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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER: 2016/740**

**Mr M G P Lekota (Cope) to ask the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.**

1. Whether he and senior members of his department travelled to Isithebe in KwaZulu-Natal at an early stage to defuse the crisis which flared up there and which led over several days to (a) the burning and looting of many factories, (b) billions of rand of loss in production, (c) millions of rand of loss to workers who had no work to go to and (d) further loss of investor confidence; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what did he and his senior officials do to calm the situation and address the deep-seated grievances of the surrounding communities regarding service delivery failures and alleged nepotism;
2. whether his department has a policy to act proactively and decisively in respect of crisis situations at local government level before the protests get out of hand and the protesters resort to arson, vandalism and obstruction of traffic; if not, why not; if so, what are the (a) relevant details and (b) outcomes thereof? NW858E

**REPLY**

(1) In line with a cooperative governance approach, indeed the concerns in Isithebe area were attended to at an early stage through the intervention of provincial government leadership and by engaging with business, communities and other stakeholders in order to find solutions to the challenges. It was through these engagements it was established that interventions to the challenges needed a multi-sectoral approach. To this end, it was agreed that interventions should focus, amongst other, on the need to expedite service delivery. Mass prayers and community dialogue were facilitated to emphasize the need for constructive engagement, peaceful protests, respect for rights and properties of others as well as education on rights to recourse as well as poverty alleviation programmes.

To date, Lower Tugela Bulk Water Supply for the area was launched on 22 March 2016 as one of the service delivery responses which also present the people of Isithebe with jobs as well as skills development opportunities. A prayer meeting for peace and stability in Isithebe was held 31 March 2016. Other activities are planned to take place in the area.

(2) In 2014, government adopted the Local Government Back to Basics Strategy as a response to challenging situations at local government level. Recognising the need for inter-sphere collaboration, the strategy is implemented and monitored collaboratively, with the Department of Cooperative Governance taking the lead in the coordination of the following five pillars of the strategy:

(i) put people and their concerns first and ensure constant contact with communities through effective public participation platforms;

(ii) create conditions for decent living by consistently delivering municipal services of the right quality and standard;

(iii) demonstration of good governance and administration;

(iv) ensuring sound financial management and accounting; and

(v) building and maintaining sound institutional and administrative capabilities, administered and managed by dedicated and skilled personnel at all levels.

Since the strategy was implemented, the department’s monitoring of municipalities has shown signs of municipal performance improvement in the KZN Province. The Department also established Back to Basic teams clustered in Provinces to provide oversight and rapid response.