

North West Sanitation Summit
Speech by Mrs LB Hendricks, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry
Mmabatho Convention Centre, North West
14 May 2007

Premier
MEC: Local Government and Housing
Members of the Provincial Executive Council
Members of the Provincial Legislature
Mayors and Councillors
Magosi a rona (our Traditional leaders)
Government officials and sector partners
Programme Director

Dumelang

I am pleased to be in the North West Province today to engage with the provincial and local leadership, senior officials and everybody present in this Summit to discuss the acceleration plan of service delivery, and how we are going to achieve the targets which have been set by the Government.

We should all be acutely aware of the problems of the bucket system, the health and social risks of not having RDP levels of sanitation, and the problems of not having access to potable water. Equally, all of us should be aware of the improvements to people's lives, and the contribution to poverty eradication and economic growth that is created by access to these basic services. It is therefore not necessary for me to go into too much detail on these issues. Rather I am here today to show the importance of collaboration between the different spheres of government in achieving these critical targets.

All of us – from the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, to the MEC: for Local Government, Mayors, Councillors, local and national officials, are part of the water value chain, and we are all responsible for the water and sanitation business. If it comes to rolling up their sleeves and building toilets – so be it; we cannot afford to disappoint our people who waited years for basic services. It is us, the political leadership and senior managers in government who will need to account if we do not meet these targets, which are about improving the lives of our people and creating a better life for all. We are left with six months to meet the bucket eradication target, with the targets of access to water and sanitation for all following closely in 2008 and 2010 respectively, so we cannot afford to relax or allow a 'business as usual' approach. The President and Cabinet are placing great emphasis on us achieving our targets, and I have been mandated to drive the acceleration plan for the water and sanitation targets.

This 'business unusual' approach has seen me visiting the Free State and Eastern Cape Provinces where similar Provincial Sanitation Summits were held. The purpose of those summits, like this one, was firstly to strengthen intergovernmental relations as an enabler of integrated service delivery; and secondly as an opportunity for political leaders and senior government officials to commit ourselves to ensuring that the targets are met. And in the Free State we signed a pledge of commitment.

These summits have greatly contributed towards us being in a position where we will either be able to meet the targets in each of the municipalities of these provinces or enabled us to identify where the problem areas or bottlenecks are, so the necessary interventions can be made.

At a practical level these summits have greatly improved the cooperation between DWAF and provincial government as well as local government. For example we are seeing the DWAF Regional Managers giving reports to the MEC: Local Government, and participating in the Premier's Co-ordinating Forum and provincial Social Cluster. I am pleased to hear that a good working relationship exists in North West between the MEC and my Department's Regional staff and I would like to thank you for the access and direct communication that my officials have with the Premier and the MEC for Provincial and Local Government and Housing. This summit allows us to strengthen this relationship and if there are any areas for improvement today is a good opportunity to raise them.

These summits also enable us to better understand the challenges experienced by municipalities as well as share information about what other provinces and municipalities are doing. For example in the Eastern Cape, the Premier's Co-ordinating Forum, in collaboration with the DWAF Regional Manager have established an intervention Task Team responsible for ensuring co-ordinated support to municipalities.

Premier, in dealing with these other provinces and municipalities across the country we have been able to identify some of the factors that have contributed to their success and it is possible to apply these lessons to other areas and other programmes. The success factors can be summarised as follows:

- Clear political directive with clear time frames;
- dedicated ring-fenced funding for the programme;
- continuous communication to communities;
- dedicated hands on support by my Department through mobilised capacity; and
- programme management approach.

These Summits are **not** about long speeches, I have personally intervened on the agenda for each of the summits so that it is not a series of long speeches. The theme is “Action” and Municipalities are expected to present their state of readiness to meet the targets; with bucket eradication, and provision of water and sanitation to clinics being the priority.

The expected outcome of this Summit is a realistic plan of action which indicates the challenges: how and when will they be solved and responsible organisation, as well as the delivery rate per month. A monthly report is expected from each municipality which will be consolidated into a provincial report to be submitted to the Premier and myself. This, ladies and gentlemen, means “Business Unusual”.

In January this year my Department, through the Social Cluster, submitted a Service Delivery Acceleration Plan to the Cabinet Lekgotla. This plan, which received the blessing of the Cabinet, is being implemented. The plan is focused on intensifying the good things that we are currently doing, i.e. innovation; urgency in our approach; and importantly, strengthening of collaboration between all spheres of Government. The strategic interventions that we outlined in this plan are:

- Hands on leadership and support by my Department as sector leader;
- hands on political support and involvement at all spheres of government;
- mobilisation of both human and financial resources to address skills gap;
- unblocking “bottlenecks” affecting service delivery; and
- strengthening intergovernmental co-operation.

As Government if we are going to accelerate or fast tracking delivery we need to have new and different ways of doing things, and this requires a commitment for more urgent engagement with how we deliver our services. This acceleration may require a review of supply chain management policies, *ad hoc* sittings of meetings of council tender committees that would pave the way for speedy implementation of the infrastructure programmes, constant communication amongst officials and politicians, political ownership by councillors, communication with communities about the different technological options, and if necessary secondments between municipalities. For example, we have been informed that the buckets have been eradicated in Maquasi Hills and the potential exists for us to second officials from that municipality or others that have eradicated backlogs, to municipalities that are experiencing challenges. There is also the potential to have secondments from other provinces or secondments of officials from my department to those municipalities that indicate they will not be able to meet the backlog.

Support to accelerate delivery can also be provided by my Department's public entities, particularly the Water Boards. During our Departmental Strategic Planning Session held earlier this year DWAF entities were requested to align their strategic plans to ours to ensure that they strengthen our capacity to achieve Government goals. Representatives from water board have been invited to do a presentation today on how they can support the municipalities in accelerating service delivery.

Premier, MEC, I have no doubt that in most of the municipalities the issue of finances will be raised as a key constraint to implementation. Whilst I agree that more funding may be required, the solution is not to just throw money at the problem and hope that we have toilets by the end of the year. If funds were the only problem I doubt that any municipality would have sent back unspent Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) funding, whereas we find that a great deal of MIG money has not been spent; so in our discussions today we need to go deeper and talk about the real constraints.

If funds are short and more money is required then I will need to go to my colleagues in Cabinet, the Ministers of Provincial and Local Government and Finance with a plan to show how existing funds have been cost effectively utilised, that there are workable plans in place to address the backlog, and there is political commitment from all spheres of Government to eradicating buckets – and those commitments have be translated into practical measures.

National Treasury will not allocate funding to municipalities that cannot illustrate that they have a well thought business plan that shows how issues of technical expertise, procurement procedures, decision

making in council, programme management and financial management have been addressed. These are areas where my Department is able to come in and provide support together with other relevant departments including the National Treasury in the province.

In our commitment to addressing the backlog, we as politicians may have to make hard decisions: I am aware of the difficulties in this Province around technology options such as Ventilated Improved Pit-latrines (VIP) that seem unacceptable to communities. It is very important that our communities should be educated and made aware that it is not always possible to provide water borne sanitation. Whilst some might see it as an ideal to replace each bucket toilet with water flush system, it is important for a municipality to look at issues of sustainable water resources, availability of bulk infrastructure, treatment of waste water, and very importantly, affordability. There are, however, appropriate technology options that could be effectively used; some might allow for upgrading from VIPs to water borne at a latter stage, others might be a french drain, or a urine diversion and composting of the waste. My Department is also able to offer advice and support on the different options and technologies available. The type of technology we propose to communities could make the difference between us meeting the targets or not meeting the targets.

In the process of speeding up access to services, we must not lose sight of the other important objectives of Government, particularly job creation and women empowerment. We have shown that it is possible to create local jobs for both men and women through the implementation of our water and sanitation programmes.

Before concluding Premier, I would like to recognise the achievements in your Province. Amongst them I would like to mention the development of the Provincial Sector Plan which responds to the key challenges related to water, sanitation and forestry, its integration into the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy, and the establishment of a working group focusing on infrastructure development

I also wish to acknowledge the financial support option that has been provided by the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) to certain municipalities and the co-operation of all relevant stakeholders in the existing provincial Task Team to ensure that this initiative is well managed and municipalities are adequately supported.

To conclude, Programme Director, there are pressing demands before us. There are only a few months before the target on bucket eradication must be met, and shortly after that we will have the target for access to water; and by 2010 we are targeting universal access to sanitation.

Co-operation is a key ingredient for us to achieve the targets and it is through a spirit of collaboration and co-operative governance that significant progress has been attained. And today we see National, Provincial and Local Government, as well as water sector stakeholders coming together to forge strategies to meet the challenges that we face. It is my hope that with our collective efforts our deliberations today will be fruitful and we will find immediate solutions to some of our challenges. Premier, I am here to work - "Let there be Water and Sanitation for All!"

I thank you.