

**STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION  
89/2010**

**24 June 2010**

The Opposition has received representations from purchasers at Cumberland Terraces who are far from satisfied with a number of issues relating to their flats. This does not come as a surprise to the Opposition given the history of that development and the negative reports regarding this project that have been made public.

There are purchasers who are seriously concerned at the fact that the windows of their flats do not open fully. The windows at Cumberland Terraces are outward-opening, side-hung windows with an integrated restrictor which locks automatically when the window is opened. This means that they will only open to about 20cm and in some cases, after the snagging, they open even less.

The Government, through its property company, have informed the purchasers who have complained that the restrictors are in place in order to prevent the window from swinging backwards and forwards and slamming shut. The other reason given is that it acts as a safety device to protect children.

The purchasers who have approached the Opposition are not convinced. They claim that the restrictors were adjusted further after the snagging had been carried out and that there was no consultation with them.

The Opposition considers that a number of serious questions arise from the information that has been made available to us, including whether this type of windows are appropriate for this kind of development. In many other buildings, there are windows which open inwards, which slide to the side or which tilt and turn. These have been installed in other developments. It is not known why the Government sanctioned the use of these outward-opening windows in the first place and why restrictors then had to be installed in all of them so late in the day.

The history of the construction of Cumberland Terraces was problematic from the very start. The Government showed very poor judgment in awarding the tender to a company called OEM that had no track record of this kind of development in Gibraltar. It also raised eyebrows at the time that a tender for sites at North Gorge and Buena Vista only suddenly came to include other sites at Cumberland Terraces, Bayview and Nelson's View as well. The developer had financial difficulties and the Government repossessed the OEM sites shortly after the 2007 general election. They were followed a couple of years later by the contractor Haymills, which also closed down owing the Gibraltar Government hundreds of thousands of pounds in respect of the employees who worked on the site. It was never properly explained how the company was allowed to run up such a massive debt.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Housing Minister Charles Bruzon said:

"The end result is that there are purchasers at Cumberland Terraces who have been the victims of the poor judgment of the Government and its failure adequately to supervise the project. I have met a number of very angry people who have raised a number of concerns with me of which the problem with the windows is only one. Having boasted that they had closely supervised the quality of the construction, any defects that surface are now clearly a Government responsibility for which they must answer and which they will have to rectify."