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MEDIA STATEMENT

KWAZULU-NATAL PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE MEC, MARTIN MEYER, DELIVERS ON PROMISE TO FORM WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION ADVISORY BODY, HOLDS FIRST MEETING WITH NEWLY ESTABLISHED TEAM

KwaZulu-Natal Public Works and Infrastructure MEC, Martin Meyer, has met with the newly established Women In Construction Advisory Body, which is given a dedicated mandate of prioritizing women-led projects and finding solutions to the numerous challenges these projects are faced with. The advisory body is made up of and led by an all-women team who all have industry qualifications, are registered, hold numerous gradings, have several years of experience within the construction industry and the built environment and hold various industry recognitions.

The establishment of this body is a result of a promise made by MEC Meyer during last year's successful Women In Construction symposium held at KZN Public Works and Infrastructure's offices in Pietermaritzburg during Women's Month. The event, attended by hundreds of businesswomen operating within the construction sector, formed part of ongoing programs and efforts by the department to give women a foot in the door into the male-dominated sector. During the symposium last year, it became evident during engagements between the businesswomen and the MEC that a vast amount of systematic discrimination against women still existed within the built environment.

During Friday afternoon's closed-door meeting at the MEC's Durban office an initial roadmap was drafted which would guide areas the Women In Construction Advisory Body would have to prioritize in the short term.

These include, but were not limited to:

- Discriminatory BEE procurement processes which still score youth applicants higher over women
- Red tape and financial limitations imposed by financial institutions indicating a lower-than-desirable appetite to fund women-led projects
- Increased targeting by extortionists who viewed women as an easier target
- The outdated tender advertisement, application and submission system which is still largely physical while we live in the digital era

MEC Meyer expressed that the areas of discussion further reaffirm that the establishment of the Women In Construction Advisory Body was well overdue.

He also said there was scope to extend an invitation to financial institutions to include them at the table so that a better understanding can be established.

To further emphasize this concern, MEC Meyer, referenced the ongoing fight to save Ithala Bank, an institution renowned for giving business owners a financial leverage, especially those previously marginalized by colour.

He went on to say that the fight to save the institution has a deeper sentimental meaning to him as a person who is openly a champion and voice for the marginalized communities.

The MEC agreed fully that some of the challenges affecting women constructors were also based on outdated policies and this is why KZN Public Works and Infrastructure is proud to spearhead a full digitization shift. He also said he would reach out to Public Works and Infrastructure Minister, Dean Macpherson, to discuss amending the current outdated regulations.

END.

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