



**CLLR ANDREW JOHN MAPHETLE
EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF POTCHEFSTROOM
TOURISM AWARDS 2006
FRIDAY – 09 JUNE 2006
PUK LIBRARY SIDEHALL**

Mr Charles Ndabeni – the CEO of North West Parks & Tourism Board;

Councilor Kenetswe Mosenogi – MMC in the Office of the Executive Mayor;

MMC's present here tonight;

Councilors;

Dr Peet van der Merwe – Chairperson of the Potchefstroom Tourism Association and all its members;

Senior Managers of the Potchefstroom City Council;

Tourism product owners;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Yesterday when my office reminded me of this occasion – I sat for some few hours thinking about tourism in our City. I thought about the sight of many boards indicating so-and-so B&B or guesthouse in the inner City – and the fading signs of Café's and fast foods outlets in the neighborhoods of Ikageng and Promosa.

When one compares the state of these signages, one cannot help but wonder who the real beneficiaries of the country's economy are. We all know the history of this country. A system of government - that used to benefit a certain group of people more than the others.

Still with that in mind, we would also remember that many of us – joined hands and stood together to bring a government that would treat all its peoples as equals irrespective of colour, race, religious belief and even social status. The latter is the same democratic government that brings the Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment initiative (BBBEE).

With these in mind – our government created channels and mechanisms that could be utilized to enrich and economically empower the previously marginalized people. When one looks at the Tourism Black Economic Empowerment Charter for example – you will realize that it focuses on empowering black South Africans within the tourism industry and making this sector more accessible, relevant and beneficial to blacks in this country. It stresses the contribution of blacks to the sector’s growth and sustainability.

One of the most important aspects of this Charter that I like is - introducing innovation into the sector through new players entering the sector, which will, in turn, attract new markets and stimulate new product development. Are we as tourism product owners in Potchefstroom - aware of these aspects of the Charter? What are we doing to enter the new areas or markets in an effort of growing the sector in the City? Do we provide international tourists with an integrated, authentic South African experience [which includes the management and ownership of products by the broader South African community] as stipulated in this Charter?

If we have answered NO to all these questions above – then this is the right time to do the right things. We should ensure that tourism income penetrates both urban and semi-urban areas of our City so that the distribution of wealth occurs across the nation. Programme Director – we should use transformation as an instrument of nation building and breaking down barriers between communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen - tonight is a very special evening in the history of this City. We are all gathered here, to bear witness to the third annual Tourism Awards by the City Council of Potchefstroom. But this should not deter us from the realities that we see on the ground.

I will be failing in my duties, as a leader of the community – if I don't highlight the skewed economic advantages that seem to be running parallel to our objectives as government and municipality. As the Council of the City of Potchefstroom – our mandate is very clear. We should utilize all our efforts and resources at our disposal, to improve the lives of our people. With the Integrated Development Plan in place – there is clear guidance on where we should start.

This government is not here to rob rich people of their wealth, nor is it here to further oppress those who are still buried under the thick heavy soil and rocks of the apartheid regime. We have to level the playing fields and let all our people play fairly and with more humanity in taking a hand of those struggling to walk on their own.

Tourism industry is still one of the fastest growing sectors with a potential to make a huge difference in the economies of our country and cities. When one talks of opportunities created by tourism products – the 2010 Soccer World Cup immediately jumps to the fore. All South Africans will agree with me that there is no other single event here at home – that will prove more forceful on the tourism front than this World Cup.

Programme Director – the staging of this event on an African soil, does not only bring greatest tourism opportunities ever but also convey challenges that could hamper our vision as a nation. Clearly this requires high levels of product investment to deal with the high visitor volumes – and we as Potchefstroom should be prepared for that.

We should expand our public transport networks, communications infrastructure and even train and equip our staff as effective tour guides. We should fully utilize the advantages of having the world acclaimed Vredefort Dome heritage site and the new Highveld national park in our doorsteps. These will improve our local economy and create jobs as well as attracting tourists. Our excellent sporting facilities also attract those who participate in or support the many sporting codes we host in our City.

Potchefstroom's tourism industry is developing rapidly. Aardklop is growing in size and quality. Our first guesthouse opened in Ikageng, Phinah's B&B, is showing great success. Ours is a country renewed. Ours is a people emboldened and energized both by the fires of our shared past and by the hope and promise of future prosperity.

When the President stood before Parliament, at the start of the year, he captured the spirit in his challenge to us all to build the Age of Hope. This shared national endeavor asks much, but promises more – especially in this sector. To the winners here tonight – we congratulate you on your accolades. But still on that note, we want to challenge you to share your expertise with those still trying to make it in this sector.

Let us all join hands and assist our SMMEs and youth groupings in the tourism sector. Let us show them how the ropes are pulled and not let them drown and vanish forever. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Potchefstroom Tourism Association and many other organizations that are playing a meaningful role in the development of the tourism sector of our economy. On behalf of our Council – you are all heartily welcome, and please enjoy the rest of the evening with us.

I thank you.