

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER M.B. GWALA
MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS (KZN) AT THE LAUNCH
OF THE DEPARTMENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME
4 JULY 2005 09H00 GREYVILLE**

Programme Director, Head of Department: Dr. F.B. Madlopha, General Manager: Corporate Services Mr. P.W. Duma, Director Communication Services: Mr. Bongani Ngubane, Acting Regional Manager Mr. A.M. Zulu, Human Resource Manager, Deputy Human Resource Manager, Head of Ministry: Mr. Bonginkosi Zondi, Communication Services staff and finally, the people through whom we are all gathered here, graduates, I greet and welcome you all.

The purpose of our gathering today is to officially launch the Department of Public Works Internship Programme. The Department of Education and the South African Chamber of Business (Sacob) state that it is critical that matriculants secure internships and gain work experience, even if they intend studying further. The skills shortage is becoming a worldwide phenomenon, but at the same time graduates find it difficult to find jobs due to a lack of experience. Internships could be the solution to bridging the gap between the skills shortage and a lack of experience. Many young people in our country leave this majestic country of ours in pursuit of employment overseas, owing to the widespread phenomenon; that our country lacks in opportunities.

This is untrue; South Africa has plenty of opportunities for young people. Companies are now required to provide graduates with learnerships and Internships, thus providing them with the experience which they often lack, in their aim to enter the corporate environment.

Often when you as graduates leave tertiary institutions, all you have is the theory, and minimum, if any practical, Internships offer you the opportunity to apply that theory. The Internship, offers the graduate a taste of the real world.

At the Growth and Development Summit last year, the government presented the EPWP framework as part of its position to facilitate growth and create jobs. Both business and labour amplified their support for the programme. At National level: the Honourable Minister of Public Works, Ms Stella Sigcau stated that the Department of Public Works, would continue to engage with both stakeholders to make EPWP a truly national affair. As a result, business, through the Business Trust, has agreed to make EPWP one of its key focus areas in the coming years.

Recently, at National level: the Department of Public Works was heartened by the ABSA Bank when they entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with Public Works and the Construction SETA. They undertook to finance construction projects and facilitate easy access to credit for contractors.

In the economic sector of the EPWP, the focus will be on the creation of venture learnerships.

During these learnerships the SMME's on the venture learnerships will be providing goods and services to government as part of the practical experience requirements.

Together with the Department of Labour a comprehensive training plan is being prepared for the EPWP. This includes the creation of a standard training course of 10 to 14 days for workers only employed for shorter durations under the EPWP. This training programme will focus on providing workers with life skills, information about the labour market, in particular where there are skills shortages, and opportunities on learnerships, internships, further education and training and job opportunities in the private sector. Furthermore D.O.L (Dept. of Labour) is working with the SETA's to put in place additional learnerships necessary to grow the EPWP in all the relevant sectors.

One of the most aggressive poverty alleviation programmes ever undertaken by the post-apartheid government, the EPWP will utilize no less than **R15 billion** in its first five years of operation to create more than **1 million** jobs including learnerships and internships through selected infrastructure development and other labour-intensive government funded projects.

Among other things, the EPWP programme will build **37,000km** of Roads, **31,000km** of pipelines, **1500km** of storm water drains and **150km** of urban sidewalks.

The key objective of today is to inform graduates and final year students about the Internship Programme. The aim of this programme will be to alleviate skills shortage experienced within

the professional disciplines of Architecture, Quantity Surveying and Engineering, particularly in the Civil, Structural, Electrical and Mechanical professions. The focus of this programme is to offer members of the previously disadvantaged groups opportunities. This programme will also allow companies to fulfil their employment equity targets.

It is fundamental that we as the Department state that, the Internship Programme should be a win – win situation, for both of us as the employer and yourselves as the employees. To ensure that the programme is a success, those of you who will be fortunate enough to be appointed as Interns, will be provided with Mentors and Coaches. The function of the coach will be to provide you as Interns with the daily operations of your responsibilities. While, on the other hand the role of the Mentor will be to oversee your progress.

In order for the Internship Programme to be a success, you as Interns need to be accommodated so as to feel as part of a professional team and not a burden. Adequate supervision must be built into the programme, and thus a supervisor - one who can handle duties such as pre-employment orientation and paperwork in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities - will be chosen to oversee the intern. Thus, we as the Department, have taken the decision that, each Intern will be required to sign a fixed term contract of appointment which will not exceed twelve months in duration.

Coaches will be required to write a report on the progress of their Intern. These reports will allow you as Interns to discuss your progress with your Coach, it will also be a forum for your Coach to

offer advice. This will provide you with the opportunity to improve in areas at which your work is not of the required standard.

That being said, the reports and the communication between you and your Coach will in addition provide you with the forum to discuss other concerns and methods to utilise in order to improve the quality of your work.

Through this system you as Interns, are guaranteed to be part of a team, and the Department in turn will be able to benefit from the contribution of fresh innovative minds.

Almost no-one is financially able to work full-time while earning no income. Therefore, Interns will definitely receive remuneration as indicated in the Code of Remuneration.

The success of this programme will depend on those of you who will be fortunate enough to be given the experience. If you apply yourselves wholeheartedly, as part of the Public Works family, you will defiantly benefit. After the completion of your Internship you will leave having acquired tools in which to tackle the job market and with a clear understanding of the working world.

I would like to wish you all the best in all your future endeavours.

I thank you.