

MORE OFFICIALS SUSPENDED IN HOUSING SCAM

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Rooting out corruption ... MEC for Cooperative Governance, Human Settlement and Traditional Affairs, Olly Mlamleli

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Two more senior officials of the department of human settlement in Free State have been suspended pending on-going investigations into the irregularity-riddled housing scam. They are facing charges of manipulation of the subsidy system, allocation list of contractors, advance payment and poor or non-inspection of completed houses by the technical staff. They both hold directorship positions in the department.

The disciplinary hearings for six other officials suspended last month for defrauding the department have started, according to Human Settlement MEC, Olly Mlamleli.

Mlamleli said this week that the department had been able to reconcile R57-million of the R500-million that was suspected to have been stolen and completed 9,000 of 20,000 unfinished houses "There are 2,000 people on the department's waiting list, according to our housing database, but they will only be able to get their houses in 2014. However, the department has set aside a budget of R91-million for all housing projects,' said Mlamleli.

When she presented her budget earlier this year, Mlamleli indicated that her department would be concentrating on completing unfinished houses in the province. An investigation conducted by the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) covers the 1994, 2005, 2008 and 2009 financial years. The probe was initiated by the national department of human settlements recently.

The investigation into this house scam covers all construction projects in the province. Some of them include incomplete houses, houses that were not built and yet contractors were paid for and addition of ghost beneficiaries to the housing list.

With the investigation going back to 1994, transgressors who have since been transferred to other departments will be traced and called to account. Mlamleli is determined not to have her department put under administration because of these shortcomings.

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The suspended provincial officials are; Chief Director in Housing Programme Management, Mamiki Mokhele; Director: Priority and Intervention Programmes Corney Twala; Fifi Makhaotse who works in the Housing Subsidies and Development section; Kaizer Maxatshwa of the Housing Development Planning and Monitoring ; Kabelo Kolozi who is the Director of Project Management, Technical Services and Loyiso Ndenze, Director: Informal Settlements and Land Tenure.

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