

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY
QUESTION NUMBER 569
DATE OF PUBLICATION: 5 MARCH 2010

Dr D T George (DA) to ask the Minister of Finance:

- (1) Whether the community was consulted before the SA Revenue Service (SARS) office in Brakpan was closed; if not, (a) why not and (b) when will consultation take place and (c) why was the office closed;
- (2) whether the office will be reopened at the request of the community; if not, why not; if so, when?

NW684E

REPLY:

1. A,B and C

- I The SARS strategy of improving accessibility to all taxpayers has been unfolding for the past three years. It has resulted in the increase in the number of taxpayers registered for eFiling from 35,000 to 4,000,000 in the past three years. It has also seen a process of reviewing the SARS “footprint” to ensure a wider and more equitable spread of SARS branches in all regions.

In the process of reviewing the branch coverage, SARS took into account the following:

- Distance from one SARS office to another(footprint coverage)
- Population/Tax Base
- Economic Activity

In areas where the above criteria were not satisfied, a number of remedial steps were followed. In the East Rand there were a number of offices clustered together in a radius of about 20km.

Office Analysis	Brakpan	Boksburg	Nigel	Benoni	Springs
Address	106 Kingsway avenue	146 Leeupoort & Short Str	Crn Hendrik Verwoerd & 4th Avenue	65 Howard Ave	20 Sanlam Building 7th Ave
Location	City	City	City	City	City
Space (m2)	1131 m2	2904 m2	2000m2	2994 m2	1922m2
No. of Employees	20	41	19	48	48
Parking	No Parking	No Parking	Yes	No Parking	Shoprite Parking
Taxi access to the office	0.5 km to Taxi Rank	0.6 km to Taxi Rank	0.5 km to Taxi Rank	0.5 km to Taxi Rank	0.6 km to Taxi Rank
Nearest High Way	M45/46	R 21	N17	N12	N17
Distance from Brakpan office		10 km	17 km	7 km	9 km

The above table indicates that the branches in the East Rand do not meet the criteria for a more equitable spread of offices. The first phase of the rationalisation was to integrate the Brakpan branch into the Springs branch which is only 9km from the Brakpan branch. The Springs branch has also been renovated to accommodate the increased volumes and ensure that service to taxpayers is enhanced. The second phase of the rationalisation will be to integrate the Benoni and Boksburg branches.

The above rationalisation will allow SARS to redirect its resources to areas currently inadequately served by branch facilities.

- II The community was consulted and SARS held discussions with relevant stakeholders regarding the integration of the Brakpan office with the Springs office. Engagement with various stakeholders took place in January, February, May and June 2009. Details regarding consultation are as follows:
- (a) SARS had two meetings with tax practitioners informing them of the rationale behind the integration (January and May 2009).
 - (b) Two separate meetings were held with the Tsakane and Brakpan municipalities in February 2009 and June 2009.
- (2) Based on the strategy outlined above, a permanent office will not be a viable option for the Brakpan area as, on average, taxpayers only need to travel between 7km and 10km to their nearest SARS branch. During peak periods, Points of Service (SARS temporary presence in Malls and Shopping Centres) and Mobile Tax Units are deployed in the various areas based on demand.