



MEDIA STATEMENT

U.P.P.A. CONDEMNS FAILURE OF POLITICAL OVERSIGHT IN TSHWANE: DEMANDS URGENT, INDEPENDENT, CITY-WIDE WATER QUALITY TESTING

23 OCTOBER 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The United Progressive People Alliance (U.P.P.A.) condemns the apparent breakdown in oversight, risk management and public communication exposed by the water contamination crisis in Tshwane. We demand urgent, independent and comprehensive water quality testing across the entire metropolitan municipality to establish the true extent of the problem and determine whether other communities are unknowingly exposed to unsafe water.

No resident should have to wonder whether the water coming out of their tap will make their family sick.

The crisis in Bronkhorstspuit is a serious warning that cannot be dismissed as an isolated operational mishap. The Department of Water and Sanitation found that the Bronkhorstspuit Water Treatment Works supplied unchlorinated water between 24 September and 14 October 2026 because

of chlorine-supply difficulties. Water samples subsequently revealed extremely high levels of E. coli and other bacterial indicators of contamination. Between 7 and 18 October, 408 gastrointestinal illness cases were reported in affected communities, with young children among those most affected.

These are not minor administrative inconveniences. They are matters of public health, human dignity and municipal accountability.

U.P.P.A. is deeply concerned that such a serious breakdown in water treatment could persist for weeks without residents receiving timely warnings about the danger.

The critical question is not only why the chlorine supply failed. It is why the systems responsible for detecting, escalating and responding to that failure did not adequately protect the public before residents were exposed to potential harm.

Political oversight exists to ensure that municipal departments perform their duties, public resources are properly managed, operational risks are escalated and residents receive essential services safely and reliably.

When water-treatment processes fail, the consequences extend beyond the treatment plant. They raise fundamental questions about executive supervision, departmental accountability, procurement contingency planning, water-quality monitoring and the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms to the political leadership.

The Mayor has acknowledged shortcomings in the escalation of the chlorine-supply problem and ordered an investigation. U.P.P.A. welcomes any genuine effort to establish the facts, but an internal investigation alone cannot replace transparent, independent scrutiny and a comprehensive assessment of water safety across Tshwane.

Residents deserve answers supported by evidence, not assurances unsupported by published laboratory results.

U.P.P.A. calls on the City of Tshwane, the Department of Water and Sanitation and the relevant public health authorities to urgently implement a coordinated, independently verified water-testing programme covering all regions of Tshwane.

The programme must include:

1. Testing across all seven Tshwane regions. Samples must be collected from treatment plants, reservoirs, distribution networks and representative household taps, including informal settlements, townships, established suburbs and communities at the metropolitan boundaries.
2. Comprehensive laboratory analysis. Testing must include E. coli, total coliforms and other relevant microbiological indicators, alongside appropriate chemical and physical water-quality parameters. Testing must be guided by the applicable drinking-water standards and the specific risks identified in each supply system.
3. Independent verification. The programme must involve suitably accredited laboratories and independent technical oversight, with transparent sampling procedures and documented chain of custody to protect the credibility of the results.
4. Immediate publication of results. Residents must be informed of which areas have been tested, when samples were collected, what contaminants were detected, whether results comply with applicable standards and what corrective measures are required.
5. Immediate warnings and remedial action. Where results indicate unsafe water, the City must promptly notify affected communities, provide adequate alternative drinking water and issue clear, area-specific instructions until safety is independently verified.
6. A public implementation timetable. The City must publish the testing schedule, responsible institutions, reporting deadlines and a clear process for communicating results to residents and the Tshwane City Council.
7. A full accountability investigation. The investigation must establish how the chlorine-supply interruption occurred, why the risk was not

escalated and communicated timeously, whether contingency measures were adequate, and which officials or decision-makers failed to fulfil their responsibilities. Any disciplinary or other action must follow verified findings and due process.

The City must stop relying on isolated samples or assurances about individual facilities as a substitute for a metropolitan assessment. A credible city-wide testing programme is necessary to identify other risks, establish a reliable picture of water quality and restore public confidence through evidence.

Water safety cannot be determined by political statements, press conferences or promises to investigate. It must be demonstrated through independent laboratory results and consistent compliance with drinking-water standards.

U.P.P.A. calls on the Executive Mayor, the Mayoral Committee Member responsible for water and sanitation (Utility Services), the City Manager and the relevant council oversight structures to account publicly for the failures exposed by this incident.

The City Council must be provided with a detailed report on the chlorine-supply interruption, the response timeline, public-warning procedures, water-testing arrangements and the measures being implemented to prevent a recurrence.

The public must also be informed of the safeguards in place to ensure that essential treatment chemicals remain available, that supply disruptions are escalated immediately and that no treatment facility continues operating in a manner that places residents at unacceptable risk.

Where negligence or misconduct is established, appropriate consequences must follow. Accountability must be based on evidence, apply to every responsible level and not be limited to convenient scapegoats.

The people of Tshwane pay for municipal services and have a right to expect that water supplied for human consumption meets the required

safety standards. Poor households, informal settlements, pensioners and families with young children cannot reasonably be expected to absorb the cost and danger of failures in systems they do not control.

U.P.P.A. calls for a transparent, accountable and preventative approach to water management, one that identifies risks before they become public health emergencies, communicates honestly with residents and acts decisively when standards are breached.

We will not accept a situation in which communities are left to discover the dangers of their water supply only after illness has spread.

The people of Tshwane deserve safe water, transparent government and a municipality that protects their lives rather than leaving them exposed to preventable risks.

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