



GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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PRESS RELEASE

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GOVERNMENT EXPLAINS TRUTH ABOUT REFERENDUM HOUSE LIFT REPAIRS

The Minister for Housing, the Hon Fabian Vinet, has issued a reply to the recent press release issued by the GSLP/Liberals on the subject of a lift having broken down at Referendum House, as follows:

“Government is grateful to the GSLP Opposition for having brought to the general public’s attention its apparent concern about works to repair one of the lifts at Referendum House, Glacis Estate. It is however lamentable that rather than attempt to find out why one lift has broken down and why it has taken some time to be able to effect repairs, prior to issuing an informed Press Release, the Hon Mr Charles Bruzon instead chooses to lay the blame exclusively on Government before even trying to ascertain the truth. We are very happy to give a full explanation.

The Opposition statement explains that “Government replaced the lifts [at Referendum House] some time ago”. Specifically, in fact, Government installed brand new lifts at both Referendum House and Constitution House just a little over one year ago, at a cost of almost £440,000. Residents will recall that until last year, each lift only stopped at alternate floors so that if one lift broke down, only half the number of tenants would be able to directly access their specific floor by lift. New openings were created at each floor, at considerable expense, and now both lifts at both buildings access each and every floor, a considerable improvement on the previous long-standing arrangements.”

Mr Vinet continues:

“The Opposition is correct when it states that “one of the two lifts at Referendum House was out of action for nearly two weeks earlier this month”. However, the Hon Mr Bruzon is necessarily misleading the general public when he irresponsibly describes this as “not acceptable”. Whether the time needed to effect repairs is acceptable or not acceptable must surely depend on the extent of repairs necessary and the reason for those repairs, neither of which Mr Bruzon has even attempted to ask about before criticising Government. If instead of trying to play politics he had tried to find out the background to those lengthy repairs, Mr Bruzon would have been informed that the lift car base plate anchor brackets and bolts of the new lift that is just one year old had extensively corroded, resulting in deflection that interferes with the main runners in the shaft. In order to carry out this task, Otis (the company which carries out the maintenance of government estates, as it also does in most private estates) was instructed to replace the base plate fixing details. In order to carry out this task, it has been necessary to dismantle the lift car base, which is a time-consuming process.

Despite not asking and therefore not knowing why the lift had broken down, Mr Bruzon curiously states that “improper use by the tenants” should not be blamed. However, Government can confirm that the corrosion that resulted in the lift having to be extensively repaired is entirely and exclusively the direct result of vandalism – specifically, the amount of urine which causes the aluminium to corrode. It is unclear as to why Mr Bruzon prefers to dismiss the truth (vandalism) and instead prefers to blame the Government, unless of course he is really more concerned with criticising the GSD at all cost than with the plight of tenants.

It was not until the GSD came into office that the needs of our elderly, infirm and other tenants were addressed and their quality of life improved with lifts being installed at Glacis Estate, Alameda Estate, Varyl Begg Estate, Penney House, as they soon will be at Laguna Estate and as we have done at Bishop Canilla House, Albert Risso House and the new Mid Harbour Estate. It is good to see that the GSLP have now, at long last, developed an interest in the lifts that serve tenants in public estates. However, when Mr Bruzon states that “the Government must understand that there are many senior citizens and other tenants in Referendum House who are concerned when one of the lifts breaks down...”, he conveniently forgets not only that these are brand new lifts, and that for the first time both lifts now serve all floors, but that if we needed any advice on how to look after our elderly, experience shows that we would not turn to the GSLP even as a last resort.”