

# Home hijackers owe

## Ulundi R100 million

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ABOUT R100 million is owed to the Ulundi Municipality by illegal tenants occupying luxury homes, built by the old government for senior homeland officials. This debt is for unpaid electricity and refuse collection.

They have managed to escape the municipal debt collectors because they are not the registered owners of the houses. Among them are doctors, nurses, teachers, a magistrate, a policeman and current government officials.

The Department of Public Works, which is responsible for the 95 houses, says only 23 are illegally occupied and it is evicting the occupants. But, Ulundi Municipality's Nkosenye Zulu says about 80 houses had accumulated huge outstanding service bills.

Zulu was not exactly sure how many houses were in arrears but said, "it is a lot more than 23".

Fifteen of the houses, which were once allocated to MECs when the provincial government was based in Ulundi, are unoccupied.

The municipality also believes taxpayers' money is being squandered by the provincial government which is paying rates on these properties (so far R24 million) even though the people living there can afford to pay this themselves. This amount included rates for the unoccupied ministerial homes.

Zulu said the municipality had contemplated writing off the huge services debt after it realised that it was impossible to collect.

The houses were built in the late 1980s by the old KwaZulu homeland government and inherited by the provincial government. When the ANC took over the provincial government from the IFP and moved the seat of power to Pietermaritzburg all officials relocated leaving the properties unoccupied. Zulu said the culture of non-payment started in the late 1990s. "Since 2000 the department has paid more than R24 million for rates," he said.