

MEDIA STATEMENT

MEC`s MEETING WITH FREE STATE VOCAL ARTISTS

20 August 2012

Bloemfontein: There is a saying that music is a universal language and to penetrate the resilient industry of tourism, the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs decided to use this means of communication to send a strong and common message that Free State is a destination of choice. On the 14th of August 2012, all Free State vocal artists were called to Soetdoring Nature Reserve by MEC: Mamikie Qabathe to discuss how they can market different tourist attractions in this province through their work of art.

About 500 artists (musician, drama and poet) accepted the invite from the MEC to attend this meeting and amongst them were, Tina Mlumzane, Don Laka Masheleng, Alah/Yen, Nateez, Primrose and many others. The Free State Tourism Authority Board members were also there and took part in the activities of the day.

This exercise is a follow up to successful Tour de Free State cycling competition where cyclists from all over the world traveled about 300km throughout 5 districts of this province for 5 days. The competition was to promote tourism through cycling and make sure that through media coverage and word of mouth from participants and spectators, Free State tourism attractions are marketed. MEC said that according to her, the Free State missed an opportunity to market its self even beyond the competition by not having a DVD with different FS tourist attractions to give to these cyclists as a token of appreciation to share with their country mates when they get home. She said some of the cyclists could not speak English but the DVD could have made so much difference.

As part of this exercise the MEC and the artists witnessed Lion and Cheetah feeds at the resort. This was not a coincidence but a planned activity with certain expected outcomes. MEC indicated that artists will be taken through other state owned and private resorts and reserves in the province with the aim of to facilitating their creativity.

The Free State is endowed with the abundance of natural beauty and has a special appeal to City dwellers who wish to escape to the country side. Tourists can be introduced to exciting 4X4 trails in the Tussen die Reviere Nature Reserve, the spectacular, monstrous Gariep Dam, the world acclaimed tigers breeding centre in Phillipolis, among others, in Xhariep District in the southern tip of the Free State. The Free State is also known for cultural tourism and scenic beauty in Thabo Mofutsanyana District (Clarens area and Sterkfontein Dam); Sports and business tourism in Motheo District (Bloemfontein). Whilst in Bloemfontein tourists can also go to Naville Hill for a spectacular view of Mangaung: Weekend and leisure tourism in

Fezile Dabi (Parys and Sasolburg area) not forgetting Koppies Nature Reserve and sports at (Phakisa Race Course) and weekend tourism in Lejweleputswa District.

MEC raised a serious concern about Free Staters not exploring and touring their own province therefore not knowing what it can offer. She encouraged them to know and appreciate it and think of Free State when thinking about traveling.

It was clear from everybody present that artists appreciate what government is doing and this exercise needs to be given a chance. All proposals are to be sent to the office of the MEC, where they will be evaluated.

Compiled by Communication Unit

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