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CAPE TOWN TO TSHWANE

Parliament to decide on committee to process bill for relocation

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PARLIAMENT was still to decide which of its committees should process the private member's bill introduced by EFF leader Julius Malema on the relocation of its seat from Cape Town to Tshwane.

This comes after the bill was considered by the Joint Tagging Mechanism for classification as a section 76 bill, which affects the provinces, ahead of its referral to a portfolio committee.

National Assembly secretary Masibulele Xaso said although the view was that the bill would be processed by the public works and infrastructure portfolio committee, there was still a discussion with the parliamentary legal services unit.

"Before it is referred to a committee,

there is a step it must go through, which is the first reading," Xaso said in reference to introducing and tabling the bill in the National Assembly.

He said the EFF had asked for the first reading of the bill.

"Once it has been debated, without a decision, then it must go to a committee. Public works has been mentioned. We discuss with legal services whether that is the best committee."

Programming whip Mina Lesoma said they have received the private member's bill for its first reading in the National Assembly.

"As a matter of principle and consistency, it will be discussed at a mini-plenary and then referred to the relevant committee to deal with the private member's bill," Lesoma said.

No date has been specified for its introduction in the National Assembly's current programme

the relocation of Parliament has

been on the radar as far back as 2016 when former president Jacob Zuma said the government could save billions if it did not have to fly and accommodate government officials and politicians from the administrative capital in Pretoria in Cape Town, the country's legislative capital.

In his bill, Malema said the Constitution provided that the seat of Parliament was Cape Town, but an act could be enacted to determine that the seat be elsewhere. Malema said Parliament's current location created several problems for MPs, the Cabinet, government and officials from organs of state, and the broader society that wished to participate in legislative and oversight functions performed by national legislature.

"Parliament is located in the farthest province from the majority of provinces, making it inaccessible to the majority of South Africans, including MPs, who spend a significant of time travelling to and from Parliament."

Malema said the relocation of Parliament would alleviate the financial burden on the national fiscus and bring the national legislature closer to most people. The bill's memorandum said public participation in parliamentary programmes was limited to individuals and institutions with financial resources, excluding those unable to travel to Cape Town.

The memo said the Cabinet was expected to spend more than R8 billion on expenditures associated with attending legislative sessions (plane travel, hotels, car hire/shuttles), travel time, dependants' travel, departmental

support, and annual operational costs of ministerial houses.

"This is an extremely low estimate," the document said.

It also said the parliamentary precinct was made up of historic structures that required regular maintenance.

The document said it was expected that Parliament would spend no less than R4.2bn on precinct renovation and refurbishment. According to the document, R4.2bn was estimated for refurbishment and renovation in May 2019 and the Department of Public Works had put the figure at R2bn.

"It will cost at least R14bn to retain Parliament in Cape Town. A new Parliament precinct in the City of Tshwane is estimated to require R7m, and the move will save the fiscus more than R7bn in the short to medium term," the memo said.

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