



EFF STATEMENT ON THE UPCOMING SIX MONTH WATER OUTAGE

Tuesday, 17 September 2024.

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) notes, with outrage, the impending six-month water outage affecting municipalities in the Free State and surrounding regions due to the scheduled maintenance of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) tunnel. This maintenance, starting October 1 and lasting until March 31, while necessary, will leave many communities without a steady supply of water.

In response, Minister of Water and Sanitation, Pemmy Majodina, has called on all affected municipalities to expedite plans to ensure continued water provision. These interventions include upgrading water treatment works and raw water pumps, constructing new reservoirs, and developing groundwater resources through boreholes to improve water access and supply during the shutdown. While these projects are crucial, the EFF is concerned about the readiness of many municipalities, as this is a tall order in such a short space of time.

This begs the question: how can we be facing such a dire water crisis when budgets have been allocated year after year for the maintenance and creation of new water infrastructure? The government has refused to prepare adequately, despite years of warnings. Their orchestrated sabotage will punish the poor, leaving millions without access to basic water services.

The shutdown will result in a staggering shortfall of 80 million cubic meters of water at a time when the summer heat exacerbates the need for water. Minister Majodina, can call for quick fixes, but this is merely a band-aid solution to a problem the ANC has created and ignored.

Gauteng's water supply also relies heavily on the Lesotho Highlands with critical resources such as the Sterkfontein Dam, which supplies the Vaal Dam, drawing directly from the Lesotho Highlands. Rand Water, the body responsible for water supply to various municipalities, is now struggling to meet the growing demands of these regions.

When the EFF took over the Department of Water and Sanitation in the City of Ekurhuleni, despite noting this orchestrated neglect of water infrastructure, we worked to reduce non-revenue water losses to below 30%, and consistently achieved "no-drop" status. However, we still find ourselves with empty reservoirs due to this dependency on another country.

Despite drawing less than our licensed water allocation, we face shortages due to insufficient bulk water supply from Rand Water. Under the EFF government the City of Ekurhuleni has constructed new reservoirs and water towers to boost storage, but these structures remain dry due to the lack of bulk water supply. This is a clear sign of the ANC's failure to invest in alternative water sources or innovative solutions to secure South Africa's most essential resource.

South Africa's water supply system is already on the brink, with nearly half of all systems posing severe health risks due to contamination. Over two-thirds of wastewater treatment works are failing, and 47% of clean, treated water is lost through leaks or mismanagement. Shockingly, 67% of staff in water treatment plants lack formal training, rendering these critical infrastructures even more vulnerable.

This outage exposes the ANC's deliberate negligence and sabotage of our water systems over the years. The ongoing mismanagement, lack of care, and refusal to upgrade our water infrastructure reveal a sinister agenda: the ANC's ultimate plan to privatise water supply, mirroring their disastrous handling of state-owned entities such as Eskom, Transnet, South African Post Office, and SAA. They are now gunning for one of the most basic human rights: access to water.

The very institution tasked with finding solutions to South Africa's water shortages, the Water Research Commission (WRC), has already been infiltrated by foreign interests.

The Gates Foundation has pumped over \$1.4 million into the WRC, embedding itself in our water systems without any rightful stake in the basic human needs of our people. This foreign influence now steers the WRC towards private "partnerships" and profit-driven "business" solutions, prioritising corporate greed over the people's right to water.

This outage is a national emergency, and needs to be treated as such. Access to water is a basic human right, and any failure to safeguard this right during the tunnel shutdown will be seen as a grave injustice to our people. The government needs to act swiftly and effectively to minimise the impact on local communities, particularly the most vulnerable, who are disproportionately affected by service disruptions.

The EFF will remain vigilant throughout this period and will hold both local and national authorities accountable to ensure that the necessary measures are taken to avoid a water crisis in all the affected regions.

ISSUED BY THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS

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