

NERSA ORAL SUBMISSION VIA MSTEAMS MONDAY JANUARY 17

MY NAME IS LYDIA PETERSEN AND I AM A FAITH LEADER WITH THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN FAITH COMMUNITIES ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE. I LIVE IN MITCHELL'S PLAIN AND MY ACTIVISM STRETCHES ACROSS MITCHELL'S PLAIN AND BEYOND.

TO ANSWER THE QUESTION OF SHOULD YOU ALLOW THE 20.5% TARIFF INCREASE ASKED BY ESKOM?

THE ANSWER IS A RESPECTFUL RESOUNDING NO!

ALLOW ME TO SHARE WITH YOU THE MANY OPINIONS OF MANY IN POOR AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES WHO COULD NOT BE HERE ON THIS PLATFORM TODAY. NOT BY CHOICE, BUT BECAUSE THEIR FINANCIAL SITUATION DOES NOT ALLOW THEM ACCESS TO A SMART PHONE OR DATA.

THERE ARE SO MANY REASONS THAT SUPPORT OUR CALL FOR NO INCREASE, BUT I WILL DRAW ATTENTION TO THE MOST OBVIOUS AND WHAT DEVESTATING IMPACT IT WILL HAVE ON OUR VULNERABLE SOCIETY.

EVERY YEAR WE ARE DRAWN TO THIS PLATFORM TO VOICE OUR DISPLEASURE IN TERMS OF TARIFF INCREASES, WHICH IS WAY ABOVE WHAT WE CAN AFFORD. MANY HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVE SOCIAL GRANTS AND UNEMPLOYMENT IS RIFE. ON MANY STREET CORNERS YOU WILL FIND. THE RESULT OF UNEMPLOYMENT YOUTH, FATHERS AND MANY MORE. IT IS A CONTINUOUS STRUGGLE TO MAKE ENDS MEET. A SOCIAL GRANT CANNOT FEED AN ENTIRE FAMILY WITH LITTLE OR NO MONEY LEFT FOR ELECTRICITY AND IN SOME HOMES ELECTRICITY IS DEEMED A LUXURY TO HAVE.

AS IT IS NOW, A R100 WILL GET YOU APPROXIMATELY 30KWH, THATS IF YOURE LUCKY. LUCKY IN THE SENSE THAT, SHOULD YOU OWE THE MUNICIPALITIES ANYTHING, YOUR DEBT IS COLLECTED VIA THIS METHOD. WHO DOES NOT OWE THE CITY IN THIS STATE OF OUR ECONOMY?. MANY HOUSEHOLDS DO NOT RECEIVE FREE BASIC ELECTRICITY, AS THE MUNICIPALITIES HAS A STRICT QUALIFYING CRITERIA. SO HOW DO WE COPE? WE ARE FORCED TO RESORT TO UNSAFE COOKING METHODS OR TO ELECTRIFY HOMES. THIS SYSTEM HAS FORCED MANY TO ACTS OF CRIMINALITY IN ORDER TO SURVIVE.

MANY ASKS HOW DOES ESKOM CALCULATE TO ARRIVE AT THESE PROPOSED TARIFF INCREASES? FOR YEARS OF MISMANAGEMENT AND CORRUPTION, ARE WE TO PAY FOR THAT? FOR THE ASSUMPTION AND PROJECTION OF SALES, IS IT OUR FAULT THAT THEY HAVE AN UNBALANCED FINANCIAL SHEET? ARE WE THE SCAPEGOATS FOR THE BILLIONS OF RANDS LOST IN REVENUE? WE CANNOT AFFORD THE EXORBITANT ELECTRICITY COSTS AS IT IS NOW, AN INCREASE WILL CRIPPLE US!

THE PRICING METHODOLOGY IS NOT UNDERSTOOD BY THE POOR AND WORKING CLASS, HONORABLE COMMITTEE. TO US, WE DO NOT KNOW ABOUT THE REGULATORY CLEARING ACCOUNT AND ITS PURPOSE. WE DO NOT KNOW THAT ESKOM CLAWS BACK BILLIONS VIA THIS BACK DOOR. WE DO NOT KNOW THAT THEY ARE ASKING FOR MONEY WHICH THEY FEEL IS OWED TO THEM. IS IT FAIR? IS IT JUST? WE DO NOT KNOW THAT R69B WAS GIVEN AS A GOVERNMENT BAILOUT, OF WHICH ESKOM RECEIVED SOME, BUT IS STILL CLAIMING THE REST. YOUR COURT BATTLES ATTEST TO THAT. WE DO NOT KNOW OR UNDERSTAND THE CARBON TAX LEVY COMING INTO EFFECT SOON. WE ARE TOO BUSY MAKING RANDS AND CENTS OF THE VERY LITTLE THAT WE HAVE.

HONORABLE COMMITTEE, IT IS MORALLY WRONG TO SUBJECT THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED TO THIS. MANY SOCIAL ISSUES RUN RAMPANT IN COMMUNITIES AND THIS PROPOSED TARIFF INCREASE WILL PERPETUATE THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF POVERTY IN OUR SOCIETY. WE CANNOT BE HELD LIABLE FOR MISMANAGEMENT AND INCOMPETENCE, NOR ANYTHING THAT HAPPENED AT THAT UTILITY. FOR YEARS THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN DRAGGING ITS FEET TO UNLOCK RENEWABLE ENERGY, NOTABLY THE DEPARTMENT OF MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY. THAT COULD MEAN A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE ELECTRICITY GRID, AS STATISTICS HAS SHOWN AT A LESSER COST. IN TURN IT WILL BENEFIT THOSE THAT FIND THEMSELVES BELOW THE BREADLINE, UNABLE TO AFFORD EVEN THE CURRENT COST, LET ALONE AN INCREASE OF 20.5%.

I AM BEFORE YOU TODAY, AS AN ACTIVIST, A CONCERNED CITIZEN. I SEE THE DAILY STRUGGLES, THE HOPELESSNESS, THE DESPAIR. I ENVISAGE WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN INCREASE WOULD DO. THE SYSTEM HAS ROBBED US , STRIPPED US OF OUR DIGNITY. WE ARE A PEOPLE OF CONTINUED STRUGGLES. AN INCREASE WILL BE DEVESTATING.

PLEASE!!! ALLOW YOUR MORAL COMPASS TO DIRECT YOU TO A DECISION THAT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO MANY.