

MEC hits back at protestors

BABALWA NDLANYA

MEC for Public Works, Babalo Madikizela, has described recent protests by a group of North Crest flats tenants in Mthatha as just “delaying tactics”, aimed at intimidating and emotionally blackmailing government from solving a recurring crisis in both the old and new North Crest flats.

He was responding to the memorandum that was sent by these protestors to the offices of Public Works in Mthatha, recently. They were demanding that Madikizela should withdraw cases that are in court about this matter.

He said Public Works and Infrastructure was the custodian of the Eastern Cape’s immovable assets and, as such, had to ensure that assets were utilised for the benefit of the people with the future in mind.

According to Madikizela, the sixth administration undertook to delve into the property space first, as a step towards seeking to utilise government property to empower previously disadvantaged property develop-

ers; secondly to encourage investment in their province and thirdly, to raise revenue in order to augment the provincial fiscus.

“These key thrusts necessitated the department to look at the overall lease register and I confirm that anomalies were identified. Some tenants had valid leases but were not paying rent; some tenants were occupying properties with leases expired and not paying rent and the last category is the same as in the North Crest flats that tenants were occupying properties and government had simply no clue who was occupying which flat for what duration and who ought to be paying what rental.

“The group of alleged North Crest flats residents, who marched on June 12, and handed over a memorandum, made wild and preposterous allegations, which may not be left unchallenged,” said Madikizela.

He said they acknowledged this reality and thus convened meetings with people, who were thought to be tenants, and communicated the departmental stance on the said properties as follows: that occupants should

regularise their occupation of the flats by entering into a lease agreement with the department at determined rental amounts by the landlord.

“We have, through the state attorney, hired a law firm to facilitate the leasing discussions and I confirm that some residents have come forth and signed,” Madikizela said.

“I am aware that the department has instructed the attorneys to continue with evictions because the occupants do not seem keen to undertake the first step to regularise their stay and thus have a right to negotiate. We are clear about the key strategic thrust of maximising the potential of government’s property portfolio and will neither be deterred nor be held to ransom by a few to the detriment of the majority of the people of the Eastern Cape.

“We are committed to building the Eastern Cape we all want, free of pov-



Occupants marched to hand over a memorandum to the offices of the Department of Public Works in Mthatha, complaining about decisions made by MEC for this Department, Babalo Madikizela. INSET: MEC for Public Works, Babalo Madikizela, has hit back at occupants who marched against him.
PHOTOS: BABALWA NDLANYA

erty and underdevelopment,” he said.

During the handing over of the petition, one of the community members, Nceba Sobantu, added that Madikizela should refrain from calling the tenants thugs and ‘Mzekezeke’ in his roadshows, which they are not even invited to.

“He should also stop misleading the

public that they refuse to co-operate, whereas he is the one who does not hold to the end of his constitutional bargain,” Sobantu alleged.

He added that they were interested in joining other residents of King Sabatha Dalindyebo Local Municipality, who pay rates and are considered for all other services.