

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 250

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250. Mr S E Opperman (DA) to ask the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry.
(Interdepartmental transfer on 29/02)

- (1) Whether any action has been taken to attend to the maintenance of sewerage infrastructure in (a) Gauteng where there have been sewage spills in the Vaal River and the Hartebeespoort Dam and (b) other provinces; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what action;
- (2) what is the estimated total cost of maintenance that will be done in the 2008-09 financial year?

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REPLY

(1)(a) and (b)

Yes, extensive actions have and are being taken in Gauteng and the other provinces by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in exercising its role as regulator and supporter of local government, especially to address sewage spills into the water resources of the country. These include emergency measures taken on the rehabilitation of existing sanitation systems, which includes sewage gravity pipelines, sewage pump stations, sewage pump lines and waste-water treatment works. In the short term, local government is also supported in minor refurbishment of sewage pump stations and providing standby pumps where funds are available.

In the longer term a comprehensive long term water and sewage infrastructure master plan has been drafted that shows sources of funds and planned expenditure with clear milestones for the periods considered.

Another action taken by the Department on waste-water treatment requirements in the Vaal River entailed conducting a study which indicated that the provision of a new regional waste-water care facility next to the Vaal River together with outfall sewers to eliminate most of the existing pump stations and the three water care facilities, are the most feasible long term sanitation option for the area.

Due to the Department's limited role in municipal waste-water related infrastructural refurbishment, maintenance and operations, and to ensure that provision is made for the necessary capital investment for effective and efficient execution of the function, all the actions mentioned are done in close co-operation with the relevant municipalities, Department of Provincial and Local Government and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

The Department's sections involved in regulating discharges of waste and waste water to the water resources are taking the required compliance monitoring and enforcement actions against municipalities to protect the resources sufficiently. This is done while complying with the constitutional requirements for co-operation between spheres of government. Municipalities are being prioritised during these actions to ensure best use of the resources available within the Department for maximum protection of the resource.

- (2) The best estimate on the total cost of maintenance on waste-water related municipal infrastructure for the 2008-09 financial year is available from the Department of Provincial and Local Government.

