

REMARKS BY THE MEC FOR FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM, Ms. NOMPUMELELO HLOPHE, MPL, DURING AN OCCASION OF BUSINESS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AT MASHISHING, THABA CHWEU LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Friday, 17 November 2023

Programme Director, Mr. Peter Maseko; our Department's Ehlanzeni District Director;

Executive Mayor of the host Municipality of Thaba Chweu, Councillor Mogotle Nkadimeng;

Executive Mayor of the Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Councillor Jesta Sidell;

Ward Councillor and other Councillors present;

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

Chairpersons of the Boards of our Entities present;

Acting Director of Enterprise Development in our Department, Mr. Solly Mhaule;

Government and Municipality officials;

All our stakeholders from the business fraternity;

Members of the media present;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Lotjhani!

1. *Ngithokoza khulukhulu kwemabhala*, for being afforded this opportunity, to address our stakeholders from the business fraternity.

2. This is a **follow-up session following a commitment we made, during the *Taking the Legislature to the People*** Outreach Programme, in September this year.
3. **There is a saying that alone we can do so little; but together we can much more!** And that is why, as the caring ANC-led government, **we value all our stakeholders.** We truly subscribe to the notion that we can only achieve what we set to do, if we walk hand-in-hand, with stakeholders.
4. Just yesterday, we were in KaMdladla in the Nkomazi Local Municipality, with the Deputy Minister of Tourism, where we were engaging tourism stakeholders. Clearly, we do not do lip service when we say we believe in stakeholder engagement; we make it happen.
5. Thus, today's session is meant **to give business stakeholders more time to engage us**, so that we can found common ground and resolve your issues of concern. They say **knowledge is power**; so if you are knowledgeable, you have the power to change your situation for the better.
6. Amongst the crucial and valuable stakeholders we have invited today, are business forums and chambers, aspiring women entrepreneurs, people with disabilities, and our SMMEs and cooperatives. We have also invited other government departments, public entities, government's developmental finance institutions.

7. Collectively, we are here for you; to answer all your questions and to resolve your issues of concern. Additionally, we will at the end of our engagement, **empower some ten (10) small businesses operating in the cash wash space, with equipment or tools of trade** to strengthen their up and coming businesses.
8. This is in fulfilment of our mandate **to support SMMEs and cooperatives**, so that they can contribute to the economy of the Province, and create jobs for the unemployed youth within their communities.
9. Programme Director; there is much information to confirm that **small business and cooperatives are, in fact, the backbone of our economy**. These businesses, which are often overlooked, **contribute more than the so called big businesses**, towards economic growth.
10. Small businesses employ quite a number of people; more than what big businesses employ. It is estimated that this informal sector **employs up to 60% of our country's workforce**.
11. Undoubtedly, I can assert that **small businesses, like spaza shops, hair salons and car washes, are in fact, big businesses**. It is, thus, crucial that they must be supported and nurtured at all times.
12. Programme Director; this empowerment roadshow is not a new one; we have been rolling-it out for quite a number of years now. On the third of this very month, we were at the Mpumalanga Stainless

Initiative in Middelburg, in the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, where **we donated tools of trade such as grinders, welding machines, drill machines, to ten (10) youth-owned businesses** currently under incubation.

13. Surely Programme Director, no one can disagree with me, when I say the **ANC-led is caring**; it is a government which cares for the youth; It is a government which believes in youth entrepreneurship and business growth in general.
14. We do this because we acknowledge that the **youth are the future of this Province, and the country** in general. Let us, therefore, work together, in our quest to nurture, empower and build a remarkable cadre of youth entrepreneurs.
15. Programme Director; Ladies and gentlemen; let us engage! I wish us a fruitful engagement.
16. ***Leave No One Behind; as we Grow the Economy of Mpumalanga*** by supporting small businesses!

Ngiyathokoza!