

Low-income housing in cities will reduce carbon

ANNA MAJAVU | 12 October, 2011 00:57



RDP houses in Carletonville have been unoccupied for two years as the Merafong municipality fights a legal battle Pictures: LEBOHANG MASHILOANE

Continuing to build housing along apartheid settlement lines will cost the public about R20-billion over the next 10 years, the financial and fiscal commission has told parliament.

"We can save 1.4% of the gross domestic product in 10 years if we use land in the six metropolitan cities efficiently," the commission's Mkhululi Ncube told parliament's human settlements committee yesterday.

Ncube said compact cities were able to make large energy savings that the current "sprawling" metros were not.

There would also be 22% less carbon emissions resulting from more efficient public transport and less travelling, Ncube added.

Government must provide a financial incentive to cities willing to build low-income blocks of flats in land close to the city centre, he said.

Government should also fund "good land to locate people closer to where they live and work and try to overcome apartheid spatial inequalities," said the commission's Tania Ajam.

Since 1994, city bosses have built very few low-income blocks of flats in formerly white areas close to the city centres, preferring instead to expand far-flung townships with tiny RDP houses.

But high emissions associated with "sprawling" cities were a real threat to human settlements, said Ncube.

"The cost is real. Climate change induces increases in water and electricity infrastructure expenditures. Municipalities will forgo the provision of essential services as they stretch their budgets to cover the impact of climate change," he added.

The commission's chairman, Bongani Khumalo, said it was up to parliament to ask the Human Settlements Department to follow its recommendations.

He implied that the department had not listened to the commission's advice.

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