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Government land, buildings in disrepair

RECENT oversights by the DA of provincial and national Department of Public Works-owned land and buildings has revealed shocking findings, including dilapidated buildings left empty for decades. This is while the departments continue to pay municipal rates bills.

These structures are vandalised and often used as hideouts for criminals, drug addicts or slum lords, who rent out parts of them. Once this vandalism reaches an advanced stage, the department often employs security guards. It then incurs further costs when occupants have to be evicted through court orders.

The reality is that these buildings could have been sold for a profit or leased out before they were destroyed, generating revenue for these departments, which are widely known to be underfunded.

Then there are the parcels of government-owned vacant land across KZN which are being grabbed and used for informal settlements. This leads to unlawful dumping of refuse, illegal water and electricity connections, and environmental and health hazard concerns due to a lack of proper sanitation.

Recent health functionality oversights in eThekweni have revealed the massive negative impact and pressure on the health-care

departments caused by the growth and expansion of such settlements in the region.

Failures by the Department of Public Works have also led to increased crime, compromising citizens' safety. Yet their appeals for help from this ANC-run department have fallen on deaf ears for decades.

The question is: Why would a department that is meant to take care of government properties allow them to degenerate to such an extent? The answer is simple – because it fears that these properties will be purchased by “previously advantaged” people.

This ANC-run government would rather allow properties to be destroyed, and it fails to realise the terrible consequence of its decision to hold onto properties – more pressure on municipalities and, thereby, residents.

The national and provincial Public Works departments have done an excellent job of running government immovable assets to the ground. The damage has already been done, and it will take years and billions of and to repair.

The situation is a complicated mess that requires a change in government if it is to be fixed. The people of KZN will have the opportunity to bring about change in our province when they go to the polls next year. They deserve better.

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Spokesperson on Public Works