

POLITICAL OVERVIEW BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, Ms. NE HLOPHE, MPL, DURING AN ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE TO DELIBERATE ON THE 2023-2024 THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT AND THE RE-TABLED APP AND BUDGET OF THE DETD AND ITS PUBLIC ENTITIES

Thursday, 14 March 2024

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee;

Members of the Portfolio Committee;

Acting of Head of Economic Development and Tourism, Mr. Cain Chunda;

Chairpersons of the Boards and CEOs of our Public Entities;

Senior Management team from our Department;

Officials from the Legislature;

Lotjhani!

1. Chairperson, let me begin by thanking you for affording us this opportunity, to engage the Portfolio Committee.
2. We come before you this afternoon, to present the **amended Annual Performance Plan for the 2023-2024**, which we had to do following the cost curtailment measures implemented by National Treasury.
3. This has affected our Plan, and has impacted our targets. It was on that basis, that the Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) issued Circular No. 5 of 2023, that gave directive to departments which have been affected by the cost curtailment measures, resulting in budget reduction, to amend their APP.

4. In this regard, our **Department and MEGA were affected**, and we had to accordingly revise our targets for the current financial year, which had an **impact only on the two outer quarters of the financial year; that is, Quarter 3 and 4**. Both the Acting HOD and CEO of MEGA, will later on, provide detail account of the amendments on their respective APPs.
5. Honourable Members; I am also delighted to inform the Committee that we have since **reconstituted a new Board for MER**, following the expiry of the term of office of the previous Board. The new Board members were inducted into office on the 6th of February 2024.
6. The Board has been **directed to perform its fiduciary duties with diligence**, to ensure that MER remains the shining star with regards to good governance, in the Province.
7. We me now apprise the Committee on matters pertaining of economic infrastructure development.
8. Chairperson and Committee Members; work to conclude the construction of the Mpumalanga International Fresh Produce Market is going well, with the **construction anticipated to be completed in April this year**.
9. We have also requested both DARDLEA and MEGA to **work towards operationalising the Market**, by acquiring the services of an Operator for the Market. This is in line with national and international best practice of appointing Operators for such projects.

10. I can now, with confidence, also inform the Committee that the land of the entire Market precinct, has been registered under the Mpumalanga Provincial Government, and is under the custody of the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport. This gives assurance that the land will not be in the hands of private people.
11. On another economic infrastructure project, we can inform the Committee that we are **moving towards appointing the Board for the Nkomazi Special Economic Zone (SEZ)**. Whilst we are dealing with that process, we would like to indicate that we are also in the **process of registering the Nkomazi SEZ as a subsidiary of MEGA**. Although the SEZ will be a subsidiary of MEGA, it will have on own Board of Directors, CEO and so forth.
12. We are also moving towards **finalising internal and external designs** for the built infrastructure to commence at the site of the SEZ. The Committee will recall that we previously indicated that *TRAC* had put a condition that they will allow for construction work to start, only after external design, which includes the ring road into the park; and the internal designs are completed.
13. Chairperson, I still maintain that **tourism is the goose that lays the golden egg** for us. In this regard, our tourism industry continues to show a steady and consistent recovery since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the hard work of our Entity, the MTPA, especially during the third quarter of 2023, they have ensured that **Mpumalanga remains on top of the mind of tourists**; it remains a destination of choice.

14. Chairperson, credit should also be given to the MTPA and partners, under the leadership of the Board, for having **successfully convinced the *FlySafair* to decide to fly direct from the Cape Town International Airport to the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport**. The introduction of this new low-cost option to the market will serve to further boost tourism into Mpumalanga, as well as ease the cost of doing business.
15. The ***Airlink Flight*** has also announced a new seasonal or peak season route from Mbombela to Johannesburg and Vilankulu in Mozambique. This will augment the promotion of the *TRiLand* Route; the route will be launched in July this year.
16. Our Department will extend an invitation to the Portfolio Committee, to join the Premier on the 2nd of April this year, when she officially launches the new *FlySafair* direct flight from Cape Town to KMIA.
17. On another matter, working with the MTPA, we will also **continue to revitalise the infrastructure at all provincial nature reserves**, so as to maintain and harness a hospitable and safe tourism product offering.
18. Chairperson; these are some of the highlights, and as I retreat, the acting HOD and CEOs of our Public Entities will provide further details.
19. Thank you so much for your indulgence.

20. ***Leave No One Behind, as We Grow Mpumalanga!***

Ngiyathokoza!