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COMMEMORATION

A commitment to justice for victims of the George building collapse

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AT AN EMOTIONAL one-year commemoration of the George building collapse, Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Dean Macpherson vowed that justice will be pursued for the victims, survivors, and families devastated by the tragedy that claimed 34 lives and injured 28 others.

Speaking at the George Town Hall yesterday, Macpherson honoured those who perished when the five-storey residential building under construction at 75 Victoria Street collapsed on May 6, 2024.

He paid tribute to the emergency responders and police officers who led a gruelling 11-day rescue effort, calling them "heroes" who worked through "the most difficult circumstances".

"We remember every life lost. We mourn every dream of a future that was cut short that day. This tragedy should never have happened – and because it was preventable, it must never happen again," Macpherson said.

Macpherson said the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, through the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) and the Engineering Council of South Africa, commissioned an in-depth investigation, with a final

report expected by the end of May.

"I commit to returning to George and meeting the families personally to explain the findings, and not simply expect them to read about this in the newspaper," he promised.

"Buildings don't collapse on their own. Accountability cannot be optional when human tragedy takes place at the hands of human beings."

He added that failures across various regulatory bodies and poor cooperation between agencies such as the Engineering Council of South Africa, the National Home Builders Registration Council, and local authorities had contributed to the disaster. Survivors and

grieving families in attendance echoed the need for justice and support.

Shadrack Mayine, who lost a leg and arm in the collapse and now uses a prosthetic limb, said his life remains a daily struggle.

"I feel better now, I can walk and move around, but my arm still gives me pain. I'm unemployed, and my family and volunteers help me," he said.

"Being on the site again was painful. It took me back to the day of the incident."

Another survivor, Ivaldo Macamo, described the economic hardship he now faces.

"I can't pay for my kid's education because I am struggling, and no one is

coming to my assistance," he said.

Virgilio Siteo, who is also unemployed, expressed frustration: "No one can help me with a job – not even the Labour Department."

Macpherson pledged that reforms to follow would not be merely technical, but moral.

"When we cut corners, when we delay reforms, when we tolerate incompetence, it is not contracts that get lost – it is lives," he said.

"To the families gathered here today, your loss is shaping real change. We will not rest until we are confident that no family must ever again experience the heartbreak you have endured."