



**29 June 2020**

### **Zondo commission – Prasa board fired for persisting with corruption investigation, says Molefe**

Not only the top structure of the ANC, but also Parliament, were alerted of the widespread corruption at the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) that remains unaccounted for. According to former Prasa chairman Popo Molefe, his board made all attempts to hold looters accountable, without success, after the departure of the parastatal's GCEO Lucky Montana in 2015.

The ANC's top six at the time, led by former president Jacob Zuma with President Cyril Ramaphosa as his deputy, promised Molefe in 2015 to get back to him after he revealed gross irregularities in tender processes, but this never happened.

Molefe was the first witness to testify on the resumption of the public hearings of the state capture commission on Monday, after a three-month break because of the national Covid-19 lockdown.

An investigation into a tender for the modernisation of Prasa's Braamfontein depot, which had a price tag of R2-billion, was one of those that formed the board's investigation. According to Molefe, no documentation could be found at Prasa that supported the decision on how the tender was awarded. For this reason, the investigation, under Werksmans Attorneys, was delayed as investigators had to arrange alternative measures to gather the necessary information. The transport minister at the time, Dipuo Peters – who deemed it an unnecessary expense that distracted the board from its functions – then ordered a stop to the investigation in August 2016. Molefe, however, believes that Peters was not acting in the interest of Prasa, but actually wanted to stop the probe for political reasons. He wrote to Peters on the matter, in response to her order, and expressed that the board did not agree with the halting of the investigation.

Peters later dismissed the board in a surprise move in early March 2017. Several directors appeared before the parliamentary portfolio committee on transport on the day of the dismissal, and reported back to Molefe how MPs humiliated them by asking questions that were unrelated to the business of the day – the corruption matters that they had uncovered through their investigations. In retrospect, Molefe testified, it was as if the ANC MPs in the committee meant to ask the board members questions that made them appear incompetent. Following this incident, Molefe wrote to then National Assembly speaker Baleka Mbete in an attempt to get her to hold the MPs accountable, but has never received a response. An acting director-general of transport at the time told the committee of the minister's decision to fire the board and install an interim one.

Molefe believes that they were fired for persisting with the investigation, and not for failing in their duties as Peters revealed in a later press conference on 13 March, a week after the dismissal. The press conference was the first instance in which the reasons for the dismissal were recorded by the minister. She was replaced later that month by Joe Maswanganyi.

#### **Useful links:**

[Zondo Commission website](#)

Corruption Watch's [Zondo Commission update page](#)

Prasa corporate website <https://www.prasa.com/>