

LOCAL NEWS

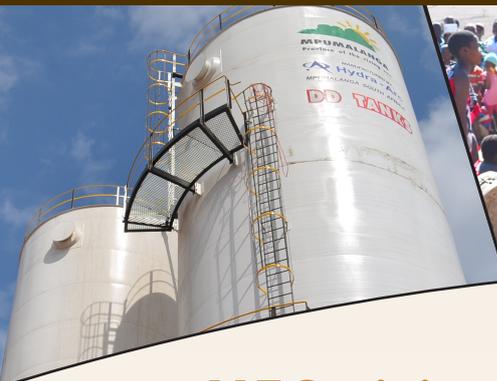


cogta

Department:
Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs
MPUMALANGA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT



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VISION

Responsive, effective, efficient and sustainable cooperative governance system.

MISSION

To coordinate, support, monitor and strengthen an integrated cooperative Governance system.

Disclaimer

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MEC's FOREWORD



HON. RM MTSHWENI (MPL)
MEC FOR COGTA

Our department is celebrating the clean audit outcome from the Auditor-General (A-G) for the 2013/14 financial year. This achievement is no mean feat and is proof enough that the department is committed to proper utilization of public funds. The A-G is a Chapter 9 institution with a mandate to verify independently the financial statements of all public institutions. This outcome could not be possible without the high level of commitment by the officials in the department at all levels. I would like to commend them for this achievement. We must make this a permanent objective in order to boost the public confidence about the utilization of their funds.

The department is now in a better position to monitor and assist municipalities to produce clean audits. We have put in place an Integrated Municipal Support which seeks to assist municipalities to achieve this goal.

On behalf of the department, I would like to congratulate Mr Cain Chunda on his appointment as the Head of Department (HOD). This is a major milestone not only for our department but for the local government sector and the institution of traditional leadership. We welcome him as the Accounting Officer of the department. His qualifications in Micro - Biology and his experience in water management issues, is key to our province, with a focus on water service delivery.

This will assist our municipalities not just to win the war for water delivery, but also to ensure that they provide our communities with quality water in line with the blue-drop status set by the Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation.

Municipalities are required to reprioritize their budgets in support of the water and sanitation priority. This was done by the realignment of the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) with the budgets. In my oversight role, I have to monitor compliance on the side of municipal councils to support this, and the responsibility to monitor implementation on the side of municipal administration, lies with Mr Chunda as the Accounting Officer. We will rely on his Management experience and support from all our officials to make this objective a reality.

On the same breath, I wish to commend Mr Richard Mnisi, for steering the department towards the right direction whilst the process of appointing an HOD was underway. He led the department with dignity. Looking at the manner in which he was dedicated to his work, it was clear to me that his mindset was fine-tuned to do the work. He has left a mark and I wish him success in his future.

He capacity to support municipalities has also been strengthened by the appointment of the Chief Director for Municipal Support, Mr Godfrey Ntombela. He is responsible for Programme 2. Mr Ntombela's immediate task is to ensure synergy between our department and the Provincial Treasury for the successful implementation of the Municipal Integrated Support Plan as directed by the Provincial Cabinet. The plan seeks to support municipalities in a quest to improve their audit outcomes and service delivery imperatives. Over and above, the plan is a key element for Chapter 13 of the NDP which seeks to transform municipalities into a capable developmental state.

With qualifications in law and experience in management in the Public Service, I am confident that Mr Ntombela is the right candidate for the position. I am also confident that he will be the driving force for municipalities to obtain clean audits. Over the years, the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality and Ehlanzeni District Municipality have achieved this elusive task. Now that we have improved the capacity, we should increase our work rate to help all the 21 municipalities to produce clean audits.

Together, we move South Africa forward!

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE HOD



MR CAIN MFANA CHUNDA
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

The department's efforts to obtain a clean audit from the Auditor-General (A-G) has been rewarded. This achievement is a confirmation about our effective internal controls and financial management systems. It is a sign that the department complies with general accounting prescripts and principles. The achievement will go a long way towards the improvement of the public perception about the department's commitment to manage public funds.

The achievement could not be possible without the commitment of the internal staff under the sterling leadership of MEC Refilwe Mtshweni and the previous leadership of the department. Our resolve now, moving forward, is to ensure that we maintain the standard. This achievement gives us credence to our effort to assist municipalities obtain clean audits, in line with Operation Clean Audit 2014.

The negotiations between the department and Eskom in relation

to debts owed by municipalities for electricity give us hope that a positive outcome is on the horizon. For many years, municipalities have been losing revenue worth millions of rands due to electricity theft. Despite this, they had to pay Eskom for the consumption of electricity irrespective of the loss. Now that the payment agreements have been reviewed, we cherish the hope that Eskom will allow municipalities to service the debts on the basis of the revenue collected. We commend MEC Mtshweni for this initiative.

In the meantime, our department is assisting municipalities with technical support. This includes installation of meter boxes in identified households and data cleansing and development of revenue enhancement strategies with a view to issue credible statements.

The Mbombela Municipality has already set a tone for revenue enhancement by introducing a Rand-to-Rand campaign. The objective of this campaign is to give residents with outstanding debts an opportunity to pay. In each payment, they stand a chance of having their debts reduced by the municipality.

We commend the Executive Mayor, Cllr Sibusiso Mathonsi for the innovation and we hope that residents will take this opportunity with both hands to pay for their debts. Not only will the campaign enhance the municipality's revenue, but further improve the municipality's financial position to deliver on the municipality's service delivery imperatives.

I have been inspired by the manner in which I was received in the department. MEC Mtshweni and the internal staff have made my new 'home' an enjoyable experience. I would like to thank Mr Richard Mnisi, who acted in this position with diligence for initiating me into the system. While I had my own fears about the new environment, however, the warm welcome has conquered them. I look forward to work with all stakeholders of the department, including Emakhosi, Municipalities and the Portfolio Committee on Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs and Human Settlement for the realization of the department's service delivery imperatives and mandate.

Together, we move South Africa forward.

Minister Mokonyane launches the Mathibela water project in Marite officially



WATER CAPACITY: Minister Mokonyane makes comments at the end of the official launch of the Mathibela water project in Mariti. MEC Mtshweni and Premier Mabuza pay attention.

Minister for Water and Sanitation, Ms Nomvula Mokonyane has launched the Mathibela water reticulation project in Mariti, Bushbuckridge Municipality with a promise that by 2015 all households will be provided with water. The function was attended by Premier David Mabuza, MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs in Mpumalanga, Ms Refilwe Mtshweni, Bushbuckridge Executive Mayor, Cllr Renius Khumalo, Kgosi Mathibela Mokoena and the local community.

Minister Mokonyane says R334 million has been set aside for water delivery to all the households in the Bushbuckridge Municipality. "President (Jacob) Zuma has made a commitment that all households are connected to water in this municipality. Our responsibility as a department, is to make sure that what the President has said, takes place. We need R1,4 billion to make the President's call a reality," she said. She

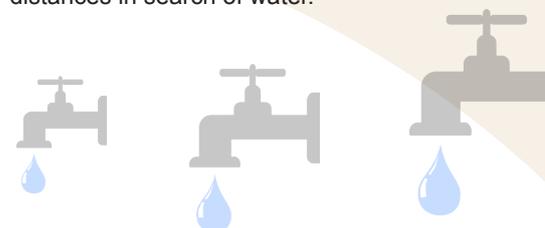
added although the department does not have the funding, however, she was convinced that it will be sourced from areas where it is not spent to fund Bushbuckridge water projects.

The Mathibela water project will connect water to 24 households. Minister Mokonyane says government is working hard to make sure that the households have water taps in the yards. She says with the help of the water agency, Rand Water, this is possible. Her remarks were echoed by Premier Mabuza. "Water will be provided to all our communities in the Bushbuckridge Municipality, dark or blue. We are doing everything humanly possible to make sure that you get water here," the Premier said to an applause by the local community packed in a marquee.

Minister Mokonyane appealed to the community not to vandalize the infrastructure.

"We are a transparent government willing to listen to your grievances anytime. Talk to us whenever you have grievances. Do not resort to destroying the water tanks, the taps, to get attention of the Premier," she appealed. She further advised the community to utilize water for their economic development. "You must use water to irrigate trees to produce fruits for commercial purpose. Use it to irrigate vegetable gardens and sell them to make money. Please use the water sparingly," she advised.

Kgosi Mokoena welcomed the launch of the project. He described it as a major intervention to prevent women from travelling long distances in search of water.



PHOLA STEEL WATER PROJECT

The MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) in Mpumalanga, Hon. Refilwe Mtshweni visited the Phola water project near Hazyview as part of her oversight role to monitor progress. Two water tanks, each with a capacity of 750 mega litres of water have been installed. The project has been initiated as an intervention for water provision in line with the provincial government service delivery imperatives.

Eight similar projects are underway in the following areas:

- Cunningmore B, Casteel and Thusanang in the Bushbuckridge Municipality.
- Steenbok and Mangweni in the Nkomazi Municipality.
- Matsulu and Kabokweni in the Mbombela Municipality.

During the visit to Phola, MEC Mtshweni expressed confidence that the project will help reduce the water shortage in that area. This project will augment the supply of water in this area in addition to the available water projects. We hope that the project will help meet the demand of water due to the growing number of people here in line with the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Mpumalanga Vision 2030, she said.

She further appealed to the local community to protect the infrastructure. Our plans to provide water is undermined by illegal connections. With limited budget, the illegal connections deplete the budget we have set aside for the supply of water to affected communities, she said.



OVERSIGHT: Head of Department, Mr Cain Chunda accompanies members of the National Council of Provinces during a visit to the Phola steel water project in Hazyview.



INTERVENTION: MEC Mtshweni during her visit to the Phola water project near Hazyview.



MEC Mtshweni makes an intervention to resolve the ESKOM debt by municipalities

MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Hon. Refilwe Mtshweni has held discussions with power supplier, ESKOM to review payment agreements for debts owed by municipalities. The meeting took place in ESKOM's head office, Megawatt in Midrand and was attended by Acting Head of Department, Mr Richard Mnisi and senior managers while ESKOM delegation was led by the general Manager for customer service, Mr Algie Kirwitz.

Although municipalities have demonstrated their willingness to pay ESKOM for the usage of electricity, however, a number of challenges have made it impossible for them to pay ESKOM for power supply. They use funds from the equitable share to service the ESKOM account. However, a number of factors make it difficult for them to pay. MEC Mtshweni told the ESKOM leadership that the payment arrangement were not realistic for municipalities. "The majority of our municipalities are losing a lot of revenue due to illegal connections. The amount of revenue which they collect for electricity from customers is not enough to pay back the money owed to ESKOM," she said. She added that some municipalities have no capacity to install meters in order to issue correct bills to the customers for electricity consumption, and the ageing infrastructure.

During the meeting, MEC Mtshweni appealed to ESKOM to assist in dealing with illegal connections. "Millions of rands worth of electricity is wasted due to illegal connections, and our municipalities are the worst hit because they cannot recoup that money. This also increases the ESKOM debt by the municipalities. ESKOM has a responsibility too to help in the fight against illegal connections," MEC Mtshweni said.

She tabled the following proposals to ESKOM as part of a commitment to pay off the debt:

- **The department in collaboration with Provincial Treasury and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) will continuously engage with all municipalities who are still in arrears with their Eskom accounts and to monitor the payment of current accounts.**
- **The department will monitor the cash flow of all municipalities as well as the payment of their creditors.**
- **Interaction with Eskom was formalised to discuss the performance of the municipalities and for this purpose regular meetings are taking place between COGTA, Municipalities, Eskom, Provincial Treasury and SALGA during which the debt as well as technical support are discussed.**

Already a number of initiatives are being implemented to help all municipalities in arrears. These include:

- **A task team has been established to monitor and assist municipalities.**
- **Revenue enhancement strategies developed for all municipalities.**
- **Provincial Treasury made funds available to assist municipalities with data cleansing.**
- **Conduct workshops to assist municipalities with tariff setting.**
- **Municipalities to implement mechanisms to reduce electricity usage.**
- **Municipalities review credit control systems to reduce outstanding debt.**
- **Municipalities assisted to collect outstanding government debt.**
- **Top hundred customers to be identified and approached for payment in each municipality.**

Meanwhile, MEC Mtshweni will soon embark on a campaign to create awareness about illegal connections and cable theft. The campaign will be done jointly with MEC for Department of Community Safety Security and Liaison, Hon. Vusi Shongwe, in partnership with ESKOM.



PACT: COGTA's Senior official, Mr Richard Mnisi and MEC Mtshweni at the end of a meeting with ESKOM's General Manager for customer service, Mr Algie Kirwitz in Megawatt.



COGTA In Action



ON THE THRONE: Chairperson of the Mpumalanga House of Traditional Leaders, Kgoshi Mathibela Mokoena hands over a certificate of recognition to Inkhosi Mkhathswa of Magogeni. Members of the Executive, Inkhosi Ngomane and Inkhosi Malaza look on.



SOLUTION: MEC Mtshweni and Eskom's General Manager for Customer Service, Mr Algje Kirwitz share a joke at the end of a meeting in Mega Watt to review payment plans for electricity debts.



MUNICIPAL STATUS QUO: MEC Mtshweni addresses the media briefing at Ehlanzeni Disaster Management Centre in Nelspruit during the 8th National Municipal Managers' Forum. She is flanked by Ehlanzeni Executive Mayor, Cllr Letta Shongwe and SALGA's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Xolile George.



DELIVERY: A Member of the Jongilanga Royal Council, Mr Sam Nzima (extreme right), in a jovial mood during the hand over of a vehicle for Hhosi Dankie Khoza by MEC Mtshweni at the HTL office. Kgosi Mokoena congratulates Hhosi Khoza.



BUSINESS UNUSUAL: MEC Mtshweni and Head of Department, Mr Cain Chunda interact with officials in the department. Cogta's Senior official, Mr Richard Mnisi (left) and Mr Fani Mnisi (right) look on.



ADVOCATING FOR SOLUTIONS: Emakhazeni Executive Mayor, Cllr Hamza Ngwenya makes a point during a visit by members of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) in Nelspruit.

MEC Mtshweni tables COGTA's policy and budget speech for 2014/15

MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Hon. Refilwe Mtshweni has tabled a budget of **R418 792** for the 2014/15 financial year in the legislature. MEC Mtshweni told members of the legislature and guests that the department will utilize the budget to support municipalities, the institution of traditional leadership and for basic services. "Madam Speaker, the improvement of the bulk water and sanitation infrastructure shall be one of the focus areas of the department. We are currently working towards the completion of the Hoxane Water Treatment Plant and the reticulation programme in the surrounding villages. I am also pleased that 21 villages have already been reticulated of the 25 villages that were targeted for end of July" she promised.

The department has made several interventions for the delivery of water. However, despite this, communities are still complaining about the lack of water. MEC Mtshweni cited several obstacles that hinder the provision of water such as ageing infrastructure, tempering with the reticulation system through illegal connections and insufficient budget for maintenance. She said COGTA is working with the Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation and municipalities to resolve the water challenges. "As we work together with the Department of Water Affairs and Sanitation, municipalities and Rand Water, victory is certain in the delivery of water to all our communities in Mpumalanga. A total amount of R1.9 billion has been set aside by municipalities through grant sources like the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG), Municipal Water Infrastructure Grant (MWIG), and Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant (RBIG) to address the shortage of water supply and sanitation throughout the province.

MEC Mtshweni said the department is supporting municipalities in an effort to help them pay Eskom bills and manage electricity net-

works. "We are also aware that some municipalities are struggling with the management of electricity networks operations and maintenance. We will be working closely with Eskom to support the following municipalities; eMalahleni, Thaba Chweu, Msukaligwa and Lekwa. We will be supporting these municipalities on technical and financial expertise, operations, maintenance plans and revenue collection," she said.

MEC Mtshweni used the opportunity to announce the promulgation of the Ingoma Act aimed at regulating initiation schools in Mpumalanga. She said initiation school owners have to comply with the new act. "Madam Speaker, the promulgation of the Ingoma Act is a major milestone achievement for our province. The passage to adulthood for our young men should not be a death-knell. The Ingoma Act gives us a legal recourse to arrest those who fail to comply and furthermore prevent further deaths, which has given our sacred tradition a bad reputation," she explained.

The budget has been allocated to the five programmes of the department as follows:

Programme 1: Administration- R102, 876 m

Programme 2: Local Governance- R141, 010 m

Programme 3: Development and Planning- R60, 262 m

Programme 4: Traditional Institutional Management- R101, 283 m

Programme 5: House of Traditional Leaders- R13, 361m



GUIDELINE: MEC Refilwe Mtshweni talks to Ligwalagwala FM's Mr Ephraim Mabilane during a post-budget speech interview.



MEC Mtshweni urges Traditional Leaders to help stop protests



HERITAGE: A group of traditional dancers entertain guests during the ceremony.

MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Leaders (COGTA) in Mpumalanga, Hon. Refilwe Mtshweni has urged traditional leaders to assist government in an effort to stop service delivery protests. Mtshweni was addressing traditional leaders and a local community in Oakley during the annual Mathibela Cultural ceremony, led by Kgoshi Mathibela Mokoena.

Mtshweni says the protests undermine government's efforts to bring services such as water to the affected communities. "The supply of water to our communities is a key priority in Mpumalanga. All our municipalities have reprioritized their budgets to cater for water. However, these protests in areas like Mzinti in the Nkomazi Municipality undermine these efforts," Mtshweni said. She urged Amakhosi to intervene. "We understand the difficulty of our communities of

not getting water in affected areas. But protests and damage of public property is not a solution to the problem. We appeal to our traditional leaders to address the communities to be patient as government is dealing with the problem,' she said.

She also made an appeal for them to warn communities against illegal connections to water and power lines. "Illegal connections to the water pipelines are a major obstacles to our water delivery plans. They cut the supply of the water to high reservoir tanks, leaving some of our communities dry. The transformers of the powerlines are overloaded and are damaged due to illegal connections. Municipalities loose millions of rands as they have to fix them. We appeal for your intervention to use your wisdom and your authority to prevent rural commu-

nities from sliding into anarchy," MEC Mtshweni said.

During the ceremony, Kgoshi Mokoena announced the water intervention to the local schools. "As a traditional council we have installed boreholes to 7 local schools in an effort to address the water challenge. This was made possible by the support of the local businesses,' he said. Kgoshi Mokoena added by working together, a lot can be achieved.

The Mathibela cultural ceremony is a melting pot for cultural activities. Swazis, Shangaans and Pedis displayed their cultural dances. The traditional gear and traditional food beared testimony that the Mathibela cultural ceremony is held during September, the heritage month.



CULTURAL ROLE: MEC Mtshweni and Kgoshi Mokoena marvel at the traditional dances during the Mathibela cultural ceremony in Oakley.

Mandela Day / Women's month celebration



LIGHTER MOMENT: Cogta's Mr Slykie Dhludhlu sings and praises with the elderly women that were filled with joy after receiving blankets.

Learners at the Impilo Primary School in Kriel, in Emalahleni Municipality are now attending classes in a revamped school following the intervention of MEC for Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) in Mpumalanga, Hon. Refilwe Mtshweni. Mtshweni led an entourage of officials from the department, members of the School Governing Body (SGB) and councilors in painting the walls and fixing the doors and broken glasses as part of the Mandela Day and Women's month.

The school is located in the farms outside Kriel. The renovation of the school is in line with one of the governments five key priorities of improving education Mtshweni said afterwards. She added that by fixing the window glasses and the doors, learners will now attend classes in a conducive environment, especially in winter. Twenty seven learners from poor families will be provided with school uniforms as part of the intervention by the department.

MEC Mtshweni further distributed blankets to 144 elderly persons in Thubelihle, amongst them a 102 years granny, Ms Linah Ndaba. During an address to the local community in a hall, MEC Mtshweni said by distributing the blankets, the department was living up to Mandela's spirit of giving. "The blankets will be used by our grand mothers during winter. Mandela has taught us to give. He has given us more than we could give back to him," MEC Mtshweni said.

At the end of the function, MEC Mtshweni cut a cake in honour of Mandela and the women who fought gallantly against draconian rule by the former apartheid government. She cut the cake with the help of granny Ndaba. She cited the crafting of the women's charter as a historical moment which contributed to the democratic changes in South Africa.



CONCETRATION: MEC Mtshweni fixes the window of Impilo Primary school in Kriel.



IMPROVEMENT: Community members put a landing hand during the renovation of Impilo Primary School on Mandela Day.

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