

The Weekly

MABE VOWS TO TRANSFORM PROPERTY SECTOR

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Building provincial infrastructure ... Free State MEC for public work, Sisi Mabe said her department has completed 26 infrastructural projects

The Free State MEC for Public Works, Sisi Mabe, has reaffirmed the department's commitment, to critical national priorities such as reducing poverty and unemployment, securing a more equitable distribution of economic growth benefits, reducing inequality and ensuring universal access to basic services.

Mabe delivered the department's 2013/2014 budget vote at Nyakallong, Allanridge, on Friday last week. The theme of the budget is Acceleration of Infrastructure Delivery and Job Creation for Sustainable livelihoods.

The department of public works is responsible for the creation of decent work and sustainable livelihoods through various integrated programmes. The department was allocated R1.4-billion, which is an increase of 14 percent from the previous financial year budget.

As part of its contribution to job creation, the department has created over 43 000 work opportunities through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). More than 700 work opportunities have been created in the Township Revitalisation Programme, which involves the revamping of townships in Cornelia, Jagersfontein, Parys, Marabastad, Arlington, Thaba Nchu, Petrusburg and Allanridge, as well as Batho in Bloemfontein.

Three hundred young people were also employed in the National Youth Service programme to work and receive training on hygiene and cleaning; ornamental horticulture and landscaping; as well as construction carpentry.

She said the department has also made significant progress in employing disabled people announcing that disabled employees comprise 1.3 percent of the staff establishment and committed herself to achieving the required two percent target by September 30, 2013.

The department has also completed 26 infrastructure projects to the tune of R197-million. They include 15 schools; one doctor's quarters; two projects for the departments of agriculture and sports, as well as four projects for the department of economic development, tourism and environmental affairs (DEDTEA).

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Mabe said building and revamping the province's infrastructure will become the department's key priority for this financial year. This, she said, was in line with the objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP).

"The NDP argues that infrastructure is not just essential for faster economic growth and higher employment. It also promotes inclusive growth, providing citizens with the means to improve their own lives and boost their incomes. It is therefore clear that infrastructure delivery as a cross-cutting priority needs to be accelerated if we are to successfully contribute to the economic growth of the province." She said her department will continue with the construction of several multi-year projects such as the social development offices; the KGI Building in Kroonstad; the Harrismith testing station; the Lebohang Building elevators upgrade as well as the Hamilton regional offices in Bloemfontein.

The department will also upgrade the Lengau Testing Station; the public works offices in Thaba Nchu; the elevators at the Sand Du Plessis theatre in Bloemfontein, as well as a number of provincial government buildings

To raise revenue, the department is going to upgrade the Revolving Restaurant at Lebohang Building with the intention of renting it out to a qualified service provider at a market related price.

Mabe said her department has commenced with a strategic process to review all current leased office accommodation with the intention of creating an integrated leasing strategy and accommodation plan whose objectives are in line with the Property Sector Transformation Charter. The provincial government wants to use its huge property portfolio to transform the sector and introduce more black players in the industry.

"The department will be implementing Phase two of property transformation comprising of a BEE funding scheme and property education programme. This will include the implementation of office accommodation plan and the decentralisation plan commencing with three municipalities situated in three Districts namely: Motheo, Fezile Dabi and Thabo Mofutsanyana," said Mabe.

Mabe said the department has been set aside R1.1-billion to implement the BEE property programme. "It is part of quest to promote ownership, especially to the historically disadvantaged individuals throughout the province."

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