

Government identifies possible sites to move parliament from Cape Town to Pretoria

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The minister of public works, Thulas Nxesi, has provided an update on government's proposed plans to relocate parliament from Cape Town to Pretoria.

The move has been discussed for a number of years, with a formal public bid announced in February 2018.

In a response to a recent parliamentary Q&A session, Nxesi said that the project is still a work in progress and is primarily the responsibility of parliament – with the Department of Public Works playing a supporting role.

He added that various engagements have been had with parliament over a number of years, with the following steps taken:

- A project steering committee consisting of the senior management of parliament and the Department of Public Works was established and it is chaired by the secretary to parliament, whose responsibility is to ensure the successful implementation of the project;

- The project mainly involves the **production of a comprehensive feasibility study report** relating to the socio-economic impacts of parliament remaining in Cape Town versus it relocating to Pretoria and project due diligence;
- **Possible construction sites in Tshwane have been identified**, but cannot be confirmed until such time that parliament accommodation requirements have been signed off by the secretary to parliament;
- For this to happen, parliament must give guidance and take the decision to move the parliamentary precinct away from Cape Town and also **legally pronounce Tshwane as the seat of parliament**, by way of proposing a constitutional amendment on Tshwane/Pretoria as the new legislative capital of South Africa;
- Parliament's decision will be informed by a comprehensive feasibility study mentioned above.

Going forward

Nxesi said that a number of socio-economic impact assessment studies still need to be completed before a final decision would be made.

The necessary funding also needs to be sourced to conduct in-depth investigations of the possible construction sites that have been identified, he said.

“Parliament and the Department Public Works to discuss challenges relating to the aforementioned and develop a collective way forward.”

Not a new idea

The loss of Cape Town as South Africa's legislative capital may once be gaining ground, but it is not necessarily a new idea.

The ANC first made the suggesting to move Parliament to Pretoria in the 1990s, but was met with strong opposition from the ANC in the Western Cape, who campaigned against it.

At the time, the cost to move Parliament to Pretoria would have been R237 million – while the cost to move the country's administration to Cape Town would have cost R23.5 billion.

A revised break down of the costs published in 2016 saw the costs to move parliament rise to an amount of R7 billion – but it was expected that this would save the country between R500 million and R750 million a year in the future.

Making the move would also mean uprooting 1,400 parliamentary staff and their families, and would have a negative impact on Cape Town's economy, according to analysts.