

# Free upkeep for ministers' luxury homes

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Government to sign new contract for maintenance at Cape Town properties

**B**ELT-tightening doesn't include cleaning your own swimming pool or spa bath when you live in a national key point mansion.

Not only did the government buy mansions for ministers and deputy ministers in two cities, but it still organises and pays for the routine upkeep.

Now the Department of Public Works is planning to sign another two-year contract for state-paid servicing, repairs and maintenance twice a week of 28 swimming pools, five spas, 10 water features and a koi pond in 30 ministerial state-owned suburban homes in Cape Town.

Part of the deal is the twice-a-week maintenance for the five large communal swimming pools in the ministerial and MP housing complexes in Cape Town.

The cost is not yet known.

The houses are believed to be on the list of national key points that President Jacob Zuma refused to release to the DA in Parliament this week because of "security considerations".

Government budgets and annual reports have previously indicated that ministers' homes are key points.

A public works document compiled for the pool and pond contractors lists the properties.

Top of the list for luxurious living are three homes in the same street in Welgemoed, which between them have three 65 000-litre swimming pools, a spa bath, three water features and a koi pond.

Each watery spot requires



**SPENDING SPREE:** This house in Upper Claremont, Cape Town, was bought in 2010 for R8.2 million.



**MONEY NOT A PROBLEM:** The government paid R6.65 million in 2011 for this 3 040m<sup>2</sup> property in Welgemoed, Cape Town.

cleaning twice a week, at taxpayers' expense.

The Star found that 20 of the Cape Town homes were bought from July 2009 to March 2011, for ministers and deputy ministers, for a total of R121.47 million.

The others were already owned by the government, some for decades, including the Genadendal and Highstead houses on the Groote Schuur residential estate.

While buying two of the properties in January 2011 – units in a complex in Muizenberg – the state also bought

21 other properties in the same complex.

The two units on the ministers' list plus five other properties were bought on a single title deed for a total of R7.8m.

The rest were on two more title deeds, for a total of R13.48m.

All 23 properties were bought on the same day, and the sales were registered two months later, on the same day.

The national Department of Public Works, which is responsible for the houses and is organising the pool and pond cleaning, did not respond

to queries this week.

The Cape Town houses were part of a national shopping spree after the cabinet was expanded in May 2009, when at least 35 houses were bought for ministers and their deputies, starting in July 2009 in Newlands, Cape Town, and ending in March 2011 in Waterkloof, Pretoria.

The 35 houses cost R192.6m.

While national policy has been to cut government spending, and prestige spending has been cut – this year's budget is about a quarter of the 2009/10 spending – the

spending on upkeep continues unabated.

The 2013 public works budget repeats previous explanations that spending increased after the 2009 cabinet expansion because of the need for ministerial residential accommodation, and upgrading buildings and security at ministers' residences.

"In 2012/13, R11m was spent on payments for machinery and equipment for ministers and deputy ministers. Over the medium term, the department will upgrade and construct 85 prestige struc-

tures against a target of 154 in the prestige accommodation category," the department's 2013 budget states.

The upgrading and construction of the unidentified 85 sites is budgeted at R2 billion over the seven years 2009/10 to 2015/16.

As a comparison, the department's spending over the same seven years for "upgrading and construction of an estimated 157 departmental accommodation sites" is almost R1.4bn, while inner-city regeneration across various centres comes to R624.7m.