



Parliamentary Caucus

Water and Sanitation

Budget Vote 41

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10:00

We must restore and rebuild the water service authorities to fulfil their constitutional duty of delivering high-quality and easily accessible water and sanitation services to every South African.

Honourable Members, the Department of Water and Sanitation needs to move with speed to restore and rebuild most of our water service authorities in order for them to fulfil their constitutional duty to deliver high-quality and easily accessible water and sanitation services for all South Africans, especially the poorest of the poor in our society, most of whom are in remote rural villages.

We in the African National Congress reiterate our support for the budget vote and the annual performance plans as presented because we are convinced that we are moving in the right direction in restoring and rebuilding the capacity of water service authorities.

- **There is greater urgency to build the capacity and capabilities of the water service authorities to provide water and sanitation services.**

Honourable Chairperson, the three spheres of government being the national, provincial, and local government are regulated and coordinated by various pieces of legislation. The Water Service Act, is one of the pieces of legislation, outlines municipalities' legislative duty as water service authorities to ensure water and sanitation supply in accordance with national norms and standards, which the national department of water and sanitation develops and monitors.

The reports on the Blue and Green Drop Certification Programme implemented by the Department paint a bleak picture of the dysfunctionality of many of our water service authorities across the country. As the ANC, we urge the ministry and department to present the proposed amendments and review of the National Water Act and the Water Services Act, both initiated during the previous 6th administration, in parliament. This will enable the Minister to swiftly intervene to support water service authorities that are facing difficulties in adhering to the legislative norms and standards.

- **Improve the quality of project planning, budgeting, and implementation to avoid water and sanitation grants being returned to the national treasury.**

Honourable Members, early this year, the National Treasury raised serious concerns about underspending on allocated grants by local municipalities (who are also water service authorities). Underspending on allocated budgets indicates that the various water service authorities do not have sufficient technical capabilities to effectively manage the project cycle to ensure the government provides communities with safe, clean drinking water and decent sanitation services.

We believe that by utilising the District Development Model, as encouraged by President Ramaphosa, we will enhance our government's work.

The DDM offers our government an institutional mechanism to coordinate the work of government in terms of planning, budgeting, and implementation of government programmes such as integrated development plans and services such as water and sanitation at the district level. Through the DDM, our government will be able to close the gap in terms of the critical skills needed to execute the government's mandate of providing services to our people. In short, the DDM will improve the quality of project planning, budgeting, and implementation to avoid instances where water service authorities return grants allocated to them to the National Treasury.

- **Developing mechanisms and procedures for water service authorities to guarantee the recruitment, selection, and retention of a skilled workforce.**

Honourable Chairperson, this august house should urge our democratic government to develop mechanisms and procedures for water service authorities to enable them to recruit, select, and retain a skilled workforce. We do understand stiff competition between these water service authorities, the private sector, and metropolitan municipalities, which offer huge sums of money to people with the necessary critical skills.

As parliament, we need to consider the possibility of the democratic government offering incentives for certain scarce and critically skilled personnel, which might encourage them to consider working in water service authorities, especially those in rural areas and in small, poor towns. This will go a long way in recruiting and retaining this skilled workforce, ensuring that our people have safe, clean drinking water and decent sanitation services.

- **Using the Presidential Youth Employment Status to fix minor water (water leaks) and sanitation infrastructure while creating jobs and transferring skills to young people**

The ANC encourages the department to take advantage of the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative's opportunities, as it has received an allocation of R7.4 billion in this medium-term expenditure framework. The Presidential Youth Employment Initiatives allow the government to not only address youth unemployment, but also ensure that we empower young people with the necessary skills for effective participation in our economy.

Similar to the War on Leaks Programme that the department implemented a few years ago, the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative enables the training of young people with the necessary artisan skills to maintain our vital water infrastructure.

- **Interventions to address debts owed to the water boards and the water trading entity**

Honourable Chairperson, the Portfolio Committee bears a significant responsibility not only to guarantee a consistent water supply to communities, but also to maintain a viable and financially stable department. Municipalities and water boards owe the Department's Water Trading Entity close to R30 billion. This will have a negative

impact on the department's ability to deliver on its mandate as obligated in the various pieces of legislation.

As the ANC, we wish to propose the following interventions to address the debts owed to water boards and the water trading entity:

- All structures of our government should launch an aggressive campaign to encourage citizens to pay for the services rendered by government institutions.
- The National Treasury should mandate municipalities to ringfence rates for water and sanitation paid by municipal customers in order for them to pay water boards.
- The National Treasury should reserve a portion of the grants allocated to municipalities to repay the debts owed to water boards and the water trading entity.
- Lastly, there should be consequences for the municipal officials who failed to uphold their fiduciary duty.

Once again, as the ANC, we fully support the budget vote as presented by the Minister for Water and Sanitation.

I thank you