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**Debate on Vote 30: Communications and Digital Technologies**

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The minister briefly touched on a very important aspect, and that is the fact that regulations is one of the biggest problems facing the communication environment. One example is mobile networks and the effect that load-shedding has on our mobile networks and the profitability and also sustainability of those companies. Chairperson, there are regulations out there that are making it impossible for those mobile networks to comply and actually survive. The state of disaster was intended actually to do something about that but nothing was done. The regulations were published when the state of disaster ended and it is extremely important that the department of communication intervenes and does something about this because people without connectivity are in a very dangerous and very detrimental situation with regard to actual economic development and taking this county forward. We can't talk about data affordability whilst load-shedding has that effect and actually makes it impossible for mobile networks to operate. You know there are regulations not only with ICASA but also with other departments. The competition act makes it impossible for networks to share generators on one site. That is something that can be addressed to make it affordable while we are facing the crisis of load-shedding. When we get to the Post Office, the minister says that he acknowledges the problems and the challenges. And we welcome that, but he does say that people can still expect to receive their post and their parcels, and they are still able to renew their motor licences. But that's not true. That's not true at all. Because currently, the probability of receiving a parcel is less than 60 percent. 92 branches were recently closed. A 105 Post Office branches are currently locked out because of arrears and unpaid bills, arrears to the landlord and unpaid municipal bills. The amount of arrears to landlords currently stands at more than R340 million. The bailout of R2.4 billion does not address the problems that are actually facing the Post Office. Only 1 122 Post Offices branches are currently functioning. But what the minister did not mention at all is the fact that a lot of SASSA beneficiaries can't receive their SASSA grants. One example Minister is from the Eastern Cape. The Post Office in Patterson closed down. An EPWP worker or SASSA pensioner must travel at the cost of more than a hundred rand to Addo to receive a grant of R800 or an EPWP stipend of R850 must spend a hundred rand. Then he gets to Addo and the Post Office is closed due to systems that are down or electricity that's not paid or cash that's not there. And then the person must get another R120 to get to Alexandria. How is that fair to the people out there? The honourable chairperson of the committee says that the pessimism of the opposition is just empty rhetoric. Go and tell that to the SASSA beneficiaries out there that are not getting their SASSA grants that can't renew their SASSA or Post Bank cards due to Post Offices that are closed or just not functioning. That should be addressed and it is not a criticism; it's the reality out there and that should also be acknowledged. The delay in the appointment of the SABC Board further created instability at the public broadcaster. And the minister must maybe explain to this parliament why the executive, why the President, delayed the appointment of the Board because that was unacceptable after this parliament unanimously supported the board members. It was delayed due to political reasons and was completely unacceptable. And that's the problem with communication and the entities of communication. And that should be addressed.