

Arts & Culture department spends over R7m on leased office space

MAFIKENG MAIL – MAHIKENG: The Democratic Alliance (DA) spokesperson in North West, Winston Rabotapi announced on Tuesday that the opposition party had submitted written questions to the MEC for the Department of Arts, Culture, Sports Development and Recreation, Virginia Tlhapi, requesting a list of properties owned and rented by the Department and what the costs are.

According to Rabotapi, the MEC's reply revealed that the Department did not own a single property and spends more than R600 000 per month on leased office space.

Slating this development, Rabotapi said the DA was of the view that this amount could be better applied to the development of upcoming artists, grassroots sports and the maintenance of museums, heritage sites and libraries.

"Towards the end of last year, we wrote to the MEC to enquire about the Department's plan to assist athletes and artists during the lockdown, to which she responded that there were no funds available for this purpose.

Rabotapi said the DA would write to Premier Mokgoro to remind him about his plans to change the Provincial Government's ownership/rental ratio to 60/40%.

"We will further request him to meet with the Department of Public Works and Provincial Treasury to discuss ways of dealing with the high expenditure on leased office space, including strategies to best utilise deserted government buildings, such as middle schools that were vacated as part of the Schools Rationalisation Programme.

"From previous responses that the DA has received on the question of leased office space from other Departments, the DA will conduct an investigation into the landlords to establish any political links with the Government.

"It is essential that the Provincial Government reduce the high rental costs by negotiating with landlords, moving to lower cost buildings or buying property and apply those funds to its mandate of serving the people of North West instead of renting property from politically connected individuals", the spokesperson said.