

Public Works spending on consultants has decreased slightly - Cronin

2017-05-23 18:39

Jan Gerber, News24

Cape Town - The Department of Public Works' expenditure on consultants has shown a slight decline over the past four years.

The portfolio committee on public works heard on Tuesday that the department had spent approximately R508m on consultants in the 2013/2014 financial year, R467m in 2014/2015, R491m in 2015/2016, and a preliminary figure of R470m in 2016/2017.

It is not a "miraculous improvement", but a steady decline, said Public Works Deputy Minister Jeremy Cronin.

"Personally, I would like to see it lower," he said.

He said, a few years ago, the department was in a shambles and that, as political heads, he and the former minister of public works, Thulas Nxesi, couldn't rely on the department's "capacity or honesty," and that consultants had been needed to turn the situation around.

As capacity and honesty were built, the need for consultants lessened, he said.

Cronin also pointed out that not all the consultants who were used came from outside the government, as the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and state law advisor were also used.

"We're spending a lot of money on the SIU, correctly so," said Cronin. President Jacob Zuma had proclaimed three investigations in the department.

In the 2015/2016 financial year, the SIU's anti-fraud and corruption investigations cost the department R79m, and the figure rose to R149m in 2016/2017.

The committee was generally impressed with the department's work in turning things around.

"I think we're moving in the right direction with this department," said committee chairperson Freddie Adams.

Cronin was also questioned about the expenditure on state events, like inaugurations and state funerals.

UDM MP Mncebisi Filtane, who enjoys a joke, asked whether they planned for state funerals.

Cronin said it was actually a good question, because there were things - like state funerals - that they could not plan for, unlike inaugurations.

Then he added: "There might be an earlier inauguration this time around..."