

■ PUBLIC WORKS

Spending on ministers' homes slammed

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THE DEPARTMENT of Public Works has been slammed for spending millions of rand in maintenance of ministerial homes in Cape Town.

The department was grilled by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for spending R312 million to maintain the houses of ministers and MPs.

Chairperson of Scopa Themba Godi said yesterday the department had already spent most of the budget, and was concerned it would escalate on the maintenance.

Mkhuleko Hlengwa, of the IFP, said

the costs of maintaining ministerial houses was huge.

Ministers pay rent of R1 500 a month, their deputies R950, while MPs pay rent of R207 and directors-general pay R75. Hlengwa said this was small compared to the thousands spent in maintenance of one house a month.

The department said it would soon build internal capacity to ensure it was able to do maintenance without going out to tender.

Public Works Minister Thulas Nxesi said he was reviewing the policy on ministerial homes. He told Scopa the matter would be put before Cabinet next month.

The committee was unhappy with

the minimal rental being paid. The department said it would review this policy as it was not in line with the needs of the country.

"It has become clear to me as a result of the auditor-general's findings and work here in Parliament, we are often found wanting. We must admit that. The exposure on Prestige (ministerial maintenance project) and unsafe buildings all point to management controls," said Nxesi.

He said the policy on ministerial houses dated back many years.

David Ross of the DA said senior officials in government should be paying market-related rent on these properties.