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■ MPUMALANGA

Municipalities face challenges of aging infrastructure and huge water debts

Mpumalanga's permanent delegates to the NCOP today kicked off their Provincial Week activities through comprehensive briefings from different government departments and institutions and they conducted an oversight visit to a water reclamation plant in the Nkangala District Municipality.

The delegation, led by Mpumalanga Provincial Whip in the NCOP, Ms Ethel Nkosi, met with the provincial department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport, the South African National Road Agency (SANRAL) as well as the Nkangala District Municipality and the national Department of Water and Sanitation for an update on the state of municipal infrastructure, water and sanitation and roads upgrade in the province.

The MEC for CoGTA in the province, Mr Mandla Msibi, told the delegation that while most municipalities were making strides in the provision of water and sanitation to communities, the biggest hindrances were aging water infrastructure as well as vandalism. Another concern that was a threat to delivery of water services were mafias that hold projects hostage and demand 30 percent payment for doing no work.

This matter is receiving attention from the national government and the relevant law enforcement agencies are responding to it. The NCOP delegation also heard that Mpumalanga municipalities owed water boards huge amounts of money in water debts, and some have no capacity to service the debts.

Another contributing factor to the challenges of water supply were growing population through migration as well as the effects of climate change. SANRAL reported about progress in the upgrade of the notorious Moloto Road, the R573, in the Thembisile Hani Local Municipality. Tomorrow the delegation will conduct oversight at the construction site.

The Provincial Whip, Ms Nkosi, said all the matters raised and commitments made by the province and national departments will be closely monitored by the NCOP. The Provincial Week is one of the initiatives that the NCOP initiated in order to enhance oversight over provincial and local governments and directly engage local communities on challenges of service delivery.

It also provides an opportunity for the NCOP and the provincial legislatures to jointly engage with citizens on challenges they experience, and provide an opportunity to receive reports from government departments and municipalities on progress made regarding service delivery. The theme for this year's Provincial Week is "Building Viable Provincial and Municipal Infrastructure for Effective Delivery of Services to Communities". (BY PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES)

