



## INTERNET ARTICLE

### **DWS assures business communities of enough water supply amidst the closure of Lesotho Highlands tunnel for maintenance**

24 June 2024

The Provincial Head of Department of Water and Sanitation in Gauteng, Justice Maluleke has reassured the public about the readiness of the Department and sector stakeholders for the impending closure of the Lesotho Highlands during the City Meets Business Engagement Session, hosted by the City of Ekurhuleni at the Alberton Civic Centre on Friday, 21 June 2024. The session focused on responsible water usage for business continuity.

The Provincial Head confirmed that the Department and relevant stakeholders in the water sector have taken all necessary measures to ensure that the water supply will not be affected by the closure of the Lesotho tunnel which will commence in October this year until March 2025.

“The main message is that we are ready for the tunnel closure and the public must not panic we have all the plans in place, and we will be communicating”, he said.

According to Maluleke, the Department is working with all stakeholders from Lesotho, the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA), Rand Water, City of Tshwane, City of Ekurhuleni, City of Johannesburg and entities to ensure no water shortage in the province during the shutdown of the Lesotho tunnel. While Maluleke acknowledged that there may be challenges along the way, he expressed confidence in their preparedness to handle any obstacles that may arise.

“In a worst-case scenario of shortage of water supply, the Integrated Vaal River System has 13 dams that supply water to the Vaal River system. This is only at the worst-case scenario when the Vaal dam is around 18%, but since the closure will be during the rainy season, we don’t anticipate that that is going to happen”, Maluleke said.

Mr Maluleke has assured businesses that they have nothing to worry about and further advised them to build on-site storage facilities for water in order to continue with their operations.

Celiwe Ntuli, Scientist Manager from System Operation at the National Department of Water and Sanitation, supported Maluleke’s assertion by stating that the analysis shows no risk of water shortage in the Integrated Vaal River System (IVRS).

During her presentation, Ms Ntuli mentioned that Phase 1 of the Lesotho Highlands transfers

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700 million cubic meters of water per year into the Integrated Vaal River System (IVRS). Phase 2 project will add 490 million cubic meters per year into the IVRS.

According to the treaty signed between Lesotho and South Africa in 1996, maintenance is required every five to ten years. The last maintenance was conducted in 2019, during which the need for Phase 2 was discovered.

In conclusion, Justice Maluleke's reassurance at the City Meets Business Engagement Session underscores the Department of Water and Sanitation's commitment to ensuring the sustainable water supply for Gauteng province and beyond in the face of the Lesotho Highlands closure.

**Mashile Tshigofatso**

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