

**SPEECH BY HELEN ZILLE
MAYOR OF CAPE TOWN**

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

CAPE TOWN CIVIC CENTRE – 6 MARCH 2008 – 14H00

Mr Speaker, today we meet to discuss the situation that has developed in Delft following last month's eviction of several thousand people from N2 Gateway homes.

Given the serious nature of the situation in Delft, it is important that we put all the facts on the table, and debate the matter in an open forum.

Let me begin with the assurance that the City has provided, either itself or through intermediary NGOs, comprehensive services to the Delft evictees, including shelter, food, blankets, sanitation, electricity, water and waste skips.

Our officials are also preparing a piece of land in order to offer this community full, formal services and the opportunity to continue living in the area.

Mayoral Committee Member for Housing, Dan Plato, will present this council with the full details of our intervention in response to the ANC's letter that has been tabled in this council.

I have also personally visited Delft twice since the evictions to check on the condition under which people are living, once on the night of Sunday 24 February after I returned on a late flight from Durban, and again last Saturday morning.

From what I have seen I am satisfied that our officials are providing as much support as possible to the majority who wish to accept it.

I am further encouraged by a letter that we received from the Human Rights Commission on 26 February, thanking the City for our role in Delft.

There are still, however, very serious challenges associated with this situation.

Certain members of the Anti-Eviction Campaign are trying to keep evictees alongside Symphony Way in their dire and squalid circumstances and are trying to prevent them from moving into the City's tents, apparently in an attempt to keep up the pressure to move them back into houses.

As a result of this, some people have remained out in the open, withstanding the offer of shelter, although that group has gradually reduced in size.

There have also been outbreaks of diarrhoea and chicken pox, which our health officials are working to contain.

For this reason we have had to exert a very strict control of food donations coming into the area. We don't want to add food poisoning to the situation.

So, through all of these challenges, the City has been there, 24 hours a day, to assist and support the evictees in Delft.

The question is, where have the Province and National Government been? In fact where has the ANC been?

As usual, they have been more interested in inflammatory statements and public posturing, rather than assisting people in dire circumstances.

They have been more interested in trying to blame the DA in general and Frank Martin in particular for the total failure of their housing policy, which Speaker, is the real cause of this crisis in Delft.

Let me be quite plain, Speaker, it is the ANC's racist and elitist housing policy that lies at the root of this crisis.

If Cllr Martin has done something wrong it will emerge and be dealt with in both the Speaker's investigation and the current court case on the matter.

But, absurdly, the ANC and the Provincial Government have tried to portray this tragic episode as a political conspiracy. The truth, as always, is precisely the opposite of what they claim.

They have even spread ridiculous stories, like the recent gem from MEC Koleka Mqulwana, accusing me of holding secret late night meetings with the people of Delft in order to whip up racial polarisation.

The exact opposite is true.

I went at night, in my own car, after I arrived home after a trip to Durban, in order to ensure that we were managing a potential disaster situation properly and to try to defuse the situation.

Again, where was the Province, the National Government and the ANC? They were likely issuing absurd statements, like MEC Mqulwana's, that in fact do what she falsely accuses me of doing - whipping up racial conflict.

Meanwhile MEC Mqulwana and the Premier were probably warmly tucked up in bed while DA public representatives were dealing with the problems of the ANC's making on the ground.

The reason for all their noise is obvious, Speaker.

The ANC has made such a mess of the N2 Gateway Project, and has made so many promises around this project, that it is now desperately trying to find someone else to blame for its failure.

But they will not succeed in their favourite game of scapegoating. Capetonians of all races know the truth.

The truth is that the cause of the racial polarisation in this project started in 2005, when the ANC was still in power in Cape Town, but desperately worried that they would lose the 2006 local government elections.

That is the real reason that the ANC started this major project and drove it through irregular procedures, benefiting several ANC crony companies through tenders in record time. The purpose was to pretend this would benefit its own supporters, and as visibly as possible along the highway, so that the ANC's disillusioned support base would have reason to come out and vote the ANC back into power in 2006, despite that party's dismal record in the City.

This was all a big con trick of course.

In the run-up to that election, the ANC promised that the N2 Gateway would produce 22 000 houses before 2006. The result was the same as all its promises. It delivered 700 flats in Joe Slovo, and about 16 houses in New Rest. That is 3% of what was originally promised. That symbolises the ANC in government.

And worst of all, Speaker, those housing units, on well located land near to town, were allocated exclusively to middle class people while the poor residents of Joe Slovo, who had previously endured repeated fires and other miseries, were pushed 15 kilometres away, to the perimeter of the City. Amazingly, only one original Joe Slovo family qualified for a flat in the project.

The rest have been left to the pitiless mercy of Thubelisha Homes, who have dismally failed in their management tasks to communicate or facilitate the allocations process.

They have even stubbornly failed to keep the City informed, despite the fact that we nominally chair the allocations process.

It is my strong contention that had Thubelisha Homes done its job properly, communicating and explaining the beneficiary list allocations transparently and properly, these invasions could have been avoided.

Instead they aggravated the impression of massive favouritism through their secrecy and issue avoidance.

They behaved exactly like the ANC, which is not surprising, because just as the anger and resentment in Delft was reaching its peak in December, the CEO of Thubelisha was in Polokwane at the ANC's conference instead of being on the ground dealing with a crisis of his company's making.

That just proves exactly how much the Thubelisha process is an extension of the ANC.

That is why the ANC and Thubelisha have helped to pit community against community in the struggle for the Delft houses offered in a scheme that massively favours shack dwellers, who had only recently been included on the housing database, over backyarders, some of whom had been on the waiting list for over 20 years.

It was a recipe for conflict, and I warned of this from the start.

When we inherited this project, we worked hard to change the grossly unfair allocation ratio of 80:20 in favour of one group over another. We were only partially successful, bringing it down to a still hopelessly unfair 70:30 ratio. When I continued to protest the inequities and injustices of this project, I was kicked off it by the national Minister, but typically, this did not stop her from blaming the City at every turn for all the project's failures.

Despite the fact that the City had been removed from the project, the government demanded the transfer of the City's best located housing land, and when I protested, I was repeatedly accused of blocking housing delivery.

The subsequent transfer of the land under extreme duress has done nothing to accelerate housing delivery.

On the contrary, our best land has been allocated to a project that is unviable, designed to generate conflict, and that allocates many times the available housing subsidy per family to middle class housing, that could and should be delivered through financial institutions and developers without state subsidies, while the poor are marginalised and disadvantaged further.

When I made an appointment to see the Minister and warn her of latent conflict in the project, she granted me an interview but failed to arrive, leaving me to wait in vain for two hours.

I also met with representatives from Thubelisha homes to discuss the allocation process in an attempt to avoid conflict. All of this was fruitless. In the normal arrogant way, the ANC/Thubelisha coalition dismissed us, failed to provide the information we required, continued on the fateful path, and then tried to blame us when things went wrong, as we will again see here today.

It has taken me weeks of asking to actually get a beneficiary list out of the Province and Thubelisha. I am now insisting on an audit of the people actually in the homes to ensure that we have been given the right list.

Let me say it plainly, Speaker: It is the ANC's policy, arrogance and incompetence that lies at the root of this tragedy.

But their approach of providing houses for a small group of elite, well-connected people should not surprise us at all.

It is exactly the same as their so-called transformation policy that provides jobs to a small group of politically well-connected cronies instead of broadening opportunities for all. Their jobs for pals approach resulted in the Eskom crisis.

Their houses for pals approach has resulted in the Delft tragedy. That is the truth, Speaker.

If they had spent the money that was allocated to the N2 Gateway flats on creating housing opportunities for the poor, we could now have delivered 2100 such opportunities, enough to accommodate the fire victims of Joe Slovo and the families currently living in misery along the road and in the sand at Delft today. That is the reality.

Instead the N2 Gateway has left poor people of all races and in all places, extremely angry and alienated.

The people still living in shacks in Joe Slovo are angry because instead of getting the houses promised to them, they are being forced to make way for homes they can't afford.

They protested violently on the N2 last year, and took the Housing Minister to the Cape High court.

The people from Joe Slovo living in Delft houses are angry because they were told they would be able to move back to the Joe Slovo flats.

But now they can't afford them, and have to stay where they are.

The people living in backyards in Delft are angry because the shack dwellers from Joe Slovo are getting preference over them.

They have been waiting for up to 30 years on the housing list, while the Joe Slovo shack dwellers have waited as little as 4 years.

Even the people who moved into the flats in Joe Slovo are angry, because they cannot afford the rent being charged. They marched to Parliament last year in protest.

Soon after becoming mayor I warned on each of the points above. It was all entirely predictable. And let me say here without any satisfaction at all: We will probably be seeing more community conflict over this project in the months and years ahead.

It is simply not feasible, in the context of a waiting list of over 400 000 extremely poor families, to start pumping billions of Rands of state subsidies into middle class housing for a small elite.

So it is not surprising that the ANC is looking for a scapegoat.

In fact, they should be thanking us, and especially Councillor Dan Plato, as the Housing MEC did in December.

They should be thanking us for the exceptional work done in trying to contain the chaos created by this policy while ANC Ministers and MECs, as well as the management of Thubelisha Homes were in Polokwane,

On the morning before the protest that led to the invasion of houses in Delft, Cllr Plato went to a volatile community meeting at great personal risk to try and stop the people from taking the law into their own hands. He became the target of their anger,

as he tried to sort out the ANC's mess, and had to be escorted away by the police. Again I ask - where were the architects of this chaos - the national and provincial government and Tubelisha homes? They throw a match into a tinder box and walk away, leaving Dan Plato and the City to resolve the crisis, and then for good measure turn around and blame us for it. It is rich indeed.

The real lesson we need to learn is that the policy of houses for pals, just like its policy of jobs for pals, is dangerous and detrimental to our nation.

Unfortunately, I doubt that such a lesson will sink in.

The only way to ensure that Cape Town does not have more Delft-style conflicts in the future is for us to focus on helping as many people as possible, rather than trying to do a lot for the well-connected few.

This is the focus of this multi-party government.

And, contrary to the Premier's claims last week, we are spending our budgets on delivering housing opportunities, as Cllr Plato will outline in detail in a moment.

The Premier's claim that we are going to underspend our housing allocation from Province by R150 million is an outright fabrication.

We are projected to spend about 90% of our R450 million allocation for housing.

Premier Rasool's statement that the Province wants to take the housing function away from the City is also empty rhetoric from an increasingly empty vessel.

The Constitution does not allow a Provincial Government to take functions over from a municipality, unless it can be proven that a municipality cannot deliver.

However, the Multi-Party Government of Cape Town has delivered more housing opportunities than the ANC when it was in office. Here are the figures:

DA -2001/02	-	4 110 housing opportunities
DA - 2002/03	-	9 729 housing opportunities
ANC - 2003/04	-	1 808 housing opportunities
ANC - 2004/05	-	3 469 housing opportunities
ANC/MPG - 2005/06	-	4 585 housing opportunities
MPG - 2006/7	-	7 519 housing opportunities

Although there have been delays on some of our projects for 2008/9, we are projected to deliver at least 6000 housing opportunities by the end of the financial year.

This is still more than the ANC has ever delivered in Cape Town.

Having said that, it is nowhere near enough given the scale of the challenge – a backlog of 400 000 units.

We would be able to speed up the housing process significantly if the Provincial Government handed over all of the housing land it is sitting on, as the national Housing Act requires it to.

The Provincial Government holds over 434ha of vacant land in the eastern metropole alone, where demand is greatest. The National Government also holds about 150 ha of land in this area.

The only significant undeveloped piece of City land in the eastern metropole is 'The Hague' in Delft, which is currently out on tender for development.

For further projects we have to purchase land from the private sector at extremely high land prices.

Meanwhile, instead of making its housing land available for the poor, the Provincial Government has started to sell its land to the private sector to make profits.

For example, in Blueberry Hill 75 ha was sold for R18 million. This could accommodate about 6000 houses, but only 500 units in this project are being planned for the poor.

The selling price of this land by Province to private developers is a real bargain at R250 000 per hectare while the City struggles to buy land within the urban edge for less than R1 million per hectare. The Province should be transferring their land to us so that we can extent housing delivery to the poor. It is a sick joke that the ANC claims to be a pro-poor party.

Why are they giving away our prime housing land to rich developers at bargain basement prices? I can make a few guesses.

By so doing, Province is undermining housing delivery to the poor in this City.

The Housing Act also requires Province to grant housing accreditation to this municipality.

Accreditation would speed up our delivery of housing by removing the red tape of Provincial approval processes for new City housing projects, and enable us to get access to more land.

So far the Housing MEC has blocked this process, and we have had to initiate a formal intergovernmental dispute. This has already wasted more than a year, but of course that is the ANC's purpose. They don't mind if the people suffer, as long as they can block the DA's delivery.

I met with Provincial and Local Government Minister Sydney Mufamadi this morning to address this matter. I am not in a mind to be patient because the people are suffering. We have met the criteria according to law, and now we MUST get accreditation. It is not discretionary.

Community conflicts over the shortage of housing will only get worse until we resolve these matters.

And I now move a proposal that I believe will resolve this matter in the issue of the N2 Gateway, Speaker.

Proposal tabled by Alderman Helen Zille at Special Council Meeting on 6 March 2008

This Council

- a) **Resolves to challenge the unfair 70:30 housing allocations ratio between shack dwellers and backyarders respectively that is causing so much grievance and division in the N2 Gateway Project and replace it with an allocation of 50% shack dwellers and 50% backyarders in the current phase of the N2 Gateway.**
- b) **On this basis, affirms its commitment to a legal, approved method of allocating homes in the N2 Gateway Project.**
- c) **Insists that where allocations vary from approved agreements, steps be taken to correct the matter.**
- d) **Condemns, in the strongest terms the lack of transparency and lack of sound management in the allocation process as well as land invasions and the instigation of invasions.**
- e) **Wishes to thank the Council officials and Councillor Plato for the considerable and ongoing work they have undertaken in dealing with the aftermath of the recent Delft land invasions and evictions and for the rapid and positive steps that have been taken to provide shelter, food and alternative accommodation for many of the people involved in this tragic, ongoing saga.**

Proposer: Alderman Helen Zille

Signed: _____

Seconder: Cllr. Neil Ross

Signed: _____