

De Lille calls for strengthening of trust in construction public-private partnerships

Speaking at the 118th Annual General Meeting of the Master Builders and Allied Trades' Association of the Western Cape (MBAWC), minister of public works and infrastructure Patricia de Lille emphasised that government is intensifying its efforts to build meaningful relationships with the construction industry.



The leadership of the MBAWC echoed the minister's sentiment on the need for strong public-private partnerships and they remain positive about the industry's prospects.

De Lille acknowledged the downturn in the construction industry, but urged the sector to welcome government's much-touted R100bn infrastructure development fund announced during SONA, which she said will be ramped up alongside a drive to stamp out corruption and sharpen the technical capacity of government.

Referring to insights gained from the World Economic Forum on Africa, which was held in Cape Town recently, De Lille stressed that the gap in trust between the private sector and government needed to be addressed saying partnerships are crucial because government cannot do it alone.

Tackling corruption

The minister made it clear that she was aware of fraud and corruption in her department and announced that she was working with the Special Investigation Unit, the Hawks, the National Prosecuting Authority, as well as undertaking civil litigation, to clean out the rot.

The minister also confirmed that her focus currently is on making the tender process more transparent and open. She also shared that, from October 2019 to March 2020, the department will be running 126 projects to the value of around R329m and all MBAWC members are encouraged to monitor advertisements and tender notifications.

The minister echoed President Cyril Ramaphosa's sentiments that projects need to move faster, confirming that she is building a pool of engineers, project managers, spatial planners and quantity surveyors in order to achieve this goal.

"This will result in the forming of a multi-disciplinary action team that makes things happen faster on the ground by evaluating and assessing every single infrastructure plan, including budgets and timelines, while making sure that no proposed project is accepted if it is not properly prepared and tender ready," De Lille said.

New president welcomed

The MBAWC AGM also welcomed incoming president Roy Hendricks, new senior vice president Rick Volker, and new junior vice president Mark Fugard who all confirmed their enthusiasm for playing a role in serving the association and its members. The role of honorary treasurer will once again be assumed by Tony Keal and John Slingsby will take up the role of immediate past president as part of the leadership of the association.

"There are still cranes peppering the Cape Town skyline," said outgoing president Slingsby. "There may not be as many, but they are still there, so all is not lost. We have to remain optimistic about our country, optimistic about its future and its ability to lead Africa."

Delivering his first address to members and guests of the association, Hendricks said: "For 128 years, the association has proudly stood in service of our members and continued to add value in an ever-changing industry and an ever-changing economy.

"We are living in trying times of economic uncertainty and can only appeal to government for a message of hope to be turned into a reality. Together with our industry partners, we, at the association, need government to know that we are ready, willing and able to build this country into the magnificent splendour we know it can be. Now more than ever, we need to stand together and support one another as we fight to survive the current economic climate."

In conclusion, he echoed Winston Churchill's iconic words: "Success is not final; failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts."

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