



the detea

the department of economic
development, tourism and
environmental affairs
FREE STATE PROVINCE

TOURISMEDORPIE COMPETISIE VAN DIE JAAR

11 SEPTEMBER 2009

Programme Director

Representatives from

Central University of Technology

First National Bank

PriceWatersHouseCoopers

Afrikaanse Handels Instituut

Volksblad

Municipalities

Distinguished guests

Programme director, I am very much honored and excited to be part of history in a making. Many of us have been patiently waiting for projects like these, where South African citizens as individuals or collective come up with innovative ideas like the tourism dorpie competition to showcase our special attributes as a province. This is a sign that we realize our potential and willing to share it with the outside world and make sure that we benefit from them.

All South Africans celebrate September as Tourism month. During the launch of Tourism month the minister of Tourism Mr. Marthinus van Schalkwyk indicated that, Tourism month is one way we use to remind the nation of this country's superior status as an exciting holiday destination, to get more South Africans to travel in and around South Africa more often and to celebrate the enormous contribution that the tourism makes to national economic growth, to development and to job creation.

Ladies and gentleman as citizens, by travelling at home, we contribute meaningfully to the tourism industry, its competitiveness and service levels. Activities planned for this month are all aimed at embracing our unique qualities and tourism offerings as the country. The exercise also allows us to learn more about our diverse tourism

attractions, which puts us in a better position to do more for our country. Last year domestic travelling contributed R25, 8 billion to the country's economy. In total, tourism has contributed R356 billion to the national economy.

Tourismedorpie competition puts us on the map by packaging different tourism opportunities for towns in the Free State and Northern Cape to position themselves as tourist attractions for 2010 and beyond. We need to take advantage of any activities or projects that we can utilize to market our province and prepare ourselves for this exciting event that is going to unlock the potential of tourism industry. If we are well prepared for 2010 FIFA world cup, we will be in a better position to be the best host for regional and foreign visitors.

The world cup would draw about 450 000 fans to South Africa, which would bring a total number of visitors next year to 10 million. We all have to put our strengths together and focus our energy to show these millions of people that our country is one of the best and can offer more than they expected.

We have different categories of businesses in the tourism sector like any other sector. There are those that are well established and developed, and those still battling to make it. Government encourages assistance of SMME's and mentorship from those who have travelled this road and fully understand its hardships.

Programme director, tourism sector has proved to be more resilient than some other economic sectors, especially during this economic meltdown. Tourismedorpie competition allows and encourages peer discussion amongst tourism stakeholders and this interaction is one of the most important elements that can be used to strengthen our businesses and improve our service delivery.

Free State province is situated at the centre of the country with access to high level standard of roads infrastructure. The roads facilitate and provide access to market for all participants of the regional economy. This is one of our unique attributes that we need to use to our advantage. We need not wait for other people to come and provide for us, but we have to be proactive and use our uniqueness and special qualities to work for us.

Like I said during the launch of Tourism month at Gariep Dam last week, we have to make a choice as the people of the Free state to compete with other provinces and loose or we should carve a niche for our self and stay ahead of the pact. The initiative we are celebrating today, is one small step in a journey to make the Free State and its special towns an epicentre of tourism in South Africa.

With proper planning a dedication we cannot fail with Tourism. The competition we are witnessing today, should be healthy competition meant to complete special attributes present in every single town or dorpie in the Free State. I have followed with interest the enthusiasm residents of this town showed by vigorously voting for

their beloved town. That is the kind of the spirit we need among the people of the Free State in our efforts to elevate our surroundings to the envy of those from big towns.

We hope we will see more of initiatives like this in the future to help us understand and grow this industry whilst turning it into one of the primary contributors to our economy. Your effort is helping us to understand this province of ours much better as you have packaged our towns so well.

Today we are here to choose the best of the best out of the 10 nominees. But before we do that I need to indicate and applaud all of you for making us proud to be Free Staters. I can vow that it was not easy to reach this stage as Free State has got many of these magnificent towns.

I am told that the **following towns have been nominated as the top 10 for the Tourism Town Competition:** Bethulie, Clarens, Colesberg, Excelsior, Frankfort, Ladydrand, Marquard, Petrusburg, Vrede and Zastron. These are ten of many towns that can be enjoyed that the Free State offers. To be nominated as top 10 finalists shows that there is something special and unique that these towns are offering and as a result they need to look after those attributes and embrace them.

A challenge facing these different towns in the province is a need to identify exactly what makes them stand out from others and package those to attract tourists. We have to avoid the temptation concentrating on normal and standard factors that do not say a lot about us.

One of our best characteristics in the province is the cultural diversity that we possess. Holding on to that and sharing that with the world can only make us tourism destination of choice above the rest of South Africa.

Our municipalities are playing a very pivotal role in making sure that our towns are what they are. We must do all in our power to make sure that our towns are attractive and safe for tourists and by so saying we mean that we must not fold our arms and wait for the government to provide us with everything.

Congratulations to all our nominees and may the best town win.

Thank you

