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MIDLANDS STAKEHOLDERS FORUM

Remarks by

The Honorable MB Gwala-MPP
Minister of Public Works: KwaZulu-Natal

6 SARABAY ROAD, NEWACSTLE

17 AUGUST 2005

The Chairperson,
Head of Department Dr FB Madlopha,
Other government officials present,
All the stakeholders present, ladies and gentlemen
I greet you all.

You are gathered here today **not** to listen to me alone speaking to you. Rather we have come to share some ideas, wishes and individual aspirations on how best to participate in construction related matters.

August has been designated as a month to celebrate our women. To mark this fact, we now have the 9th August as an officially recognized Public Holiday on our calendar. Perhaps it is appropriate at this point to kick-start my short message to you by saying something about women.

WOMEN IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

It is regrettable that we are realizing only now the significant role of women in the society. As a result my Department has also not been

immune to this anomaly. It is only now that we are beginning to say that such realization must be matched with actions that will result in real material benefits for women. Today I have to admit the obvious fact that it is the Women's Day celebrations that has provided to my Department the focus needed to address the situation. On a date to be announced later, my Department will be marking these celebrations by inviting women who are keen on entering the construction industry sector or those already in the construction to a meeting where their needs and challenges will be raised and a program of action be drawn up for the Department.

PROJECTS PUT ON HOLD BY CLIENT DEPARTMENTS

I suppose most of you know that my Department is the landlord of other government departments. The services that we render involve the provision as well as maintenance and repairs to all types of accommodation and other infrastructure to our client state departments. Such accommodation may either be leased or fully owned by the state. Of course our services are rendered in accordance with the order of priority and budget determined by our client departments.

Like every other organization or institution, government also has privileged information that it may not share with the service providers. That information, however, does not impact in any way on the

contractors and their work relationship with us. My Department does not have a mandate to speak on behalf of other government departments. I felt I had to reassure you on that one because perceptions of lack of transparency in the manner we conduct our business need to be addressed at every opportunity.

EMERGENCY PROJECTS

Declaring the nature of work as urgent is a prerogative of that particular client department. My department does not have any control or say over that matter. Otherwise all other work has to be done through the normal tender (or bid) process. Only work so identified by the client department can be approved by my department and executed as such. Otherwise declaring a lot of work as urgent can lead to potential fraud and corruption.

CIDB NOT HAVING THE INTERESTS OF CONTRACTORS AT HEART

There is another unfortunate perception that has been created before the contractors I even work shopped, the perception that says the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) does not have the interests of the contractors at heart. Nothing can be further from the truth. In fact the CIDB is a government-approved statutory body brought into being by an Act of Parliament with the sole intention of strengthening rather than retarding the emerging contractors. This requirement to register encompasses a development aspect which

will assist the contractors to grow. At a work shop provisionally scheduled for the 22 August 2005 more detailed information will be provided on this issue.

FAST TRACKING THE GROUPING OF PROJECTS TO ONE CONTRACTOR

Government has a responsibility to respond to the needs of the community, often with limited resources. In that situation the government is still expected to respond to crises of one kind or another, such as, for example, heeding the clarion call made by the President in his State of the Nation Address in May 2004 saying learning under the trees should be brought to an end within three years – when he was referring to the problem of classroom backlog. The crisis in this regard necessitated exploration of other avenues to respond to the situation – hence the Fast Track Process Grouping of Projects to one Contractor. It may not be the best system but it has yielded positive results so far.

May I stop right there and express my hope that our interaction today will be a start of greater things to come.

Thank you.

