

# 32,000ha of land will be freed up this year - De Lille

It's a drop in the ocean, complains the Red Berets

By **Nonkululeko Njilo**

Department of public works & infrastructure is set to release 32,263ha of land in the 2021/22 financial year, minister Patricia de Lille said yesterday.

She made the revelation during her budget vote in the National Assembly. The majority of MPs voted in favour of the budget, except the DA and the EFF.

Of this land, 21,132ha were expected to be released for land restitution, 10,951ha for human settlements and 180ha for socio-economic purposes.

This was, however, a drop in the ocean according to the EFF, which is pushing for "productive land" to be expropriated without compensation.

"Why are you hoarding almost two million hectares of productive land which is laying fallow and which can be distributed to emerging farmers and other industrious South Africans who need land for their enterprises?" said EFF MP Annacleta Siwisa.

"Minister, land is a very important issue to us. It is not something to be toyed with, especially not now, when the government you have decided to be part of is against the expropriation of land without compensation."

Siwisa slammed the department for forging ahead with Expropriation Bill hearings while parliament was conducting public hearings on the possible amendment of the constitution to allow expropriation without compensation.

"Your Expropriation Bill seeks to subvert this process and, in the end, come up with expropriation legislation that will leave our people worse off than they were before. Why is

your Expropriation Bill saying the only land that should be expropriated without compensation is land that is hazardous to health, or land that has not been used for anything?"

"Black people need productive land. We need land for building houses in urban areas. We need land to produce food, high value commercial agricultural land. We need land for industries," she said.

The DA also opposed the budget, but expressed an opposing view.

MP Madeleine Hicklin argued that the Expropriation Bill would not answer SA's land reform issues.

"South Africans are crying out for land, land upon which to live, to farm, to flourish and to contribute to economic growth and job creation. But this lazy ANC government opted to rather force the Expropriation Bill on the public.

"The truth is not told. Let me categorically state the DA is 100% for land reform and land restitution. We believe the country's existing policies are not the reason land reform process has failed. They have failed because of those who perpetuate corruption and maladministration," she said.

ANC MP Elphus Mathebula came to his party's rescue, accusing the DA of double standards and inconsistency in their stance on the Expropriation Bill.

"We need to expose the double standards of the DA so they stop howling about the issue of them not supporting the bill when they are inconsistent. They are expropriating land in Cape Town, where the DA is in government," he said.

De Lille said her department also had an extensive property portfolio comprising 29,041 land parcels and 81,573 buildings. A total of 9,736 are vacant parcels of land ready to support the spatial transformation of cities and towns.



**Minister of public works and infrastructure Patricia de Lille.**  
/ESA ALEXANDER