

LONG SERVICE CERTIFICATE AWARDING CEREMONY

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DATE: 02 DECEMBER 2008

VENUE: FLOREAT HALL BRAM FIRSHER BUILDING

Programme Director

Long Service Awards Recipients

Members of the Management

Supervisors

Ladies and gentlemen

Public service comes a long long way when public servants did not have the interest of those they serve at heart. Those who were given the responsibility of looking after state resources including the human resources did not have appropriate training and skills to do so nor commitment to look after those assets. *Ba ne ba se na taba hore ho e etsahala eng, bas a kgathalle*

It was not until 1997 when the ANC led government introduced the Batho Pele (People First) service initiative aimed at transforming the public service into customer orientated delivery channels. At the centre of this intervention are cultural shifts that needed to take place to improve not only the image of the public service but the quality of service to those we are expected to serve.

Programme Director, the shift entailed eradicating fragmentation of efforts and the introduction of integrated efforts towards service delivery. It meant doing away with sabotage and blame and to usher in a culture of a learning organization. Hierarchies and silos needed to be replaced by effective sharing of information and communication. For this government to fulfill its mandate, we had to destroy the front versus back offices mentality and inculcate the sense of synergy and teamwork.

The previous regime was preoccupied with multiply projects despite shrinking resources instead of developing one or common vision towards which all should aim at. We had to introduce tangible solutions instead of being preoccupied with theory versus action, which practice did not guarantee any results, least to the poor masses of this country. Today we encourage structured innovation which guarantees us a winning organization rather than the constant innovation that only brought about endless constraints.

Today we can look back with pride and say the principles we introduced back then have ensured that our focus is not only on skills – what we do but also on our behaviour, how we do what we are expected to do.

The celebration and acknowledgement of the long service to our people today bears testimony to our renewed commitment to the principles of Batho Pele. Let this event serve as a reminder to us individually and collectively of what we undertook as values when we joined the public service. Celebrating a collective of almost 700 years of public service among yourselves gives expression to those values which include professionalism, accountability, responsiveness, ethics and performance in delivery of services to our communities.

Improved and efficient public service is everyone of us' business. For this reason it is therefore important that each and everyone of us should contribute to the following broad strategic interventions;

- Promoting Governance with emphasis on anticorruption and ethics
- Empowering the citizenry, especially rural communities to enhance accessibility to service
- Access to information
- Capacitating public service to meet expectations of the people
- Restructuring the public sector in ensuring that we create a caring society

Bomme le Bontate mosebetsi oo le o etsang molemong was setjhaba sa rona ke wa bohlokwa ka nnete. Le fuwa dikgau tsena ele sesupa sa mmuso hore ka nnete re lebohela boitelo ba lona ho etsa bonnete ba hore setjhaba se ba motlotlo ka mmmuso ona . Le ha ho lejwalo ha re lebelle hore motho a qete dilemo tse 20 kapa 30 pele boitelo ba hae le matsapa a hae aka ananelwa. Ka lebaka lena re batla ho qholotsa ba ka sehlohong hore ba re netefalletse hore ba etsa eng ho bona hore basebetsi ba mmuso ka mehla ba ikutlwa ba hlokomelehile hore ba nne ba tswele pele ka mosebetsi wa bona o kgabane.

Long Service Awards are just but one of integral parts of government employee retention strategy to make sure that skill and knowledge needed much by government to deliver its mandate are retained. As part of the government incentive to keep its valuable personnel, it is only fair to acknowledge the fact that Long Service Recognition System can hardly accomplish the desired goal without the essential support from other systems and structures. This is partly because the reimbursement of this system to beneficiaries is a once off thing whereas we as government need to continually remind

our employees in every way possible, that we realize and are aware of the indispensable contribution to the betterment of the lives of our people.

Programme director a good and professional relationship with our supervisors can also contribute a lot in creating a conducive work environment that allows us to be productive and creative. Supervisors and managers must make it their responsibility to support their subordinates with relevant material and equipment so as to make it easy for them to do their jobs. We spend most of our time at work so it is vital to make the conditions acceptable and bearable.

Among other interventions introduced by this government to ensure that working conditions are acceptable and bearable, is the Employee Health and Wellness Programme which is aimed at assisting employees with coping mechanisms with regard to personal and work related problems that impact negatively on their productivity in the workplace. Our employees are very important to us, that is why we will continue to invest in them. Skills development is therefore another important intervention to ensure that public servants are continuously improved.

In doing this, we will, as devoted public servants, ensure that we continuously identify within our own work environment and elsewhere, models of best practices which will make our work better. In this way we will be able to identify those ways of working that are most effective in serving the people of the Free State. As public servants we need to know what works for the people the service is intended for and how we can learn from others in order to achieve better results all the time.

Once we have reached this stage as a institution we then will be able to;

- Identify and replace poor practices
- Bring performance of poor performers closer to that of the best
- Avoid reinventing the wheel
- Minimize rework caused by using poor methods
- Save costs through better productivity and efficiencies
- Combat dysfunctionality, i.e deadlines not met, complaints from customers
- Improve service to clients

As long serving staff members, you bring a wealth of knowledge and institutional memory to the tasks at hand. Even more than that, you have developed a deep understanding not only of your individual jobs but of the larger workings of the department. Your completion of 20 and 30 years of service bears testimony that it is possible to remain loyal not only to the department but to the public we serve even under adverse situations some you served in government.

We can only hope and trust that you have developed your own customized system of mentoring younger ones and those who have joined the department long after you. We will appreciate that in the true spirit of *thebe e sehelwa hodima e nngwe* you will ensure that you impart your skills to those who remain behind when your pension days come. We want you to have a truly restful pension without us calling you back to come and help us out.

Let me take this opportunity to wish you and your families a peaceful and joyous Christmas. May the Good Lord hold you and your loved ones in his palms during the festive season and give you unmatched energy to get into 2009.

I THANK YOU