**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**PARELIAMENTARY QUESTION NO: 1327**

**DATE OF QUESTION: 01 APRIL 2022**

**DATE OF SUBMISSION: 19 APRIL 2022**

**Mr W Horn (DA) to ask the Minister of Justice and Correctional Services:**

With reference to the preliminary report received by the Department of Justice on the structural defects pertaining to the Palm Ridge Magistrates’ Court Building in Gauteng, which advised that a further and full investigation by a structural engineer was called for on an urgent basis in order to ascertain with certainty whether the structural deficiencies of the specified court building were of such a nature that it was no longer safe to use, what steps have been taken (a) to source on an urgent basis such further report by a structural engineer and (b) in the meantime to ensure adherence to health and safety standards at the building?

**REPLY:**

1. The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD)’s Gauteng Regional Office requested the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI) to conduct a structural assessment on the Palm Ridge Court facility on 08 November 2021.

The request was based on numerous complaints that the users of the building had been raising to the attention of the DoJ&CD’s Gauteng Regional Office where administration staff, judiciary and the public at large felt they were not safe to either occupy or utilize the Palm Ridge Magistrate Court facility due to its severe structural defects.

The assigned structural engineer visited the site to conduct an inspection on 15 November 2021. The nature of the inspection involved assessment of the Palm Ridge Magistrate Court facility to pronounce on its structural integrity and provide recommendations. The recommendations on the Investigation Report, Condition Assessment: Palm Ridge Magistrate Court were that a complete status quo report be conducted by a professional team and where the need for further investigation arises, a specialist be requested.

The DoJ&CD wrote to DPWI and requested that a comprehensive assessment on the structural integrity of the building be conducted, and a new repairs and renovations project on the facility be registered.

ZAS Architects & Planners and Fhatani Consulting Engineers together with representatives from DPWI and DoJ&CD undertook a review of issues identified within the Investigation Report: Conditional Assessment: Palm Ridge Magistrates Court, Johannesburg as prepared by DPWI on Thursday, 3 February 2022. A detailed report, dated 8 February 2022, covers two (2) sections, a response to remedial items identified by the structural engineering services division and prioritization of remedial items identified.

ZAS Architects & Planners and Fhatani Consulting Engineers provided their professional opinion that there were no major remedial items identified that warrant the building unsafe, and the facility can be used for its intended purpose. Notwithstanding, the remedial work as identified should be carried out expeditiously.

1. The structural engineer report has declared the building safe for occupation. However, the report further outlined the remedial works that needed to be executed as part of the maintenance of the court. DPWI has attended to the following identified challenges on an emergency basis:
2. Leaking roof;
3. Damaged ceilings;
4. Non-functional lift;
5. Damaged flooring;
6. Urinal systems; and
7. High-rise lighting globes.

For the remedial work required to fix the cracks, DPWI is in the process of appointing a contractor. In anticipation of the appointment of the contractor to fix the wall cracks, DoJ&CD is of the view that the remedial work cannot be executed while the users are in the building.

The DoJ&CD has been looking for an alternative accommodation for officials occupying the one wing which is severely affected by wall cracks. Two (2) locations have been identified, one (1) is a community hall within a 5km radius of the court earmarked as alternative accommodation, upon municipality engagement and approval. The second location is a vacant land parcel opposite the court, this is privately owned and can be utilized as parking. The owner of the site has agreed to let out the land to DoJ&CD officials to use as parking daily. The courts parking area will be used to place park-homes as offices and mobile courts while repairs are being attended to at the court.

**END**