water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

EdST

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MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 2687 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above question asked by Mr M R Sayedali Shah (DA) is attached for your consideration.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 05/10/2012

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED

Elsabe - Inform Maya to draft a media statement that anticipate this being in the media, but indicating how we are dealing with this matter proactively

MRS B E E MOLEWA, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE: 2012/10/07

Media statements published 9/10/12

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 2687

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 21 SEPTEMBER 2012 (INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 31)

2687. Mr M R Sayedali Shah (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

(1) Whether she has been informed of the regular occurrence of pollution into the Margate and Port Edward estuaries from sewerage infrastructure managed by Ugu District Municipality; if not, what steps does she intend to take to investigate the matter; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) whether the municipality has reported the events to the Department of Water Affairs as and when they occur; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(3) whether the Department of Water Affairs is assisting the municipality to eradicate the pollution events; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(4) whether any officials of the Department of Water Affairs have conducted inspections since 1 January 2012 of failing sewerage infrastructure managed by Ugu District Municipality; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(5) whether, since 1 January 2012, any (a) notices, (b) directives or (c) criminal charges in terms of section 19(3) of the National Water Act, Act 36 of 1998, have been directed against the municipality for pollution events; if not, why not; if so, in each case, what was the response of the municipality? NW3305E

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REPLY:

(1) Regarding pollution in the Margate area:

- The Department of Water Affairs (the Department) was first notified of an incident of sewage overflow from the Margate Pump Station 4A on 28 June 2012 by the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs. In response, the Department issued a non-compliance letter to the Ugu District Municipality (the Municipality) on 2 July 2012 requesting a plan of action (to address the pollution) to be submitted on or before 20 July 2012.

- On 3 September 2012, the Department received a complaint from the Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife regarding sewage overflow from the same pump station. Taking into cognisance the fact that the Municipality had not yet responded to the Department's notice and that a second complaint had since been lodged regarding the same pump station, the Department conducted an inspection of the pump station on 5 September 2012 and confirmed the sewage overflow. On 7 September 2012, the Department held an urgent meeting with the Municipality's management and environmental authorities to discuss the cause of incident, actions taken and the way forward. It should also be noted that during the meeting, the Municipality also provided the Department a response letter to the notice issued on 2 July 2012 and the actions in the letter are reflected in response (5)(a) below.

- The Department gave the Municipality a verbal directive to take steps to stop the source of pollution, ensure that the Margate Beach is closed to the public, and remediate the effects of the pollution. Such verbal directive was followed with a written directive on 2 October 2012 instructing the Municipality to conduct an assessment of all sewage infrastructure within their area of jurisdiction, report the outcome of the assessment and further develop a plan of action to refurbish or construct new infrastructure where necessary in order to prevent the recurring incidents.

With regard to the Port Edward pollution incident, the Department received a complaint from a community member on 1 August 2012. A subsequent inspection revealed that there were no incidents occurring, however, signs of recent spillages were evident.

(2) Although the Municipality did not report the pollution incidents to the Department and environmental stakeholders, a community member alerted the Department as outlined in response (1) above.

(3) As part of its support function to municipalities, the Department's KwaZulu-Natal Regional Office serves on the Sector Appraisal Committee, which is responsible for appraisal of business plans and technical reports from municipalities. In the case of the Ugu District Municipality, a business plan for the replacement of the sewer pipeline, upgrade of the rising main, effluent main and pump station at Margate was assessed by the Sector Appraisal Committee (on 6 August 2012) and an amount of R24 562 091 has been recommended for funding of the business plan from the Municipal Infrastructure.

(4) Two inspections have been conducted by the Department on 14 August 2012 and 3 September 2012. The outcomes of the inspections as well as actions taken by the Department have been outlined in response (1) above.

(5)(a) As indicated in response (1) above, a non-compliance letter (notice) regarding the failing pump at the Margate Pump Station 4A was issued to the Municipality on 2 July 2012 requesting a plan of action to address the pollution. The Municipality provided the response letter during a meeting (to discuss the pollution incidents) held between the Department and the Municipality. The letter stated that a project to replace the sewer pipeline at Margate, upgrade the rising main, effluent main and pump station was approved by the Department on 31 August 2012 to be registered on the Municipal Infrastructure Grant. The Municipality further informed the Department that this project could take up to 18 months from the date of budget approval and the estimated completion date is April 2014.

(5)(b) As indicated in response (1) above, a verbal directive was issued to the Municipality on 7 September 2012 to take steps to stop the source of pollution, ensure that the Margate Beach is closed to the public and remediate the effects of the pollution. Such verbal directive was followed up by a written directive on 2 October 2012, instructing the Municipality to conduct an assessment of all the sewage within their area of jurisdiction, to report the outcome of the assessment and to draw up a plan of action to refurbish or construct new infrastructure where necessary in order to prevent the recurring incidents.

(5)(c) No criminal charges have been laid against the Municipality at this stage. The Department has undertaken to monitor the progress of the proposed medium and long term solutions. The outcome will determine whether charges will be instituted against the Municipality.

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