



public works

Department of
Public Works
FREE STATE PROVINCE

MEC's SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS TOURNAMENT

12 November 2009

Programme Director,
MEC's from other Provinces,
Participating teams from other provinces,
Sponsors,
Esteemed guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Free State province is very proud and honoured to host this year's National Health and Wellness tournament. We hope that your stay and participation in this tournament over the next three days will be a memorable one. We are particularly pleased to see the involvement of businesses through sponsorships in this tournament.

The department of Public Works and Rural Development is committed to the ideals of a healthy and productive workforce. Hence we believe that this tournament will also go a long way in encouraging a healthy life style among employees. Poor health has a profound impact on workers and their families, employers and the economy of the country. At workplace, we need to put the issue of health and wellness in our priorities, for us to be able to address daunting developmental challenges in our communities. A report issued by The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA during September 2007, entitled "Heart Disease in South Africa" revealed some of the shocking statistics that needs mention here;

- Despite the high rates of AIDS deaths in South Africa, actuaries project that chronic disease, including heart disease is also going to increase in 2010. About 33 people a day die due to heart attacks.
- High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes add considerably to the burden of disease in South Africa. Heart disease is the second biggest killer of South Africans after AIDS.
- More than half the deaths due to chronic disease, including heart disease, occur before the age of 65 years. These are premature deaths that affect the workforce in the country and have a major impact on the economy of the country.
- Experts estimate the total direct and/or indirect costs of death and disability from heart and stroke to exceed R8 billion a year.

Therefore ladies and gentlemen, it is against this backdrop that employee health and wellness programmes should become an essential tool to successfully ease the burden of disease in South Africa. It is time for a paradigm shift; for too long we have been focusing our attention on the problem (i.e. managing disease). Employee health and wellness programmes should focus on finding solutions through health promotions, education and new ways of thinking. This we must do because employees are the most important assets to any company or government.

I am informed that this tournament was launched in 2004 hosted by Kwazulu Natal and it has been a resounding success in all these years. Today all provincial and National departments are participating in this tournament. I therefore wish to see this year's tournament being better and exciting for all the participants.

This tournament is correctly placed during this November month wherein the province will also host the soccer international friendly between Bafana Bafana and Jamaica. This match will not only test the readiness of Bafana Bafana in the pitch for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, but will also give the Province an opportunity to showcase to the rest of the world, our readiness in all the requirements of the tournament of this magnitude.

Let me take this opportunity to thank the sponsors Ruwaccon Construction Company, Absa, Liberty Life, Virgin Active, Old Mutual and New Start for your valued partnership in hosting this tournament. We hope that our partnership will grow proportionally to the realization of this noble goal of a healthy life style among employees. I thank the national Employee Wellness, Sports and Recreation Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. M.I. Nonjola and the provincial tasks team from our department and the department of Police, Roads and Transport. For all the teams and participants, I wish you luck and may the best team win.

Ladies and gentlemen, this tournament is about celebrating the health and wellness of employees; so let us all enjoy ourselves.

I thank you.