

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NUMBER 1109**

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**Mr M H Steele (DA) to ask the Minister of Finance:**

- (1) Whether any studies have been undertaken to ascertain the efficiency and quality of service provided by the SARS office in Pietermaritzburg in terms of (a) the number of taxpayers being assisted and (b) the length of time each person waits to be served; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (2) whether any plans are in place to improve (a) the size of this office, (b) its location and (c) the quality of service offered to the taxpayers of the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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**REPLY:**

- (1) Time and Motion Studies have been conducted for all our branch offices including the Pietermaritzburg branch. These studies were conducted applying the latest thinking in that field. The key question that the Time and Motion Study tries to answer is around the time it takes for a person performing under ideal conditions to complete a task. The results of these studies for our branches indicate that the agents and consultants should be able to deal with 50 tax service requests per day.
  - (a) Taking the outcome of the Time and Motion Studies, and the average volume of tax service requests received by the Pietermaritzburg office into account, the office should operate with 27 agents.

The office currently has 39 agents. This means that the office has capacity to handle 1950 taxpayers (39 agents x 50 service requests / person / day). Assuming that each

taxpayer will on average have 2.12 (21565 Service Requests /10150 Taxpayers) service requests, these volumes equate to 920 taxpayers per day (1950 / 2.12)

The table below indicates the number of taxpayers and service requests that visited the office over a 17 month period between last year and the first five months of this financial year. It is evident that the number of service requests handled during this period was within the office capacity of 1950.

	17 Months Average (Actual)		Capacity
	Month	Day	
Taxpayers	10,150	478	920
Service Requests	21,565	1,078	1950

- (b) The waiting time or queue time is currently measured manually and it is 1 hour on average. This is because taxpayers arrive at an uneven rate leading to peaks and troughs during the day. This means that during certain times of the day, the queues will be longer than normal; generally this is between 11:00 and 14:30. The waiting time during this period of the day is relatively higher than at other times of the day. The times range from around 45 minutes to 1 hour during this period of the day when at other times of the day the waiting times range around 10 to 20 minutes.

We plan around those times to ensure that we match demand to supply but some of these peaks are difficult to predict from day to day. We are continuing to refine our capacity plans in this regard and the introduction of an electronic queue management system will further enhance our efforts.

- (2) (a) There are plans to move to a different location once the lease expires. There is still one year remaining in the lease.

- (b) The total size of the building is 4000 square meters. There are plans to create more space for the service area by converting some of the space that is currently used for back office functions. This will create more taxpayer counters on the first floor of the Pietermaritzburg office. The number of counters will then increase from 39 to 50 with a waiting area that can accommodate around 100 people. It is important to note that these changes will not be of a permanent nature as we anticipate moving to a different location in due course.
  
- (c) Currently the KZN Midlands taxpayers have to travel to the Pietermaritzburg or Standerton offices to deal with their tax affairs. They also have an option of phoning the contact centre or accessing SARS services through our web based service offerings.

We are in the process of establishing service points in the KZN Midland through mobile units and sharing premises with other government departments such municipalities and community centres. This is a process that will unfold over a period of time as contained in our strategic plan.