

Housing MEC defends use of private sector

'We need partners to fight backlog'

By FRANCIS HWESHE

Special Correspondent

Housing MEC Richard Dyantyi has defended the private sector involvement in housing provision in the province.

He was responding to the claim that the government could not meet the housing challenge alone after a march by hundreds of frustrated people from across the Cape Flats.

"We need more partners to deliver houses and fight the backlog," Dyantyi told the media after the protesters toy-toyed outside his office, demanding that his department cut ties with housing companies Thubelisha Homes and Trafalgar Property Management.

The protesters accused the companies of corruption, incompetence and of abusing the rights of the poor.

They said the government should not privatise housing but rather consider the plight of single parents, farmworkers and other poor people who "desperately need proper housing, especially now that it is winter".

Dyantyi said the people's concerns regarding better housing were understandable, but countered that while housing was not being privatised, his department would continue forging partnerships with Thubelisha and Trafalgar in a bid to fight the growing backlog.

He said business, banks and communities, among other roleplayers, formed critical pillars in the government's



IN DEFENCE: Western Cape MEC for Housing, Richard Dyantyi, explains his position

response to providing decent housing in the province.

But he would take the issues raised against the companies into consideration.

The protesters, some of whom said they were living on pavements in Delft, yesterday rallied behind the Anti-Eviction Campaign which spearheaded the action. They were also supported by organisations such as Cosatu.

Holding aloft placards bearing messages such as "Banks must stop selling our houses to corrupt agencies", they accused Thubelisha of forcing people to temporary relocation areas "with the false promise of housing".

"You were then responsible for the building of flats of sub-standard quality for the poor people ... Then you carried out mass eviction of people who had been on the waiting list for more than 20 years.

"Six months later, they are still on the pavement, in the dead of winter, opposite empty houses.

"Now you want to evict more people from shacks to build more shoddy housing," they said in a memorandum they handed to the company.

In another memorandum to Trafalgar, they accused that company of exploiting "the poor people on the N2 Gateway Housing Project".

"We don't need any more letters from you as they create heartache and pain for pensioners and single mothers," the memorandum said.

Wiseman Gquma of the Western Cape Bond Forum, who was among the protesters, said victims of retrenchments, job losses and those who had been on contract employment were being evicted from their houses by banks for failure to pay bonds.

"The government should help these people," he said.

Sizwe Nquqe of the Treatment Action Campaign said HIV-positive people living in shacks needed better housing as the floods and cold weather put their lives at risk.

"We want proper houses," said Emma Lucas, a mother of six from Gugulethu, adding that she was a backyard dweller.