

Publication: South Coast Sun - Main

Title: MPs smell corruption in laboratory lease

Publish date: 09 May 2025

Page: 3

Reach: 20325

AVE: R 19961.77

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MPs smell corruption in laboratory lease

PARLIAMENT'S Portfolio Committee on Police has raised red flags over possible corruption linked to the South African Police Service's (SAPS) ongoing lease of a flood-damaged building used as a forensic science laboratory (FSL) in Amanzimtoti.

The committee, chaired by Member of Parliament, Ian Cameron, conducted an oversight visit to the facility, housed in the Nedbank building in the CBD recently, where it found the building to be structurally compromised and unsuitable for its intended use. Yet, SAPS continues to lease the

property at R500 000 per month and despite its condition, forensic analysts still report for duty.

"This building has suffered extensive flood damage over the years, with some floors rendered unusable, yet the lease continues and no sustainable plan has been put in place to resolve the issue. This is an inexplicable use of public funds," said Cameron.

The laboratory is one of only four forensic labs in South Africa, alongside facilities in Gauteng, the Western Cape, and the Eastern Cape. Repeated flooding since 2017 has caused R70 million

worth of equipment damage, further hampering operations. Cameron said this has contributed significantly to the country's backlog of 140 000 DNA cases.

Senior SAPS officials informed the committee that talks with the building's owner have so far yielded no solutions. This has raised suspicions among committee members about the integrity of the lease renewals.

"It is important that there is an investigation to ascertain why SAPS leadership has persisted with this unwise, astonishing and incomprehensible decision. There

is a smell of corruption with the lease," he said.

Following the visit to the FSL, the committee also toured the ballistics section on Kingsway Road, which was found to be in better condition than the biological laboratory.

The committee has since called on SAPS management and the Department of Public Works to urgently conclude discussions and secure a permanent, functional facility. The report emphasises that the continued neglect of forensic infrastructure undermines the broader criminal justice system.



Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Police, Ian Cameron.