

Too much still being spent on ministers!

SOUTH Africans cannot be expected to pay R500 000 in taxes towards braai areas at ministerial homes.

Parliament's Standing Committee on Public Accounts said this after reports that the department of public works spent half a million on these facilities at three ministerial houses in Cape Town.

"The committee is concerned about what seems to be priorities for government.

"Is it really necessary to spend that kind of money just for a braai area for a Cabinet minister?" the oversight committee said after meeting in parliament on Tuesday.

Earlier in the month, the *Sunday Times* reported that public works had spent R30 million on five homes for ministers in Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town. It reported that three of the Cape Town homes had been kitted out with braai areas costing a total of R500 000.

The payments appear to fly in the face of efforts to curb ministerial spending.

Ministers have previously

come under scrutiny for using executive privileges to book into luxury hotels while doing government work and flying business class.

The standing committee said it was told the department owned 148 sites of "prestige accommodation" allocated to ministers and deputy ministers. Some houses were not being used.

"We requested the department to provide the committee with a report on how much each of these houses are costing the government in maintenance, rates and taxes for the past two financial years," the committee said.

It has also asked for a report on heritage sites and the cost of maintaining them.

"The committee is also concerned about the lack of a cap for the purchase of ministerial houses, because the committee has learned that the department spends as much as R9 million for a certain ministerial house."

It requested public works to report back on 29 August.

– *Fin24*