

## ■ EVIDENCE

# Costly need to back Gupta evidence

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THE Commission of Inquiry into State Capture yesterday heard that it would have to dig deep into its resources to corroborate key parts of former ANC MP Vytjie Mentor's testimony against the Gupta family.

The commission headed by Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo heard that it would need more than R810000 to hire experts to conduct historical mapping, analyse the painting done on the property and hire a material constructor.

Department of Public Works chief architect Erna Wiese told the commission that a team of seven – including a deputy director-general, two property valuers, a quantity surveyor, structural engineer and electrical technologist – was unable to provide an opinion on the features Mentor identified in her evidence to prove that the property she described belonged to the controversial family.

"If we are to prove beyond a reasonable doubt, a team of specialists needs to be appointed," said Wiese.

She said the R810000 quote was based on the department's internal projection of the work that needed to be done and did not include restoration of the property.

The Public Works team conducted an in loco inspection with the commission's legal team, investigators and lawyers representing the Guptas in December.

In her evidence this week and last year, Mentor described the features of one of the standalone properties in the Guptas' Saxonwold compound in which she was allegedly offered a ministerial post.

But Wiese said Mentor was supposed to point out the property in which the offer was made by one of the Gupta brothers while former president Jacob Zuma was in another room in 2010.

"She (Mentor) did not point it out immediately," Wiese testified.

According to Wiese, Mentor could not identify the house she visited with 100% certainty.

Wiese's testimony follows Mentor's testimony this week, in which she sought to discredit records from SA Airways, the Home Affairs Department and Vodacom appearing to disprove most of her evidence.

In her defence, Mentor told Justice Zondo almost a decade had lapsed since some of the events allegedly took place and that the time could have been used to alter the documents.

She said some of the documents appeared to have been computer-generated, prompting Justice Zondo to state that she seemed to have issues with all records produced before the commission.

Meanwhile, Independent Police Investigative Directorate executive director Robert McBride, who was scheduled to give evidence at the commission, is expected to implicate no fewer than 30 politicians and senior government officials in attempts to undermine the institution's role and functions.

Head of the commission's legal team Paul Pretorius requested that McBride's evidence, which he was meant to present yesterday and today, be deferred to a later date.

Pretorius said procedural fairness to the parties implicated by McBride dictated that they be given enough time to respond.