

Minister Mchunu calls for prioritised maintenance of infrastructure

In a recent joint Imbizo at King Zwelithini Stadium in Umlazi, Water and Sanitation Minister, Senzo Mchunu, urged local authorities to prioritise the upkeep of water infrastructure to ensure consistent water supply to communities.



Water and Sanitation Minister Senzo Mchunu. Source: x.com

The Imbizo, attended by dignitaries including eThekweni Municipality mayor, Mxolisi Kaunda, and Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs MEC, Bongsi Sithole-Moloi, was a concerted effort by all levels of government to address the persistent water issues in Umlazi and parts of eThekweni.

Mchunu, in his keynote address, emphasised that many of the water-related issues faced by communities could have been averted if local authorities had adhered to fundamental operational and maintenance procedures from the beginning.

“The problems that we have currently, can be resolved and resolved quite urgently if we go back to the basics. Our infrastructure has a lifespan, and we need to take serious care of it before it is too late,” said Mchunu.

“We must not allow our infrastructure to reach its life span. We need to act proactively to ensure that our house is in order. We are where we are because people are too relaxed at times and only react when there are problems.”



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He was encouraged by the resolve shown by Kaunda to solve issues in a short space of time to the benefit of communities and stressed the need for urgency in the provision of water to communities.

“We need to accelerate the pace in which we do things [and] where there are issues, we need to be decisive, and a sense of urgency is needed. We can’t relax when people do not have water. Let us talk, decide, and implement with a speed that is required and ensure that we fulfil our mandate of providing people with adequate water supply,” Mchunu said.

“ eThekweni Municipality is doing the best it can to resolve the current water challenges in the city and appealed to provincial and national government to give them the necessary support in their resolve. ”

“We are regulated by provincial and national spheres of government in our constitutional mandate as the Water Service Authority and we acknowledge our role and responsibility. We cannot do this alone. We need all the support that we can get, with capacity and resources,” the mayor said.

Kaunda also dispelled the notion of mistrust of the quality of water in the city, reiterating that water gets tested twice a week by the city and independent scientists to ensure compliance with quality standards.

He further urged residents to work with the city and pay for services rendered to them so that revenue collected can be reinvested.

“Only those who are not working are exempted from paying for government services and they need to come to us and register as indigent, so that they can be on the indigent programme of the city,” Kaunda explained.

Operation and maintenance contract

Meanwhile, uMngeni-uThukela Water has entered into a short-term operation and maintenance contract with the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality to prioritise wastewater maintenance.

As part of this agreement, Kaunda said uMngeni-uThukela Water will operate wastewater works owned by eThekweni and two pump stations deemed critical and this represents 90% of the effluent that the city treats.

“uMngeni-uThukela Water has been working on priority projects to urgently improve compliance and has since delivered chemicals necessary for treatment in all the wastewater works needing chemicals and is currently spreading the refurbishment of infrastructure.”

eThekweni Metro is supplied from two large water treatment plants - the Durban Heights Water Treatment Plant with a capacity of 615Ml/d and Wiggins Water Treatment Plant with a capacity of 315Ml/d.

Further supply is from Midmar Water Treatment Plant and DV Harris Water Treatment Plant via uMbumbulu pumpstation and Point M.

All these schemes abstract raw water from the Mgeni River System through Midmar, Nagle and Inanda dams.

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