



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

KEY-NOTE ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MRS EDNA MOLEWA, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE EMERGENCY BULK RAW WATER PIPELINE IN ERMELO, MPUMALANGA PROVINCE, 15 JUNE 2013

Honourable Premier

MECs present here today

Executive Mayors and Mayors of Local Councils

Councillors

Dikgosi

Departmental and other Government officials

Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great honour to stand here today to participate in this historic milestone for the people of Ermelo and Msukaligwa Local Municipality at large. I wish to send my gratitude to my colleague, Premier Mabuza, for his commitment to work hand in glove with me to ensure that we bring clean, potable water to the people of this province.

Yesterday we were in Bushbuckridge in the Ehhlazeni District where the Premier and I launched a unique initiative that will help provide water to the entire Bushbuckridge municipal area now and into the not too distant future. The fact that we are spending two days in succession here in Mpumalanga is a clear indication that we want to declare war on water shortages in the province.

The challenge we have in the province is that there is insufficient bulk infrastructure. This is impacting on the eradication of the water services backlogs, which currently stand at approximately 35%. Most of these backlogs are in rural villages.

With a population of 130 000, it is painful to see that at least 36 000 of these people do not have access to clean, potable water. The sooner we address this situation together as various spheres of government the better. I am aware that water challenges in the Msukaligwa Municipality and Ermelo in particular go beyond the issue of backlogs. In the past year or so, the Ermelo town has run out of water and this affected the people in many ways, including the disruption of normal well-being of the residents and the day to day running of businesses.

We know that water is central to every aspect of human activity; hence the ANC government is embarking on various initiatives to address this challenge. We believe that there is a need to strengthen the link between water availability and the key priority programmes as reflected in the Provincial Growth Development Strategy (PGDS). It is clear that all key economic sectors in the Province rely largely on water availability. Those economic sectors include agriculture, mining and commercial forestry as well as tourism. Agriculture is the main user of water and the second largest employer, therefore we regard it as a key development sector with potential for further growth opportunities in the secondary industries which involve processing and packaging. Therefore, the Department, through various mechanisms, is providing support to the Province in order to contribute towards the achievement of Provincial priorities.

This is the reason why we decided to dedicate the past two days to this province to ensure that we tackle the water challenges as much as we can.

We are here today to launch the Emergency Raw Water Pipeline project, which comprises of the construction of above ground emergency pipeline in Ermelo. The project will serve as a surplus raw water supply in this area and is aimed at addressing the water shortage in Douglas Dam and Willem Brummer Dam. The project will,

therefore, address the issue of the water shortage in the Ermelo area, Wesselton and Phumula Settlements.

Indeed we are committed to assist the municipality in all its endeavours to provide water to the local people. There are a number of other interventions that we have made to respond to the water crisis in Ermelo. The Department has provided the municipality with water storage tanks and an amount of R320 000.00 was put aside to cater for that intervention. An additional R500 000 was provided to assist the municipality with technical support & advisory services. Another amount of R52 million was provided to assist the municipality by constructing a temporary pipeline while a long term measure is still under consideration.

In addition to the above intervention, a parallel process for the provision of a permanent technical solution to provide water to the Ermelo /Wesselton service area is being considered under the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant. This intervention is worth R32 million and should be completed by October 2013. A further R335 million is earmarked for the Msukaligwa Water Supply Scheme for Ermelo, Wesselton and Breyton.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is not the only intervention we have made in the Gert Sibande District Municipality. The District has benefited from a number of short to medium term interventions implemented by the Department through the Accelerated Community Infrastructure Programme (ACIP). The Department has drilled 14 boreholes in the District through the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA) and installed 1890 rainwater harvesting tanks in Msukaligwa, Pixley ka Seme, Lekwa, Mkhondo, Dipaleseng and Chief Albert Luthuli.

A feasibility study was also initiated two months ago by the Department to look at the bulk water requirements for Carolina. The outcome will provide advice on the appropriate intervention support that can be provided to the Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality through the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant.

In total, the Department is providing to all Local Municipalities within the Gert Sibande District Municipality through the RBIG projects worth over a billion Rand over the next three years.

Premier, between us we have determined that the people of this Province, who have shown a consistent endorsement for our Government, deserve our undivided attention and uninterrupted service. Our being amongst them today is an indication of how we value the input they have given us towards our work and being here is also an indication that we are truly their servants.

We thank you the people of Gert Sibande for your patience and perseverance.

I thank you.