

Help from Canada

Talk of the Town
20 June 2019



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: On its latest mission to Ndlambe, the BigM project team from Ottawa, Canada is assisting Ndlambe and several other Eastern Cape municipalities to deal with climate change and complete an accurate asset management system. From left are program and project manager Michael Ostrom, strategic programs and projects officer Andy Reside, LED manager and coordinator of BigM for Ndlambe Qhawe Mampane, overall BigM project manager from Ottawa Charmain Forgie, Ndlambe mayor Phindile Faxi, Ndlambe infrastructure director Nolithando Vithi and community protection services deputy director Fanie Fouche

Picture: ROB KNOWLES

BigM initiative assists with climate change

ROB KNOWLES

Ndlambe Municipality has enthusiastically welcomed Canadian support to tackle green issues like waste management and climate change.

BigM (Building Inclusive Green Municipalities) is an initiative of the Canadian government to help stimulate growth and modernise infrastructure in the Eastern Cape Province. From the South African side, Salga (South African Local Government Association) is running the BigM project here and in several other municipalities in the province to educate people of the importance of recycling as well as finding solutions to underground infrastructural problems.

The project began in 2017 and is ongoing. The project is conducted in a series of missions by the Canadians to Ndlambe where certain predetermined milestones are reached.

BigM project leader from Ottawa, Charmain Forgie, said her team's role was to help build capacity to minimise the effects of climate change and to resolve infrastructural problems by creating a complete asset register, specifically regarding underground assets such as sewage and water pipes.

It seems that all parties including the mayor and the municipal manager are willing to be open and honest about the problems they have encountered in the past and welcome our advice," she said.

Ndlambe mayor Phindile Faxi said he was impressed with the assistance from the Canadians, as what they were doing was of great importance.

The asset management side, particularly the underground assets, will help our disadvantaged people greatly," Faxi said.

The Canadian team reviewed the existing asset management policy and conducted a survey to ascertain the level of knowledge of climate change among municipal staff. A new draft policy on climate change has been produced that was communicated and discussed among all municipal staff.

The BigM project team has also met with several private companies and organisations, including I-Wars (Integrated Waste and Management Services) and the local business forum to hammer out issues on recycling and asset management.

In the next mission, due to take place in the fourth quarter of 2019, the team anticipates holding public education programmes on recycling and climate change. It will also pair a local school and one from Ottawa and exploring the creation of a coalition or advisory on recycling and climate change along with a mentorship programme.

Salga's BigM project manager, Iebogo Matlou is overseeing the project to increase awareness of climate change and its effect on the people of the area.

"We need to go back and ask how did we manage to do some of these things in the past, even before climate change and the idea of recycling became issues," said Matlou.

"It starts with our children who understand better than us how climate change and wasting our natural resources will affect them in the future."

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