

Management of infrastructure to be an enforceable imperative

Minister of the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) Nomvula Mokonyane says municipalities must ensure that the management and maintenance of infrastructure are carried out as stipulated in their budgets.

Addressing delegates from various water sector stakeholders, community members, and all related associated, on progress made during the first day, 1 August 2014 National Water and Sanitation Summit at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg, east of Johannesburg, the Minister said this process is meant to enhance the prospects of water and sanitation provision. "We will no longer hear about the excuses of ageing or non-functioning water infrastructure," said Minister Mokonyane.

According to Minister Mokonyane, all Water Service Authorities (WSAs) are now going to be instructed to set aside at least 7% of their total budgets towards maintenance and management of infrastructure. The money will also be used to make sure that each municipality makes sure that there is capability and capacity to carry out this task efficiently and effectively.

Further, the Minister warned that government is set to introduce legislation to make sure that this matter is implemented without fail. Municipalities have been warned to ignore this process at their peril.

The Minister said deliberations on Friday, 1 August 2014 centred on the call for a "back to basics approach for good governance, effective administration, sound financial management, community engagements and public participation". This was espoused by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) Pravin Gordhan during his presentation on how to effectively enhance service delivery.

Minister Gordhan stressed that the issue of service delivery is not impacted by the shortage of money but by municipalities being able to deliver a basket of services.

What is also key is the way of correcting the imbalances in service delivery imperatives, described by the Minister as game changers; these being the need to adopt the following: Development of municipalities to facilitate service delivery; Develop 10-year water and sanitation infrastructure plans; improve infrastructure implementation and capabilities; Improve collaboration among government agencies to coordinate and synchronise plans; Facilitate alignment and coordination of infrastructure grants to report to main infrastructure plans in line with the National Development Plan (NDP).

Again, main expenditure budget has to be allocated for maintenance, whereby all municipalities must comply in terms of the intended legislation, said Minister Mokonyane.

Finally, there has to be harmony regarding all roles and responsibilities of all related institutions and spheres of government. Most important is to educate and create awareness amongst people regarding water conservation and preservation, according to Minister Mokonyane.

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