



Ministerial Statement
by
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Minister of Public Works

Commissioning of East End Water Facilities

Friday, July 14th, 2023

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda with an overview of the status of the East End Water and Wastewater Infrastructure project.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues may recall in December 2022 I provided this House with an update regarding the Bermuda Land Development Company (BLDC) Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Project. This \$30,000,000.00 initiative is designed to enhance the lives of our citizens by rejuvenating old and creating new water systems that would properly treat sewage waste and provide potable (drinking) water to the parish of St. George's.

Mr. Speaker, this work is the result of the Strategy for Sustainable Water and Wastewater Servicing – St. George's Parish – a summary report of which was produced in February 2018 by water consultants Associated Engineering International Limited. All of the key stakeholders including the Corporation of St. George's have been consulted over this period.

Water and wastewater services in the Parish are currently provided by the Bermuda Government, the Bermuda Land Development Company (BLDC) and the Corporation of St. George's through publicly owned infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, individual property owners operate their own private systems - rainwater collection, storage and treatment, cesspits and septic systems.

Only a limited number of customers receive the services via public infrastructure. The remaining are self-served through their own private systems.

Mr. Speaker, the provision of water and wastewater services in the Parish has experienced challenges for a number of reasons:

- a. **Less reliable rainfall patterns** - Rainfall is the principal source of fresh water collected through traditional roof or land catchments. Widespread potable water

shortages during an extended period of low rainfall were experienced in 2005, 2009, 2015 and 2017.

b. **Insufficient water treatment capacity** - Treated water is used as backup via truckers during dry periods. However, the existing capacity of the treatment facilities was inadequate, resulting in shortages of potable water during extended drought periods.

c. **Bathing water quality** - Raw wastewater is pumped to the reef area northwest of St Georges Island and beach closures continue to occur. A small wastewater treatment facility on St. David's Island provided service to buildings in Southside only. Other discharges are impacting quality of the local harbour, and the reef and ocean around the island.

d. **Cross contamination from freshwater lens** - The remainder of buildings in the Parish are connected to cesspits and septic systems. The lack of wastewater treatment, including the use of cesspits, continues to degrade the quality of the environment including the freshwater lens.

e. **Aging and deteriorating infrastructure** - Much of the publicly owned infrastructure was in poor to very poor condition and presents a significant risk for the stakeholders.

f. **Unknown demand for services** - Arising from new hotel development and cruise ship needs;

g. **Budget constraints** - Many customers were not charged for services provided and recovery of costs is not adequate. Management, operation and maintenance of the infrastructure was underfunded (by successive administrations) and maintenance work was mostly performed on an as-needed basis at best.

Mr. Speaker, these issues highlighted more general concerns around effective management and regulation of the water sector in the Parish and the public awareness gap regarding water and wastewater services. In turn this highlighted the need for a robust strategy that takes into consideration each of these challenges.

Mr. Speaker, a vision for water and wastewater servicing was developed early in the study to guide decision making through the project. It highlights the long-term aspiration for the provision of services and provided direction for all stakeholders.

It means that while this strategy is high level it needed to consider long term goals, and provide environmentally, socially and economically sustainable plans - while considering the central role of customers and other stakeholders associated with service provision.

Mr. Speaker, though the BLDC project has not met the completion deadline within the first quarter of this year (2023), I am proud to say that this initiative continues to make steady progress towards 100% operation which is expected before the end of the summer.

The primary reason for the delay is yet again **Mr. Speaker** the on-going supply chain and delivery issues for specialized equipment.

Mr. Speaker, additionally the other contributing factor was that this year has been very wet, especially over the last few months which made it difficult for contractors to complete equipment installations per the initial schedule.

Despite the delay, I am pleased to report that we are on budget and beginning the commissioning stage and over the coming weeks various sections of the equipment will be energized and tested before bringing them fully on-line. This includes the distribution of Potable (drinking) water as well as the collection and treatment of sewage. The new Reverse Osmosis plant is already operational and ready to supply potable water to St. Georges in the coming weeks.

Mr. Speaker, the Southside infrastructure upgrades include:

- All new potable water mainlines
- New sewage collection connectivity to the Town of St. George's and the Hotels.
- New Reverse Osmosis plant.
- New Wastewater treatment facility.
- Ability to interconnect Southside reservoirs resulting in enhanced storage capacity.
- New monitoring systems for critical equipment.

In addition to the direct benefits it affords the ability for the Ministry's Water Section to establish a new water truckers' outlet in Southside. The required equipment for this new operation has been ordered and will be installed and made operational before the end of this calendar year.

Mr Speaker last and by no means least, the project will enable a major Environmental benefit for Bermuda. For the first time St. George's inclusive of their hotels will see all sewage redirected to Southside where it will be treated via a new wastewater treatment facility and no longer will there be a need to pump it overboard. This year we will be able to close the Tobacco Bay sewage outfall. This is a huge accomplishment that will contribute significantly to enhancing our marine environment.

We have completed all main line trenching totalling approximately 17 miles of pipe. Note that each trench has 3 or 4 pipes. The only remaining works are the final connections to the new pump and lift stations. All remaining connections are being completed as the lift or pump stations are commissioned.

There are 3 HDPE pipes for Potable water, waste/ sewage, and reclaimed water plus 1 conduit pipe for communications.

We have purchased:

- 1 Sewage Treatment Plant
- 1 Reverse Osmosis Plant with capacity to produce 200k gallons of water per day.
- 6 Potable water Pumping Stations, each station contains 2 pumps and a full control system.
- 2 Sewage stations and an additional 7 intermediate lift stations.
- 20 miles of HDPE Pipe of various sizes inclusive of more than 20 control valves.
- 1 SCATOR monitoring system which enables remote monitoring and control for Potable water and sewage system. The system shows the flows, status of pumps and enables remote control to open and close valves. All the systems are connected through a closed fibre network.

Within the last year the project expenditure for material associated with the water, sewage pumps and controls were over \$3 million dollars. This does not include the actual sewage processing plant (\$3.5 million) or the Reverse Osmosis water production plant (we decided to do a supply contract so we did not pay for the equipment but we have spent \$250k in providing the building).

Project expenditure to date is \$27 million of the \$30million budget. Remaining balance to be spent is final connections, commissioning, and contractor retentions.

Mr. Speaker, the work being done in the parish of St. George's will provide a much more reliable and quality of water to the people and businesses of the parish. It will also serve as a template for work that needs to be done in this area in other parts of the island. That infrastructure is also in need of repair and replacement. The lessons learned through this exercise will provide a clear guide to improving the process as we move forward.

I would like to thank the people of St. George's for their patience during this lengthy exercise.

Mr. Speaker, outlined in the government's 2017 platform were a number of commitments made that were designed to enhance the lives of our citizens. As I have said before, this Administration believes in protecting our residents by investing in our water and wastewater infrastructure as without this we could not ensure a healthy population nor a healthy environment.

Mr. Speaker, as always I will keep this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda informed as we progress.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker!**