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Icebergs could save Cape Town

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MARINE salvage expert, Nick Sloane, says the harvesting of an iceberg which he was proposing to guide from the Antarctic to Cape Town, could produce up to 150 million litres of water per day for a year.

Sloane said his plan entailed using the water currents in the ocean to guide an iceberg to Saldanha, in a project that could be completed in nine months.

Sloane was speaking at the African Utility Week conference, presently under way at the Cape Town International Convention Centre.

Their project aims to guide an iceberg the size of 100 million tons from Antarctica to Cape Town, using the cold Benguela water current in the ocean.

"If we start the project by July, then the iceberg could potentially reach Cape Town by Easter next year," he said.

Sloane said he already had private investors lined up, who were willing to fund the project, which would cost around R1.1bn, if the city of Cape Town came on board.

It was estimated that the water would cost the city two and a half cents per litre.

The Western Cape was experiencing its worst drought in a century.

During a keynote session, where solutions from nature were explored to address increasing energy and water constraints, he told delegates that a total of 140 000 icebergs were drifting in the southern oceans and melting.

His address followed the director of water and sanitation in the city of Cape Town, Peter Flower, who also presented on the water crisis in the city.

Flower told delegates the city still needed to reduce consumption to 450 million litres of water per day to keep Day Zero at bay.

With the current usage at 500 million litres per day, the situation would remain dire despite measures employed by the city to reduce consumption.

While there has been a slight increase in dam levels, the city of Cape Town on Monday cautioned that usage had also



DROUGHT SOLUTION: A project to transport an iceberg from Antarctica to Cape Town could be completed in about nine months.

increased. "Although there has been a slight increase in dam levels of 0.5% to an overall level of 21.4% because of some rainfall and lower evaporation rates, we need to continue to stretch the remaining water in our dams as we simply do not know how much rain we will receive over the winter months," the city said in a statement.

The collective consumption over the past week was 554 million litres of water per day, reflecting a 6.7% increase from consumption of 519 million litres last week.

It places Cape Town 104 million litres above the usage target of 450 million litres per day that the national department of water and sanitation had set.

The city said by Monday dams were just 0.1% below water supply level on the same day last year.

"This is an incredible achievement of water saving by the people of Cape Town, given that the dam levels at the start of the year were at 31% compared to 46% last year."

According to the city, water users had to stay alert. It said that there may be a bit of complacency creeping in.

"We call on all Capetonians to remain on course with their savings efforts. As Cape Town has shown the rest of South Africa and the world already, we are capable of meeting challenges head-on and pulling together to do what is required."

The city said that while current initiatives to save water were working, it still couldn't predict how much rainfall would be received over the course of winter.

"We simply cannot afford to relax our savings efforts."

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