



## Gauteng wastes R7.8bn worth of water

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By BALDWIN NDABA

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Johannesburg - Gauteng municipalities have collectively lost 480 980 000 kilolitres of water in the 2011/12 financial year, amounting to a staggering R7.84 billion in financial losses.

This is according to Gauteng MEC for Local Government and Housing Ntombi Mekiwe, who was responding to a question by DA spokesman on local government Fred Nel.

Mekiwe, in her response to the DA's written questions, confirmed that the province was experiencing heavy water losses, saying it was mainly due to ageing infrastructure.

She provided the DA with the breakdown of water losses across all municipalities, with the Joburg, Tshwane and Ekurhuleni metropolitan councils found to be the worst offenders.

"Of great concern is the fact that water losses are on the increase, up from 35.9 percent in 2010/11, with the main culprits being the three metros, recording losses as follows in 2011/12: City of Joburg lost 206 020 000 kilolitres; Ekurhuleni 133 250 000; and Tshwane 77 290 000 kilolitres," Nel said.

The worst losses were experienced by Emfuleni, which lost 42 990 000 kilolitres of its available 82 420 00 kilolitres of water.

A total of 480 980 000 kilolitres of water - the equivalent of 2.5 Hartbeespoort dams or 192 392 Olympic size swimming pools - were lost.

"MEC Mekiwe's reasons point to a deterioration in the managerial capacity of municipalities in Gauteng as well as a deterioration in maintenance programmes.

"These water losses generate major financial losses for municipalities that are already financially stretched.

"The immediate target should be to arrest the increase in losses, and then to bring water losses down to 15 percent of all water purchased in Gauteng within two years."

He said then minister of Water Affairs Lindiwe Hendricks warned in 2009 that Gauteng could start experiencing water shortages from 2013, and by 2025 would experience severe and widespread shortages.

"Water is a scarce resource in South Africa, and with the crisis in acid mine drainage in Gauteng, it's becoming even more expensive to clean and more limited.

"Losses of such an important resource with rising demand due to urbanisation in Gauteng will significantly increase the price of water over the medium and longer term," Nel warned.

He called upon Mekiwe to implement a programme of action to assist municipalities in Gauteng to limit water losses.

"If we fail to do this now, it will have serious consequences in future, not just on the revenue of



A man walks past a burst water pipe on the corner of West and Market streets in Joburg. Picture: Mujahid Safodien

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municipalities, but also in terms of the availability of water as a resource and the price at which it will be supplied," Nel said.

According to a report by the Water Research Commission - which focused on only half the country's municipalities - on average a third of water was lost through leaks or non-payment.

The commission found that Cape Town lost the least amount of water at 25 percent.

The report fingered deteriorating municipal metering and billing systems.

"An example is the City of Joburg, which has been trying for the past few years to rectify their billing system, while several municipalities have also changed or amalgamated their billing systems with disastrous consequences."

Another cause of the losses was deteriorating infrastructure due to ageing and a lack of preventive maintenance.

Gauteng is already using 98 percent of its allocated water and relies on Lesotho for a lot of the water sitting in the Vaal Dam, the Water Resources Group has warned.

How to save water:

- \* Do not leave taps dripping as this can lead to a waste of 30 litres a day.
- \* Do not put anything down the toilet apart from toilet paper.
- \* Fill up a kettle with only the amount of water that you need, as this will help to save water and electricity.
- \* A washing machine uses 100 litres of water, so be sure to wash a full load of clothes every time to reduce water usage.
- \* Storing water in the fridge instead of running a tap to get colder water each time saves water.
- \* Don't leave the water running when brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your hands.
- \* Water your plants in the evenings when temperatures are lowest.
- \* Bath your young children together.

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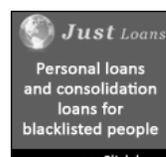
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### Anakin Sky-Vader

Another product you can't use because somewhere up the line someone else is WASTING it due to incompetence. Employ more people to fix the infrastructure (hello that's job creation) and start putting water-flow sensors on critical main junction points.

### nickn4m3

The Nats must have had a fountain of youth, because infrastructure only seems to age in the New South Africa.

### Pravda Che

now here is a chance for the gangsters that are trying to run the country to kill two birds with one stone.  
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