



EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE

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**HON MINISTER LINDIWE SISULU MP
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, WATER AND SANITATION
AND
MS DEBORAH MOCHOTLHI
ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL WATER AND SANITATION**

Dear Minister and Acting Director-General,

**RE: COLLAPSE OF WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES – CHRIS HANI
DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY (EASTERN CAPE)**

I refer to the aforementioned matter as well as to my unanswered correspondence addressed to you dated the 19th of February 2020 and the 6th of May 2020.

I have repeatedly written to you, over a period of a year, highlighting the systematic collapse of water and sanitation services in the Chris Hani District Municipality (CHDH).

Cradock has recently had no water for a period of 5 (five) days. This was apparently as a result of repair work that was done to a broken raw water canal that channels water from the Great Fish River to the Geelbooi storage dams.

It must be noted that we are also currently in the middle of the annual maintenance period for the Orange-Fish tunnel, which renders it basically non-operational. It is accepted practise that all routine maintenance and repairs to supporting infrastructure in areas that receive water from this scheme is carried out during this period.

One such infrastructure project is the canal that supplies Cradock with raw water, which has been broken for several months already. The CHDM was well aware that they had to appoint a service provider to attend to the repairs during this period. Notwithstanding the aforesaid this inept municipality has failed to put the following mitigating factors in place:

- 1) A public information campaign to warn residents to use water sparingly or in the alternative, to warn them that they may sit without water for a couple of days;
- 2) Failing to ensure that storage dams had sufficient water. When the sluices from the Great Fish were closed, the Geelbooi storage dams were not filled to maximum capacity, thus leaving Cradock without sufficient water;
- 3) Failing to fix pipe leaks and bursts. There were a number of massive leaks, as well as pipe bursts, that were not attended to whilst the water from the canal had already been closed. This is unacceptable gross negligence that wasted much needed water during a period that the community could ill afford same;
- 4) The Geelbooi dam is situated virtually next to the Great Fish River. There is no reason why the municipality could not have pumped water directly from the Fish River into the storage dams using an emergency pump powered by a generator.

I visited Cradock on Monday and Tuesday and was shocked to see how desperate people tried to secure water from a handful of water dispensing trucks. When speaking to some of these individuals it was clear that they had no idea as to why the municipality has run out of water.

It is simply mindboggling that this municipality could fail to properly plan for scheduled maintenance work, leaving a town with more than 35000 residents without drinking water.

This at a time when we are encouraging our communities to be as hygienic as possible in a bid to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is therefore my submission that the continued incompetence of the Chris Hani District Municipality, at the very least as far as a water authority is concerned, has now reached a stage where they are actually endangering lives.

It is furthermore my submission that the inability or failure of your department to take action against this inept municipality makes you complicit to their actions/non-actions. If you look at some of my earlier correspondence on the matter you will notice that I have repeatedly requested that you remove the water and sanitation competency from the CHDM.

I once again further place on record that the Waste Water Treatment Plants in both Middelburg (Eastern Cape) and Cradock are still non-functional. This means that vast amounts of raw sewerage are still flowing into the Fish River on daily basis.

Whilst residents in Cradock are no doubt desperate to have running water again, imagine how disgusted they must be, knowing that the very water they consume is contaminated with the raw sewerage from the neighbouring town of Middelburg?

I have over the course of the last year been diligent in bringing all these failures and negligent actions to your attention. Unfortunately, due to your unwillingness to take decisive action against this errant municipality, I have now decided to refer this matter to the Human Rights Commission for their kind investigation and intervention.

I will thus compile a dossier with all my correspondence and hand this over to them by the end of the week.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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**HON. RETIEF ODENDAAL, MPL
DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE MEMBER OF THE EC PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE
SHADOW MEC FOR FINANCE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND AGRARIAN
REFORM
DA CONSTITUENCY LEADER, EC MIDLAND (CRADOCK/MIDDELBURG)**

**CC: Cllr Monde Desha, IYM
Cllr Rika Featherstonehaugh, IYM
Mr Sputnik Ratau, DWA- Director: Strategy, Content and Media Liaison**



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