

TO: All Media

EMBARGO: For immediate release

DATE: 22 May 2024

Water and Sanitation Minister Donates Houses in Kgubetswana Township

In a celebratory event held on Tuesday, 21 May 2024, the Minister of Water and Sanitation, Mr Senzo Mchunu, donated 40 houses, through the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA), to beneficiary families living in Kgubetswana Township in Clarens, Free State.

The houses were originally built by TCTA, as accommodation for out-of-town staff members working on the construction of the Ash River Oufall, during the implementation of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project - Phase 1 (LHWP-1).

The organisation started leasing out the houses to residents of Kgubetswana, with the intention of selling them to occupying residents at a discounted price. CEO of TCTA, Percy Sechemane, said that TCTA struggled to sell the houses to the resident occupants over the last 28 years, due to affordability issues, as most of the occupants were either elderly or unemployed.

Minister Mchunu, in emphasising government's commitment to ensuring the upliftment of communities said; "The donation of these houses demonstrates our commitment to better the lives of citizens, wherever we can. Through the TCTA, we will continue to develop initiatives that bring dignity and progress to our communities".

The Minister also advised the Executive Mayor of Dihlabeng, Tseki James Tseki, who was in attendance, to emulate the superior standard of the houses handed over to the beneficiaries in future community housing projects of the municipality. The houses have three bedrooms, lounge, kitchen and full bathroom, complete with full fencing and a carport. "This quality and the size of houses is the best, it is what we should aspire to produce, and I would have loved to do more, but now that responsibility is in the hands of the Mayor. The standard has been set"; said the Minister.

The houses were initially valued between R65 000 and R85 000, however, a recent valuation process, in preparation for the transfer of ownership to the beneficiaries of the donated houses, indicated that the current value of the houses was between R380 000 and R640 000. "The total value of the properties being donated to the 39 families and an NGO servicing persons living with disabilities is R16 720 000"; said Minister Mchunu. The property sizes range from 208m² to 302m².

Mr Sechemane said that the process of property transfer is currently being finalised at the Deeds Office and all new owners will be receiving their title deeds in the next six weeks.

“It is believed that such a massive transfer of property ownership to these families, and the escalation of the property value to multiple times the original value will make a significant contribution in boosting the property values in the area;” said Sechemane. He also emphasised that, though the beneficiaries will not be allowed to sell, transfer, donate nor encumber the houses for a period of ten years from the date of donation, the houses represent a turning point in the new owner’s financial prospects.

Mr Sonwabo Morgan Ngubane, a beneficiary and local community leader expressed the profound gratitude of the beneficiaries in being granted the opportunity to own their homes.

“Today, we made history, we have been working diligently with TCTA, over the years, helping to resolve all the outstanding issues to ensure that the organisation can help us reach this day”; said Ngubane.

The hand-over of the houses to new owners was preceded by an engagement, led by Minister Mchunu, with TCTA and representatives from Free State Province municipalities and water bodies, on water and sanitation services in the province. Minister Mchunu implored municipal leadership in the province to do all they can to overcome any challenges hindering the provision of water and sanitation services in the areas they lead.

During the engagement, TCTA assured municipal representatives that the Lesotho Highlands Tunnel closure, from October 2024 to March 2025, for maintenance, will not adversely affect water provision in both the Free State and Gauteng provinces.

“We continue to work with the DWS provincial office in Free State and local municipalities to explain all the processes we are following to ensure that water provision will continue uninterrupted during the six months period of maintenance”, said Sechemane.

TCTA is a state-owned entity under the Department of Water and Sanitation, responsible for financing and implementing bulk raw water infrastructure in South Africa, including the South African portion of the LHWP.

The LHWP is a multi-phased initiative established by a 1986 treaty between the governments of Lesotho and South Africa. Designed to provide water to South Africa’s Gauteng province and generate hydroelectricity for Lesotho, the project involves constructing a series of dams to harness the waters of the Senqu/Orange River in Lesotho’s highlands, for the mutual benefit of both countries. Phase I of the project was completed in 2003 and inaugurated in 2004, with Phase II currently underway. It is expected to be completed by 2028 and is envisaged to yield a capacity of 14 cubic metres per second to the Vaal River System.

--Ends--

For more information from TCTA, please contact Mr Luzamo Sandlana on 079 071 9368/ LSandlana@tcta.co.za or Ms Wanda Mkutshulwa on 082 908 2692/ wmkutshulwa@tcta.co.za

For further information from DWS, contact Kamogelo Mogotsi, Spokesperson for the Ministry on 076 523 0085 or Wisane Mavasa, Spokesperson for the Department of Water and Sanitation on 060 561 8935.