



agriculture
& rural development

Department:
Agriculture and Rural Development
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE KZN MEC FOR
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

THE HONOURABLE THEMBA MTHEMBU

DURING THE 2018 DARD SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARDS

4 May 2018

Programme Director,

Acting HOD Mr. S.P Myeza

Senior Management of the Department

District Managers for Agriculture

State Veterinarians from the Districts

Clients from Participating Districts

Members of the Provincial Batho Pele Forum

All the finalists for the Service Excellence Awards

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Journal of Public Administration, Vol 39 no 4.1 of November 2004, M. Crous wrote,

"Public institutions should constantly strive towards improving their service delivery. There is no such thing as 'arriving' when it comes to service delivery. It is also important to remember that customer expectations do not stand still. What was yesterday's delightful surprise is today's norm.....And above all, all institutions claiming to have attained efficiency in service delivery, need to remember that: Customer care is not about meeting expectations, but about exceeding them."

The people we are here to celebrate and recognise today have demonstrated the truth and essence of the extract above. Through the work they perform on a daily basis, they have and continue to show diligence, commitment and integrity for the people and communities they service.

These are officials who have a clear understanding of the Batho Pele Principles of consultation, the maintenance of high service standards, redress, access, courtesy, information, transparency and value for money.

Allow me to remind you of the significance of these Batho Pele principles. Batho Pele as we know, translates to '**People First**', in Sotho. These words impel all of us as public servants to be service orientated. They force you to strive for excellence and commit to continuous service delivery improvement, with a clear understanding that you are accountable to the people.

We must remain cognisant that our history of colonialism and apartheid presented the democratic government with enormous challenges, namely poverty, inequality, unemployment and the enormous aspirations for greater access to basic public services.

The black majority in this country were accustomed to an economic and social system that served mainly the white minority. Basic services were often not provided or of a sub-standard quality.

We can therefore understand the impatience that has grown amongst the people. Every day, somewhere in the country we watch in the news as communities protest over a lack of service delivery.

Simultaneously, we are bombarded with reports of corruption and the misappropriation of funds by officials in all spheres of government.

President Cyril Ramaphosa during the 2018 State of the Nation address said, "*We want to instil a new discipline, to do things correctly, to do them completely and to do them timeously. We call on all public servants to become agents for change.*"

Our people are thirsty for a quality government. They need to be reminded that this is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. A government that works to ensure that their most basic needs are taken care off.

As a Department, we laid the foundation of addressing the fundamental needs of our people in 2016 in Didima when we re-aligned our service delivery programmes to place food and nutrition security at the core of all our functions. As a

constitutionally guaranteed right, food remains a key element of addressing issues of poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

However, it is you in the coal-face of service delivery who can ensure that our strategies provide tangible yields for the people we serve. From the receptionist who answers the phone, the extension and advisory services officer who assist farmers and communities daily, the general worker, making tea or cleaning, the SMS manager who leads by instilling a culture of accountability, responsibility and mentorship.

We all form an important piece of the puzzle that is the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Our success in delivering quality and efficient service lies in our ability to ensure that we never break nor lose a piece of the puzzle.

Therefore let the theme of this years' Service Excellence Awards, 'which states, **"Promoting excellence and change through Batho Pele"**, propel us to look back and evaluate whether we serve our people with the dignity and commitment they deserve.

In the words of American labour leader Walter Reuther, I say, *"There is no greater calling than to serve your fellow men. There is no greater contribution than to help the weak. There is no greater satisfaction than to have done it well."*

I applaud all 13 nominees from the various District and Local Offices of the Department that have participated in the various categories of the Awards. You are the front-runners of our Department who stand up and make our government stand out.

Makwande.

I thank you