

■ EXPROPRIATION

Call to use land to build houses

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HUMAN Settlements, Water and Sanitation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu is pushing for the Expropriation Bill in Parliament to allow the department to expropriate land to be used to build houses.

Sisulu said yesterday, before her budget vote, that while the Expropriation Bill was driven by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, her department wanted to ensure the bill accommodated the housing issue.

She said once the bill was released for public comment, they would ask that one of the clauses should specify that most of the publicly-owned land to be expropriated should be used to build houses.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has said that a report on land reform by a panel, chaired by his deputy David Mabuza, will soon be released.

The Mabuza panel had been working on the report for more than a year and handed the report to Ramaphosa a few months ago. Sisulu said her department must be the first in line to benefit from expropriated land.



Lindiwe Sisulu

“With new legislation for land expropriation in the pipeline, we will make sure that we are first takers in the queue for expropriated land,” said Sisulu.

She said once the bill was released for public comment by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, they would push for one of the clauses in the bill to include that expropriated public land be used to build houses.

“We will not be in charge of the Expropriation Bill, but the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure will be in charge. When the legislation is out there, we will put a comment,”

she said.

Sisulu said they had been talking to the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development on the publicly-owned land.

They have been talking from the time that department was conducting an audit on land ownership.

She said once they had identified land that could be used to build houses, it would be easy to fast-track the process when it was under a state-owned entity.

Sisulu also said she would be engaging the construction industry. She said they would not allow the construction industry to collapse under their noses.

Several big construction firms have either closed shop or are on the brink of collapse. Other firms are in business rescue.

The crisis in the construction sector began a few months ago when some of the companies experienced a cash crunch, with some of the major projects not materialising.

This impacted on their balance sheets, resulting in applications for business rescue for some and near collapse for others.