

Sona cost a whopping R11m – DA

Replies to parliamentary questions have revealed that the budget for this year's State of the Nation address (Sona) by President Jacob Zuma stands at about R11 million, according to the Democratic Alliance.

On February 2, secretary to parliament Gengezi Mgidlana told media that only R4 million had been budgeted for the event, DA chief whip John Steenhuisen said yesterday.

"But replies to written questions to the ministers of police and public works have revealed that their departments had spent a further R4.085 million

and R2.7 million, respectively," he said.

"The department of state security avoided answering the question, as is their habit, claiming that their enormous deployment to the event came from the normal operational budget of the [State Security] Agency [SSA]," Steenhuisen went on to say.

"The DA will submit an application in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act to get a clear picture of SSA resources dedicated to the event and why," Steenhuisen said.

Adding the R204 153,60 spent on deploying 441 members of the

South African National Defence Force "to maintain law and order during the opening of parliament" reveals that this year's Sona cost at least R10 989 188.

"This eye-watering amount could have been better spent on initiatives to create jobs, provide skills and training, or on education for young South Africans," Steenhuisen said.

The DA would keep probing the real cost of Sona 2017.

It will reveal how many millions was spent on having "a paranoid president deliver a speech to his own caucus", Steenhuisen said. – ANA