



DROUGHT CHARGE SHOULD BE PAID BY THE CITY, NOT THE VICTIMS

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The Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry says there is no justification for the drought charge the City Council wants to introduce to compensate for the loss in revenue from water saving and lower sales.

In a letter of objection to the new fee I've said the City should find ways to reduce its costs just as any private sector company would do in these circumstances.

We reject the idea that some form of surcharge on water users would be appropriate to cover the revenue shortfall. You cannot punish customers for buying less of what the City cannot supply anyway. The water problem is the result of poor Council planning and it is the Council that must pay.

The City regarded the sale of water as a trading operation to produce revenue. For ten successive years, water tariff increases had been well above the inflation rate and in four of those years the increases had been more than double the CPI.

We further reject the idea of basing an extra fee on the valuation of property. Many property owners have gone to great lengths to save water. They have installed well points, grey water systems and bought tanks to capture rain water. They are deserving of our gratitude for their water savings, at their own cost, will mean more water will be available for others. They should be rewarded.

I have warned the Council that it should brace itself for lower water sales and lower revenue in the future for commerce and industry has made considerable investments in water capturing and water saving facilities and they will be eager to secure returns on these investments in the future.

The situation is similar to the electricity crisis where high tariffs had forced consumers to use power more efficiently and to look for alternatives.

In these circumstances a new long-term approach to the distribution and sale of water in urban areas is required. We urge the City Council to take the lead and set up a team of officials and experts from the academic world and the private sector to devise a plan for the efficient and productive use of water, complete with targets for the recycling of an increasing percentage of water as well as a road map for the increasing use of desalination.



CAPE CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

We see this as an opportunity for the City to take the lead and to show the country what can be achieved with imagination, good long-term planning and the use of improving technology.

Janine Myburgh

President of the Cape Chamber

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