heartily endorse the efforts of the Public Works Department in availing opportunities in these two sectors to our young people and trust that this year’s summit will be a great success” remarked MEC Ravi Pillay as he made his closing statement.

It should be mentioned that the summit was also flowered by various exhibitors from different stakeholder partners amongst others were AQRate Verification Services KZN (Pty) Ltd, ABSA Bank, Old Mutual, CIDB, KZN Department of Human Settlements, NAFCOC and Productivity SA, SARS, Durban University of Technology.

The structure of the programme was designed such that all stakeholder partners and respective project managers from the Department had an opportunity as “panel of speakers” to deliver their respective presentations that respond to the call and aim of the summit. It is also acknowledged that the crux to the event was the for those young people who made all the efforts to leave their homes during a cold and rainy weather and make time with Government and gain something that would seek light to the economic future of the youth in the Province. It is also remains quite interesting to note that many a youth made it through in attendance regardless the weather and other socio-economic constraints. An astonishing address was delivered by Sthembiso Mlungwana, who serve as a participant to the Property Incubator Programme( PIP).



***Ms Sindi Linda, General Manager: Property Management during the questions-answer session***

A question-answer session was conducted and managed by Ms Sindi Linda, the General Manager for property Management. During this period, the guests had an ample time to ensure that all unclear matters of concern were well elucidated for their benefit and use. These sessions are mostly paramount to serve as guide to and for potential young entrepreneurs who equally seeks to cultivate future stakeholder partnerships for the Department. The summit does not reflect a talk-shop but rather a session that would be weighed against all odds of delivery on the part of the KZN Department of Public Works. Stemming from this elucidation, resolutions were identified, captured and agreed on by all parties for a way forward. These resolutions will alleviate the repeat of similar issues or complaints for the coming financial year by the Department. Amongst the guests, complements were extended and conveyed to the Department in the manner of interaction by the Department by reaching out to the communities through this forum. It is indicative that Public Works normally reaches out to communities through two summits and the request from the stakeholder partners is to ensure that the people are met at least at most intervals in the year. It is indeed observable that the KZN Department of Public Works “talks the talk” for the youth of the Province.



***Ms Mbali Fraser MPL & Chairperson of the Public Works Portfolio Committee delivering a vote of thanks***