

Police owe R1.6bn for unused building

SAPS 'squatting' as offices lie idle

By **Thabo Mokone**

Five years after buying the Telkom Towers in Pretoria as the new headquarters of the SAPS, the police are yet to occupy the building – but the cost has ballooned from R650m to R1.6bn.

This while police minister Bheki Cele is “squatting” somewhere without an office while other police staff and senior managers are stuck at the old and “completely overloaded” and “condemned” buildings of Veritas and Wachthuis in the Pretoria city centre.

This was revealed by public works minister Patricia de Lille in parliament yesterday ahead of the tabling of her spending plans and priorities for the 2019/2020 financial year.

De Lille said following a meeting with Cele on Tuesday, she’s resolved to withdraw a team of senior managers from her department, the SAPS and the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) from further involvement in the Telkom Towers project.

The services of a private property manager would be enlisted to see to it that the SAPS move into their new office by the end of April.

De Lille said while the Telkom Towers complex re-



Public works minister Patricia de Lille tabled her budget yesterday.

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mained empty, the SAPS were spending up to R500,000 a month to secure the building.

“The police are still not inside the building. Over and above that the police are providing private security to guard these building at a cost of between R400,000 to R500,000 per month

“We’re looking to find a quick solution ... we’ve agreed to withdraw immediately all the staff of the department of public works and the police that are involved in this project.

“We’ll seek the service of an outside project manager to take over the management of

this project,” said De Lille.

“Currently, the minister is squatting, he doesn’t have an office to work from, the police commissioner doesn’t have an office to work from ... they can’t operate like this.

“It’s not that the department has done nothing about the delay in delivering this project. The DG [director-general] did start an investigation; the investigation has been delayed because the CEO of DBSA has not been forthcoming with information because the DBSA is actually the implementing agent on behalf of the department,” she said.

“I’ll be raising this issue

with the chairperson of the board of DBSA.”

The new minister of public works said she, along with all senior officials of the department, will be subjected to lifestyle audits from next month to June.

De Lille said the Special Investigating Unit was probing 2,325 cases related to fraud and corruption within the departments, including civil claims to recover monies lost to maladministration amounting to just over R403m.

She said they were also seeking to recover a further R135m related to the Nkandla scandal.