

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 378

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(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 8)

378. Mr M M Swathe (DA) to ask the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry:

- (1) Whether her department has visited the Percy Stewart water works sewerage plant outside Krugersdorp in the Mogale City Municipality in the past three years; if not, why not; if so, (a) on what date did each visit take place, (b) which departmental officials were part of each team visiting the site and (c) what were the findings in each case;
- (2) whether she has been informed that the physical infrastructure at the plant has been grossly neglected for some time and that the plant is suffering from a significant skills shortage, with a 60% vacancy rate; if so,
- (3) whether her department has determined who is responsible for this state of affairs; if not, why not; if so, who is responsible;
- (4) whether her department has taken any action against those responsible; if not why not; if so, what action;
- (5) whether her department has taken any steps to rectify both the infrastructure and the skills shortage problem; if not, why not; if so, what steps?

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REPLY:

- (1) The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's Regional Office in Gauteng does quarterly audits for all Waste-Water Treatment Works (WWTWs). These coincide with routine effluent quality audits. During the audit in June 2007 it was discovered that the Percy Stewart WWTW was not complying with the permit requirements as it failed to discharge effluent of acceptable quality. Several non-compliance notices were sent to the Municipality. After the Municipality failed to rectify the problems following two DWAF notifications, the Department's Regulatory Unit intervened. It is important to note that this Treatment Works received recognition in 2005 and 2006 for excellent operations.
- (2) A detailed site investigation was conducted on 8 November 2007 by my Department's Regulatory Unit, my Department's Gauteng Regional Office and officials from the Mogale City Municipality.

- (3) The under-performance of the WWTWs is due to of the following reasons:
- Old infrastructure;
 - old technology not designed to handle the current organic load;
 - high rate of development which result in inadequate capacity;
 - shortage of trained staff and technical skills;
 - funds not allocated to upgrade/refurbish the plant; and
 - poor management.
- (4) This plant has been identified as a priority and my Department has taken a co-operative government approach to have the situation rectified. To date, an engineering firm has been appointed by the Mogale City Municipality to assist them with immediate, medium and long term plans to deal with the non-compliance and capacity problems at the WWTWs. The implementation plan to correct the situation at the WWTWs was presented to my Department and officials are busy studying the content. The Municipal Management has shown good leadership and co-operation since the intervention by the Regulatory Unit.
- (5) After the intervention by my Department's regulatory unit, the Mogale City Municipality as the Water Services Authority (WSA) has provided funds for the refurbishment of the WWTW which is underway. Short term issues as identified by Departmental investigations are being addressed. A medium and long term plan has been submitted to my Department. There is a concern about skills shortages. The Mogale City Municipality faces the same challenges in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff as other sectors in this country that require engineers and scientists. This is the reason they have appointed an engineering firm to address the problem in the interim. The implementation plan mentioned in my reply to part 4 of the question, above will also include acquisition of suitably qualified staff.