



## water affairs

Department:  
Water Affairs  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



EdST

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### MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES: QUESTION 671 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above question asked by Mr K A Sinclair (COPE-NC) is attached for your consideration.

*W. S. Molewa*

**DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

DATE: 05/12/2012

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED <sup>as amended ✓</sup> ~~AMENDED~~

*Done*

*B. E. Molewa*

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

DATE: 2012/12/13

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 671

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 30 OCTOBER 2012  
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 38)

**671. Mr K A Sinclair (COPE-NC) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:**

Whether her department has assisted the Umsobomvu Municipality in the Northern Cape with the salvaging and reparation of a water pump station in the Orange River that is submerged beneath the water surface; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details in terms of (a) the (i) framework and (ii) context of the assistance, (b) a specific breakdown of the financial assistance to salvage and repair the pump station and (c) the reasons that caused the pontoon to become submerged beneath the surface? CW885E

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**REPLY:**

(1) The Department of Water Affairs (the Department) assisted the Umsobomvu Municipality with the salvaging and reparation of the water pump station on the Orange River from where water is abstracted for the town of Colesberg. The relevant details are as follow.

(1)(a)(i) The framework of assistance.

Following a request from the Umsobomvu Municipality the Department, provided both technical and financial support to salvage and repair the water pump station. This support was given in order to ensure that the water supply to the town of Colesberg would be restored within the shortest time possible, and most particularly in view of the municipality not being in a position to conduct the necessary restoration work on its own.

(1)(a)(ii) The context of the assistance.

The pontoon with submersible water pumps was submerged below the water surface due to the failure of the fibre glass floats, thereby leaving the town of Colesberg without its main water supply. The Department, upon further enquiry was informed that alternative water supply mechanisms (groundwater supply and water supply through water tankers) were put in place, but that the Umsobomvu Municipality was unable to perform the required emergency repairs to the water pump station from where it sources its main water supply, and this was due to its adverse financial position.

In order to ensure that the main water supply of Colesberg was most expediently restored, the Department considered raising the pontoon as the first priority, and also various other options to execute this repair work quickly, effectively and within a reasonable budget, and these options were investigated. Following an assessment of the available options, a specialist diving company was appointed to assess the damage to the pontoon as well as to institute measures to bring the pontoon to the surface.

The diving specialist managed to refloat the pontoon and an assessment was made, and it was discovered that the fibre glass floats supporting the pontoon were irreparable, whilst the same was true for the submersible pumps. The Department therefore availed further funding for the repair of the pump station as detailed in (1)(b) below.

(1)(b) A specific breakdown of the financial assistance to salvage and repair the pump station.

The total cost of salvaging and repairing the pump station amounted to R892 696.60. This comprised of:

- R400 000.00 for the salvaging of the sunken pontoon by a specialist diving company and the supply of new floats that are more durable; and
- R492 696.60 for the supply and installation of new submersible water pumps.

(1)(c) The reasons that caused the pontoon to submerge beneath the surface.

The pontoon sank due to the failure of the fibre glass floats that keeps the pontoon afloat. The failure of the fibre glass floats was as a result of water penetrating the floats through hairline cracks that had developed in the floats.

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