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PROVINCIAL WEEK

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*“Building viable
Municipal
Infrastructure for
effective delivery
of services to
communities.”*

Eastern Cape’s NCOP delegation puts delivery of water under close scrutiny

The Eastern Cape’s permanent delegates to the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) kick started the week-long Provincial Week yesterday in the province by receiving briefings from the Premier of the province, MECs of human settlements and transport, mayors of OR Tambo, Alfred Nzo and Sarah Baartman district municipalities and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality on a wide

range of service delivery issues, writes Mava Lukani.

The delegation is in the province as part of the NCOP’s Provincial Week programme. Presenting the objectives of the programme, the Whip of the delegation, Ms Nokuzola Ndongeni, said the 2023 Provincial Week focuses on the state of municipal social infrastructure in South Africa under the theme: “Building viable Municipal Infrastructure for effective delivery of services to communities.”

Ms Ndongeni emphasized that an issue that must be considered during engagements is how municipalities begin to factor in the impact of

climate change on their infrastructure planning and design - especially roads. Regarding water, sanitation and bulk infrastructure, reliability of water services, and interventions to reduce water supply disruptions, need a broader discussion.

The Acting Premier of the province, Ms Siphokazi Lusithi who is the MEC for Human Settlements painted a provincial picture on the areas that the delegation is going visit in the province. The delegation heard that the province is prone to disasters that include flooding which destroys road infrastructure among other things. The province presented the state of roads, road projects that have been





rolled out and that are in construction. According to the MEC for Transport, the province currently requires R4 billion just for maintenance.

The delegation which is in two groups for the purposes of reaching as many service delivery sites as possible in the province heard that no meaningful interventions have been made in the

province to address the shortage of water. The delegation heard that the province is still in the same situation of “dry water taps” as it was a few years ago. Each water service provider from the national Department of Water and Sanitation and the municipalities presented ideas in the form of plans. As the district municipalities presented to the delegation their

situations regarding water shortages, presenting the state of Ingquza Hill Local Municipality in the OR Tambo District Municipality, the municipality’s Executive Mayor told the delegation that the situation regarding water shortage in their municipality is worsening.

The Executive Mayor told the delegation that the municipality requires R21 billion just for the eradication of the old water backlog.

The delegation heard that the province has spent R2.1 billion on infrastructure projects of the total amount of R9.3 billion. To date there are only two projects that have been approved for the 2023/24 through the Budget Facility Infrastructure. The delegation expressed its unhappiness about underspending yet there is a serious shortage of water in the province. 🇿🇦

Gauteng NCOP delegation expresses concern over Emfuleni local municipality’s lack of operational budget

Gauteng’s permanent delegates to the NCOP expressed a serious concern about Emfuleni Local Municipality’s lack of operational budget to provide basic services to the residents, writes Xihlamariso Ngoveni.

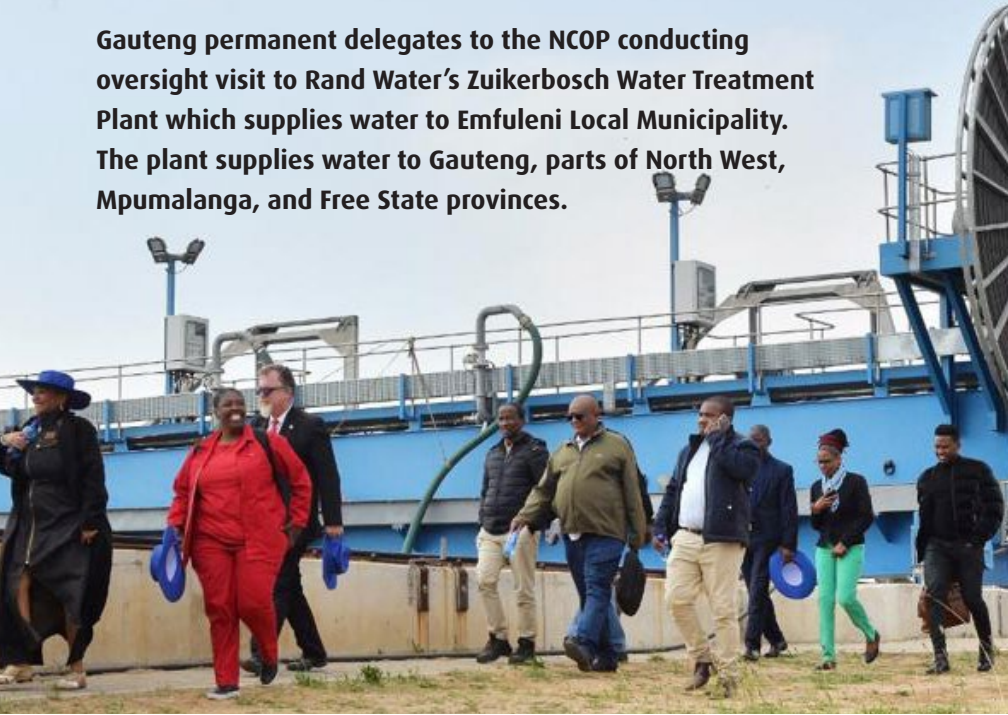
The delegates heard that the municipality is not collecting any

revenue as residents don’t pay for services and the struggling municipality is forced to scramble for resources to pay Rand Water for water supply. The Chief Director of the municipality’s water and sanitation implementation utility (Metsi-a-Lekoa), Mr Madoda Besani reported that the local municipality collects no revenue and that it provides services it can’t afford.

The NCOP is on a weeklong oversight visit to Gauteng to inspect water, sanitation, and human settlement

infrastructure to identify and help find solutions to challenges that impede provision of water and sanitation. As part of their high-impact Provincial Week oversight programme, the delegation met with the municipal executives, including the Mayor Mr Siphon Nkosi, and the Department of Water and Sanitation team deployed to implement the Section 63 intervention, to exercise oversight on the water and sanitation infrastructure programmes in the area.

Gauteng permanent delegates to the NCOP conducting oversight visit to Rand Water’s Zuikerbosch Water Treatment Plant which supplies water to Emfuleni Local Municipality. The plant supplies water to Gauteng, parts of North West, Mpumalanga, and Free State provinces.



The delegation bemoaned the seriousness of the challenges facing the municipality and undertook to escalate the matter to the provincial and National government. They recommended the intervention of the National Treasury and the COGTA, as well as the Premier and the provincial government.

They noted some success reported as part of the Section 63 intervention, and implored the mayor and his executive to improve communication on successes that the municipality has had with upgrades to some strategic treatment plants in the area. The delegation told the mayor to improve customer care service and to take residents along on where the municipality is in terms of the benchmarks and interventions from Rand Water and the Department of Water and Sanitation.

A large chunk of the municipality’s budget pays Eskom debt and to keep the lights on, while other operational imperatives are unfunded. When asked if the municipality has any operational budget to assist with day-to day operations, the Municipal Manager, Mr April Ntuli, confirmed that none existed. Currently, the municipality depends on the Department of Water and Sanitation’s Section 63 intervention budget to fund its activities.

Mr Nkosi reported that some of the challenges emanate from old and dilapidated infrastructure which has far exceeded its design capacity, leading to frequent downtimes, and collapse of sewer lines. He said blockages of sewer lines are caused by a variety of factors including dumping of foreign objects such as blankets, car tyres, stones and other debris that harm the system.

Emfuleni municipality has been under much scrutiny and heavy criticism for a very long time for its failure to control the sewer spillage into the Vaal River system due to infrastructure collapse. 🇷🇵

The Section 63 intervention was invoked by the department to effect upgrades and improvements to critical bulk pipelines and pump stations infrastructure. The Chief Director responsible for the intervention, Mr Justice Maluleke, told the delegation that they procured and handed over sixteen vehicles and tractors to the municipality, but had to register them under Rand Water as the municipality owes different entities that may just attach the assets to recoup the debt.



The Chief Whip of the NCOP, Mr Seiso Mohai, engaging during the Free State Provincial Week's briefing at the Free State Legislature.



Free State's permanent delegates to the NCOP told the province is planning for integrated provincial development

To mark the commencement of the week-long Provincial Week programme in Free State, the Free State's permanent delegates to the NCOP and their counterparts members of the Free State Legislature received briefings from the Provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and Human Settlement, Department of Transport, and Bloemfontein Water Board respectively on various infrastructure projects that anchor the provincial and municipal service delivery machinery in the province, writes Abel Mputing.

The Provincial Week is one of the NCOP's annual flagship programmes that provides permanent delegates to the NCOP an opportunity to return to their respective provinces to assess progress made in the delivery of services to citizens and also provides them with an opportunity to contribute to addressing challenges facing the communities. This year's Provincial

Week programme is held under the theme, "Building Viable Provincial and Municipal Infrastructure for Effective Delivery of Services to Communities."

In his opening remarks the Acting Premier of the province, Mr Nono Maloyi, informed the NCOP delegation that the infrastructure is aging and ailing infrastructure in the entire

province and that it experiences financial challenges as the money they have is insufficient but they are doing their utmost best to address the situation.

The Acting Premier further told the NCOP delegation that the province is encountering endless challenges such as incomplete and unfunded

infrastructural projects with no consequence management; a dangerous challenge of construction mafias; the Zama Zamas (Illegal miners); high vacancy rate on critical positions; damaging veldfires, unending disputes amongst the traditional leaders and the challenge of poverty as a result of the fifty three point six percent (53.6%) unemployment rate in the province.

The NCOP delegation heard that tenders are awarded and monies have been paid for certain projects, but they have not been started. The delegation also heard that there are service providers that have been blacklisted who are awarded projects to carry out, and the province has a backlog of criminal cases that are with the Special Investigative Unit and other law-enforcement agencies regarding unlawful tender processes and incomplete but fully paid-up projects.

The delegation also received a progress report of the N12 and N14 incomplete housing projects that were implemented by the province as the flagship and catalytic projects. The N12 project was aimed at addressing the housing needs for the community of Jakaranda in the City of Matlosana local municipality. The project was funded through the Human Settlements Development Grant by the National

Department of Human settlements through the North West Department of Human Settlements. The project was a multi-year contract with the objective of addressing approximately 38 500 housing backlogs in Matlosana.

However, the NCOP delegation was told the N12 project for housing in the Jakaranda community stalled due to contractual problems. The department has since taken over the implementation of 1667 top structures from the Matlosana Local municipality and currently has four sub-contractors on site working on the project. The N14 housing development infrastructure project in Touvleg was meant to deliver 360 housing units but is also stalled due to several reasons including the contractor having financial challenges and some of the sites being located on a wetland. The contractor, however, is back on track and continuing with the project.

The delegation expressed its concern over the problem of the incompleteness of projects within the required timelines and it wanted clarity on when the final handover of the N14 will take place. The delegation also highlighted its unhappiness about non-blacklisting and consequence management by the department over contractors who do not honour their contractual obligations and deserting

projects before completion including the slow progress of law enforcement agencies in initiating criminal prosecution in instances where corrupt activities within the projects was discovered and reported.

The delegation advised the North West Department of Human Settlements to ensure that it has plans in place to ensure that the appointed contractors complete the projects within the timelines contained in the tender and to ensure vetting system of contractors is improved to appoint qualified and competent contractors.

“The Department of Human Settlements must provide a report with an updated timeline of when the N14 and N12 projects will be completed and hand over the houses to the affected communities...[and] this report should be sent to us by the 30th September 2023... and the N12 and N14 projects must be concluded by the end of January 2024.” said Mr Eric Landsman, the NCOP delegation leader in the North West province. The delegation members also recommended the Acting Premier to initiate partnerships with the private sector to address some of the challenges and the provincial executive to ensure all the lost funds due to negligence and/or fraud during the infrastructure development projects are recovered and follow-up on prosecutions with law enforcement agencies be conducted.

Furthermore, the provincial executive must devise a strategy on fostering community engagements to reduce incidences of protests at construction sites and ensure all the construction projects create job opportunities within the communities where these projects are taking place. 🇿🇦

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KZN provincial NCOP delegation gravely concerned by water shortages in the province

The KwaZulu-Natal's (KZN's) permanent delegates to the NCOP have expressed concerns on the water crisis facing the province when it received briefings on the water shortages from the Department of Water and Sanitation, Trans Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) and Umngeni Water-UTHukela yesterday at the KZN provincial legislature, writes Jabulani Majozi.

The TCTA told the delegation that it was brought in as an implementing agent by the Department of Water and Sanitation to work on a project that would culminate in a transfer of water from Umkhomazi River to augment uMngeni Water Supply System which will then supply water to Durban and



Pietermaritzburg regions. Furthermore, TCTA told the committee that uMngeni Water was already experiencing a water deficit and therefore needed to be augmented to increase water supply at least until the year 2040.

The TCTA told the delegation that approximately six million people within the eThekweni, Msunduzi, Mgungundlovu, Harry Gwala, Ugu and Ilembe district municipalities are to benefit from the bulk water project once completed. The TCTA also informed the delegation that if

eThekweni water levels continue to be depleted, this could result in loss of much needed revenue to the City. However, the delegation expressed its reservations about the cost of the project which, according to TCTA could escalate to R24 Billion. The leader of the delegation, Ms Lindiwe Bebee, said as the delegation together with Members of the provincial legislature, they would like to be briefed further on the financial implications of the project as figures indicated by the TCTA were very high. 🇿🇦