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ACCOUNTABILITY

Scopa calls for investigation into entire Prestige Portfolio

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IN A quest for accountability, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa) has called for a comprehensive investigation into the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure's Prestige Portfolio.

The investigation, spearheaded by the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), would encompass all aspects of the portfolio, including the management and maintenance of parliamentary villages.

The decision to launch the investigation comes after Scopa received a briefing from the department regarding the Prestige Portfolio.

Simultaneously, the committee received a briefing from the SIU, which shed light on its investigations into the portfolio and the financing of parliamentary villages. Shockingly, the SIU's findings revealed a series of issues within the Prestige Portfolio.

Among the concerning revelations, the SIU discovered that Prestige Portfolio project managers and supply-chain managers failed to maintain proper records, procurement processes were systematically circumvented and project costs had spiralled beyond control.

Of particular concern to Scopa was the dismal state of maintenance at parliamentary villages, despite the department having a whopping R510 million contract in place for 950 facilities with a service company. Additionally, the

committee expressed apprehension about the security and maintenance of the Acacia Park village, situated on land owned by the department.

In response to these revelations, SCOPA has instructed the department to provide a comprehensive report addressing the committee's inquiries.

This report must be submitted no later than October 27 and should include detailed information on the full occupancy status of all Prestige Portfolio facilities in Pretoria and Cape Town. Importantly, Scopa warned that this disclosure should not compromise the security of any occupants.

The department informed Scopa that in Pretoria, there were 55 houses, 49 of which are currently occupied. In Cape Town, there are 73 houses, with 69 being occupied.

In a statement issued by Parliament, Scopa said that it was not satisfied with the state of the Prestige Portfolio, nor with the management of parliamentary villages.

"There seems to be some compromise to the accountability outlook. The committee has advised the department to improve internal controls. Scopa believes there is a need for legislative reforms around the management of the Prestige Portfolio and parliamentary villages to synchronise all the relevant legislation and statutes," it said.

The investigation by the SIU is expected to shed further light on the issues within the Prestige Portfolio and pave the way for necessary reforms.