

# ‘Lack of skills’ in SA led to employment of Cubans

**TARRYN-LEIGH SOLOMONS**

tarryn-leigh.solomons@inl.co.za

THE Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is sticking to its guns as they reiterate that their reason for employing Cuban nationals as technical advisers and not South Africans, has to do with the inability to attract and retain skills in these technical fields, where the department has been facing challenges in terms of filling vacancies.

In response to a Parliamentary question from the DA, the department’s minister, Patricia de Lille, revealed that 24 Cuban nationals were employed by the department with each employee receiving a salary of R1 125 725 in the 2020/21 financial year.

The DA’s Samantha Graham Mare says she will write to De Lille to request a detailed breakdown of which projects are making use of these technical advisers and what the skills requirement is of each position.

“Minister De Lille motivates the situation by stating that there has been a dearth of the relevant skills available in South Africa and as a result, they have had to import these highly specialised skills from Cuba.

“The list of specialised skills includes engineering, construction project management and facilities management,” said Graham.

One of the entities under the department is the Council for the Built Environment (CBE).

In turn, the CBE oversees the activities of five Councils which include inter alia the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA), the South African Council for Architectural Professionals (SACAP) and the South African Council for Project and Construction Management Professionals (SACPCMP).

Mare argued that the SACPCMP has over 11 000 registered professionals in its database, ECSA has over 55 000 registered members and SACAP has 11 000 members.

“It is, thus, inconceivable that the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure was unable to locate 24 professionals from among the registered members within its own entities to provide technical advice.

The current cohort employment contract will end in November.