

30 September 2008

### MBSA CONGRESS – 2008 – PORT ELIZABETH

I represented the ECA(SA) at the 103<sup>rd</sup> Master Builders South Africa annual congress which this year was hosted by the East Cape MBA.

The venue for the 3 day event was the Boardwalk Conference Centre in Port Elizabeth and proceedings got under way on Sunday 21 September with the more energetic enjoying golf or bowls whilst the ladies could indulge in aesthetic treatment (manicure, pedicure, waxing, facials, make-up, massages, rubs and scrubs) at a local spa to get them into the perfect shape for summer.

The welcoming cocktail function took place at the Courtyard Hotel and Greg Steele, Executive Director of the EC MBA welcomed guests in the friendly city after which the golf and bowling competition prize winners were announced.

The Minister of Public Works Ms. Thoko Didiza delivered the keynote opening address, after MBSA President Eunice Forbes had officially opened Congress 2008 on Monday 22 September 2008.

The honourable Minister announced that government has in excess of R400 billion earmarked for infrastructure development in the country over the next 3 years. The biggest challenge facing government was to improve its quality of service delivery. Other challenges for the government include bringing more women into the Construction Industry, and improving the working conditions of the workforce particularly as it relates to safety and health issues.

Other issues which need government intervention include:-

- Mushrooming informal settlements in the vicinity of major construction sites.
- Maintenance of existing and new government assets.
- Building and maintaining a skills pool.
- Improving foundation education of children.

Sammy Issacs, a good friend of the ECA and currently Executive Officer of SAQA, explored reasons why the artisan pipeline in South Africa had dried up. The increasing use of subcontractors and outsourcing of labour has certainly contributed to the decline in artisan numbers.

Sammy made an impassioned plea for captains of industry to take responsibility for training in the different sectors of our Industry. He called upon SETA board members to take charge of their custodianship and address their problems in an effective and meaningful manner.

“You the shareholders of SETAS must make it a priority to make your SETA work”, was his message to delegates.

Delegates were encouraged to use a university to do research into the reasons for the huge drop off in new apprentice / learner intakes.

The afternoon was spent at leisure with some delegates and partners visiting the Coega IDC, others had a close – up look at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan 2010 Stadium, whilst the more adventurous embarked on an eco cruise which included whale watching in Algoa Bay, courtesy of 3 days of magnificent summer weather with only a slight breeze to remind delegates that they were in PE.

Dinner was spent in the company of Abbott & Crabb at 34° South restaurant. The theme for the evening was “Nautical Night Out” and judged by the outfits on display everyone joined in the fun. Prizes were awarded for the best dressed guests.

The third day of Congress included presentations by Andre Fourie of the National Business Initiative and Claire Deacon of Occumed.

Claire proposed to Congress that a separate item be included in Bills of Quantities “to allow for medical surveillance and examination of workers, lung functioning and hearing as well as eye examinations”. She suggested introducing a RED TICKET to confirm workers’ health status in the Construction Industry similar to the system that applies in the Mining Industry.

The MBA is in the process of establishing a national database, indicating the health status of the labour force in the Industry, to be used by member companies when considering job applications.

Aubrey Matshiqi from the Centre for Policy Studies gave a refreshing overview of the current state of our democracy. “Stop boasting about democracy in South Africa. Once tested we will know if we have a true democracy. The time for our country to pass this test has now come.”

At the closing ceremony, MBSA President Eunice Forbes announced that Life Membership has been bestowed on Mr. Andrew Stewart from KZN MBA.

It was also announced at Congress that Eunice Forbes from Gauteng MBA had been re-elected as President of MBSA for another term of office with Jean Marie Talbot from Speyers Construction in Port Elizabeth unanimously elected as Vice President until September 2009.

Sadly, Congress also noted the passing of Mr. Philip Haylett, on 10 July 2008. He was Chief Quantity Surveyor at the Public Works Department until his retirement in 1994.

Congress 2008 came to an end with the presentation of National Safety Awards at a gala dinner, dance and musical show on Tuesday 23 September at the Boardwalk Conference Centre.

It was a most enjoyable experience and I thank the ECA for affording me and my wife the opportunity to be part of it.

The date and venue for next year's event will be announced by MBSA.

Kind regards

LM Bowles  
Regional Director  
East / South Cape