



**KZN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MEC FOR PUBLIC  
WORKS, MRS LYDIA JOHNSON AT THE PUBLIC  
WORKS LONG SERVICE AWARDS CEREMONY IN  
MAYVILLE, DURBAN, 03 MARCH 2009.**

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Programme Director

Head of Department

Senior management

Departmental staff

Ladies and gentlemen, I greet you all.

Today we have gathered here to commemorate the journey our dedicated, hardworking, disciplined and committed staff have traveled in the Department. It is indeed an honour and a privilege for me to be part of this occasion. Today we are celebrating effort and dedication you have demonstrated by serving in one Department for such a long period.

The country is proud to have employees of your caliber. I say this because you started serving this department during apartheid era when working conditions for the previously disadvantaged people were not conducive.

You started serving this Department when the rights of workers to acceptable working conditions were deliberately violated. There was absence of bargaining councils or institutions and this exposed workers to various forms of abuse in the work place. Gender and racial discrimination was rife.

The government and organized business lacked willingness to ensure development of workers in terms of skills and knowledge. This reduced opportunities for upward mobility among workers

who were already in the labour market. Workers were trapped in one monotonous job for their entire lives.

Nevertheless, since the democratically elected government came into power, we have strived to improve working conditions for workers in all sectors. We have actively encouraged training and development of workers in their specialized fields and this has increased levels of productivity among workers.

The government in partnership with the private sector has promoted Adult Basic Education with a view of ensuring improved productivity levels and personal growth. The government has made it compulsory for all organizations to reveal their training and development plans and programmes. This has had a positive impact in terms of skills development.

Today workers are at liberty to affiliate in trade unions which are their voice and they enjoy protection. We are proud that today even workers who were neglected, including farm and domestic workers are unionized.

However, one should acknowledge that the government is still faced with a serious challenge due to non compliance by certain employers. The government is aware of the fact that some workers are still subjected to ill-treatment and discrimination in their work place. Other employers are not willing to implement affirmative action programmes. The government needs to go an extra mile in terms of educating these employers because they retard transformation process.

With those words I just wanted to bring your attention to the fact that these employees who will receive the long service awards managed to serve their country under such circumstances. We salute and applaud them for that.

Today's ceremony also marks another victory against the many challenges we have as a country and as workers. Today, the Public servants are viewed as the most corrupt employees. There is lack of honesty and patriotism. There is absence of the sense of duty. This has crippled our government and slowed the pace in terms of service delivery.

However the government has made significant strides in terms of inculcating the culture of serving the people through the Batho Pele Principles. We are proud of you because you have reached this level because you have refrained from corruption. Others have served twenty and thirty years respectively.

Apart from corruption, the country and the entire global village is faced with the challenge of HIV/AIDS pandemic. Many workers have lost their lives and others are sick. This has resulted to our country losing productive and skilled people. This impact negatively on our economy. We need to join hands and support those affected and infected.

Another challenge we are faced with is the escalating food prices. This is a global challenge emanating from global economic downturn. Our government has a very limited power to avoid increases in prices of basic food. We understand that the purchasing power of our currency has depreciated dramatically and this has increased the cost of living. I wish to encourage you to spend your money wisely. You should refrain from spending on luxuries and invest your money so that you retire rich.

With those words I wish to encourage you to keep up the good works and continue serving the people. I hope that our youth, the new entrants in the labour market will learn a lot from you.

You need to transfer the skills you have acquired to our youth.  
I hope that you will continue serving the department selflessly.

I thank you.