



**SPEECH NOTES BY KWAZULU-NATAL MEC FOR TRANSPORT,
COMMUNITY SAFETY AND LAIASON MR B. H. CELE AT THE
VUKUZAKHE GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON FRIDAY, 11 MAY
2007**

All Protocol Observed

- We have come here today to celebrate the achievements in the construction industry. The graduation of Vukuzakhe Contractors marks a historic event in the development of the emerging contractor sector in KwaZulu-Natal.
- We welcome the participation of learners which bears testimony to the progress made by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport's broad based approach to black economic empowerment and support for the small and emerging business sectors.

- It is not my intention today to outline the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport's history of progress in supporting disadvantaged population groups and communities to grow and to prosper and to share the wealth of KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa.
- The fact that so many contractors are here today is in itself indicative that you have been in a position to take advantage of the new policy frameworks, and contract opportunities our government has put on offer since it came to power.
- However, we must not fool ourselves. The struggle to liberate our economy in South Africa is no less bitter than the struggle to liberate our country to democracy. Indeed, as we intensify the struggle for economic liberation, we need also to seek our African solutions in solving African problems.
- It is on that score that my Department signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA) to facilitate Construction Contractor Learnerships (NQF Level 2), the duration of which is 24 months. This was after the Department identified a need for training as there was lack of skills within the construction industry.

- The Construction Contractor Learnership is geared towards developing contractors' managerial skills and targeted mainly women and youth within the construction industry. Learnership agreements between the Training Providers, Vukuzakhe Contractors as Primary Employers and the Department as Secondary Employer were signed during 2004 and 93 agreements were entered into.
- Out of those 93 learners, only 88 learners continued with the programme. However, it is unfortunate that six of those are deceased and we only have 82 graduates today.
- It is very encouraging that as a result of this programme, learners will now have a full accredited qualification; the skills and competencies to be utilized and applied within their relevant companies. The learners also have an opportunity to undergo training for the NQF Level 2 in EPWP qualifications which will help them to bid for EPWP projects.
- My Department continues to embark on other training programmes some of which will be implemented this financial year 2007/08. To this end, a proposal has been made for a new learnership – Construction Roadworker (NQF Levels 1-3).

- Unlike the Construction Contractor Learnership, the Construction Roadworker Learnership is geared towards providing technical hard skills required by contractors. It will cover amongst other things:
 - Read and interpret construction drawings and specifications;
 - Install and maintain guardrails;
 - Install precast pipes;
 - Install Gabion baskets;
 - Install road studs;
 - Batch and mix concrete;
 - Conduct bituminous seal operation; and
 - Construct precast kerbs and concrete channels.

- The target to be achieved here is 180 learners including youth, women and people living with disability. Our Project Liaison Committees (PLC) currently play a key role in the recruitment of learners within communities where road construction projects take place.

- The Department plans to complete the recruitment drive of all 180 learners throughout the province during the second quarter of this financial year. The recruitment process has started with 50 prospective construction workers, including 18 for P100 in Ndwedwe, 10 for P577 in Inanda KwaMashu area, 10 for John Ross Highway and 12 for EPWP learners in Ongoye (P230/P240).

- Also, seven Construction Contractor Learners from P68 in St Faiths will graduate during this financial year after undergoing the two year training.

- The Department has set aside more than R10 million for learnerships during the 2007/08 financial year. This includes learnerships for EPWP, a programme my Department is coordinating for the province.
- As I have indicated earlier, apart from the above learning programmes, my Department offers various other learning channels especially to students in the fields of Technical and Civil engineering.
- Our Technology Transfer Centre (T²) has embarked on various apprenticeship skills programmes. To this end, 40 students have been recruited for these programmes. 16 of them are on a four year program in Mechanical engineering and the other 24 are on a one year program in Civil engineering.
- As one of our major investments, Ladies and Gentlemen, the African Renaissance Road Upgrading Programme (ARRUP) plays a vital role in the skills development of students to enhance the engineering skills in the country. I am pleased to inform you that 48 Civil Engineering students from Technikons and Universities have acquired in-service training from ARRUP and Cabinet Projects during the last financial year. We are also hoping to mentor more technicians and junior engineers during this financial year.

- About 44 schools have been visited with the aim to encourage scholars to consider careers in engineering and take science and mathematics. Here, about 1700 kids were exposed to construction sites and offered career mentorship. In another move to attract schools in Civil Engineering, my Department has become the main sponsor of the annual bridge building competition organized by the Civil Engineering of South Africa (CESA) in the Pietermaritzburg region.
- Our bursary committee awards financial assistance to students at university levels who are pursuing fields of Technical and Civil engineering. These programmes are designed to afford opportunities as well as skills development to people who were previously designated as disadvantaged – to gain support and be able to contribute positively towards upliftment of the economy.
- Technikon and University students have been awarded bursaries and we have an agreement that once they complete their studies, they will work for the Department for a minimum of years equivalent to the years they were funded. I am appealing to other students make use of this opportunity and apply for financial assistance.

- In conclusion, it is important Ladies and Gentlemen, that I express my appreciation at this stage to the CETA and Vukuzakhe Contractors who have partnered with my Department to make this possible. It is partnerships like this that as government bodies, we need to encourage so as to implement the integrated development strategy.
- I would also like to thank the learners who have taken the step to acquire skills and knowledge that will allow them to take charge of their own future, and hopefully form an integral part of the national economy in their future careers.
- Finally, may I urge all members of the construction industry as a whole to ensure that they not only comply with the law but create opportunities for the unemployed in their areas to train and get work experience.
- Let us all join the skills revolution. Let us spread the word so that no government official, potential partner, media representative or future learner is ignorant of Vukuzakhe, its learnerships and its capacity to bring about meaningful change in people's lives.

I THANK YOU.

