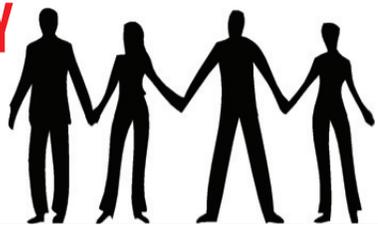




**FIGHTING POVERTY
KEY TO SECURING
HUMAN RIGHTS**

Feature Page 5



**SWITCH OFF:
HELP SAVE
THE PLANET**

News Page 2



**THINK BIG:
ZWELI TELLS
TRADERS**

News Page 2

Water safe to drink

KEN MCHUNU

ETHEKWINI Water and Sanitation Head, Neil MacLeod, has assured residents that the City's drinking water is 100%.

This follows the recent outbreak of cholera in neighbouring provinces, which sparked anxiety among some Durban residents that the virus could contaminate our water.

"The Municipality has always ensured it complies with the South African National Standards for drinking water.

"We ensure 100% compliance and then go the extra mile," MacLeod said.

"From February 2008 to the end of January this year, we sampled 184 potable water sites across eThekweni. This generated 3 500 samples which led to 28 318 analyses."

Technology

He said the Municipality used the latest available technology and the most specific tests.

"We also addressed about 6 700 seepage and consumer problems," said MacLeod.

"We have facilities across the Municipal area where we add chlorine to the water to keep it safe and free of harmful organisms that could cause sicknesses like diarrhoea and cholera.

"Residents can be sure that the water they drink from the tap is safe."

MacLeod urged residents to use water sparingly as it was a "scarce resource". He said the cost of building new dams remained very high.

"There is always a need for customers to use water carefully."

He urged residents to report leaks and illegal water connections by emailing eservices@dmus.durban.gov.za or by calling the tollfree line, 080 131 3013.

The department can also be reached on the SMS/Mxit number, 083 707 3013.

For information on beaches, water quality and tides, visit <http://beaches.durban.gov.za> or call 080 131 3013 tollfree.

mchunuk@durban.gov.za

Pensioners' rebates: 'no cause for alarm'



SIGN OF THE TIMES: IEC Electoral Officer for eThekweni, Sipho Cele, and Regional Supervisor, Godfrey Naidoo, with pledges by political parties

Picture: THEMBA KHUMALO

Parties promise to keep it fair

THEMBA KHUMALO

POLITICAL parties contesting the elections in Durban next month have committed themselves to free and fair elections by signing the Electoral Code of Conduct at the City Hall.

Leaders last Friday pledged to make sure their parties adhered to the spirit of free

and fair electioneering, in line with the code.

The ANC's eThekweni Region Chairman, John Mchunu, said: "We trust the signing of the code will help us protect the right of all parties to campaign freely.

"We will do our best to ensure peaceful, free and fair election," he said.

John Steenhuisen, representing the Democratic Alliance (DA), said: "We hope the pledge is carried forth to all party structures.

"Free and fair elections mean that all parties are able to campaign freely and free of intimidation in all areas," he said.

Continued on Page 2

Processing of valuation objections now complete

THEMBA NYATHIKAZI and ROMITA HANUMAN

THE Municipality has dismissed speculation that there is anything sinister about its request for monthly income details on this year's rates rebate form for pensioners and has given the assurance that it is not compulsory to disclose this information.

This follows suggestions by ratepayers' groups and the Democratic Alliance that the City was considering using this information to reduce rates rebates for pensioners who earned more than a certain amount.

"The Municipality is not looking at ways to decrease benefits for pensioners, but is simply collating information that will assist in knowing the spread of people across income brackets in our region," said City Manager Michael Sutcliffe.

Krish Kumar, the Deputy City Manager: Treasury, said: "It is not true that the City wants to implement a maximum income threshold for rebate beneficiaries, meaning that the pensioners who earned more than the threshold would not qualify. Questions over income were primarily designed to assess who the beneficiaries of the rebates were, and not to exclude anyone."

Kumar said pensioners

were not compelled to complete the section on income, but it was on the form at the request of the National Government which had asked the Municipality to survey who benefits from services such as rebates and subsidies.

Turning to objections to the latest property valuations, Kumar said the Treasury had now processed all the objections and would send out letters to objectors. The objectors will only see change in valuation on their bills in April or May. However, the changes would be backdated to 1 July 2008.

"As the objections have now been finalised, and ratepayers can no longer pay on the basis of what they deem to be fair value. They have to pay on the basis of the value that emanated from the objection process," Kumar said.

He said the City had received some appeals and these cases were being dealt with at Provincial Government level. "They will now set up the Independent Appeals Board to deal with outstanding issues.

"Be assured that we will do everything possible to expedite the process.

"The Municipality thanks objectors for their patience and understanding in this process which was done for the first time," Kumar said.

nyathikazi@durban.gov.za
hanumanR@durban.gov.za

METRO REPORTERS

IF YOU are the owner of a bed and breakfast establishment in eThekweni, you'll be glad to know that you are in line for a rates rebate of up to 50%.

This effectively means that your rates will be that of a residential property.

Previously, bed and breakfasts and guesthouses were rated in the commercial category if more than a third of a residential property was used for this purpose. All will

in future be categorised as commercial, but with generous rebates.

To qualify for a rebate, the owner of the property must live there permanently.

If it is owned by a company, close corporation or trust, at least one member or director must live permanently on the property. This is subject to

any of the members of such companies, close corporations and trusts not being a member of another company, close corporation or trust that owns a B&B or guest house.

The establishment must be registered with a properly constituted organisation and must offer accommodation

and dining facilities only to registered guests. Those that also offer conference, spa and similar facilities will not qualify.

A business license in terms of the accommodation establishment by-laws must accompany the application. This will need to be certified by the member association.

Good news for B&Bs

Where up to four bedrooms are available, a 50% rebate will apply. Where between five to 10 bedrooms are available, a 25% rebate will apply.

Kerry Nieuwoudt, owner of Northcrest Manor Bed and Breakfast, was ecstatic at the rates rebate. "This is great. It is fantastic that we are going to receive this.

"I am looking forward to the World Cup. It's going to be great because this industry will be alive."