

# Premier halts Parkside renovations while assessment takes place

## SABELO NSELE

PREMIER Willie Mchunu has halted the R32 million renovations at Parkside residence while an independent assessor evaluates if the renovations undertaken are value for money.

He yesterday defended the costly renovations, saying that without renovations the official residence could pose a risk to him and his guests.

Mchunu said a preliminary assessment by the Department of Public

Works had found the roof of the main building was in such a severe state of disrepair that it posed a safety hazard.

Speaking at the provincial legislature, Mchunu said the investigation would also determine whether work done was necessary and whether proper tender processes were followed.

He said the "Parkside masterplan" will also be assessed to establish the necessity of all further work identified or still to be identified.

Mchunu said the findings of the in-

vestigation will be reported to the provincial cabinet, legislature and to the public in February 2018.

"There is a logical reason why a building which houses the premier must be kept in reasonably good condition, with a proper maintenance and renovation plan. This is to safeguard what is a national heritage, but also to ensure the safety of all users, including diplomatic and international guests," the premier said.

He said in 2011, following a series of

assessments by professionals who all recommended that renovations be carried out, Parkside was declared unsafe and Dr Zweli Mkhize, the premier at the time, was asked to vacate the house.

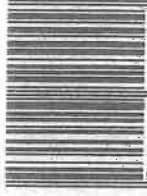
Mchunu said a tender for R497 636 to complete work on bathrooms had been awarded in June 2016. He said the contractor was subsequently declared unfit to complete the contract in January 2017 due to poor workmanship.

He said a new contractor was appointed to repair and complete the

bathroom renovations in March.

"The revised budget for renovations had escalated to R821 905,80," he said. The R32 million renovations are set to be completed in 2023.

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