



**Publication:** City Press - Main  
**Title:** CABINET MINISTERS` R93m BONANZA  
**Publish date:** 21 May 2023  
**Page:** 1

**Reach:** 56056  
**AVE:** R 289748.01  
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# CABINET MINISTERS` R93m BONANZA

Kitchen upgrades, pest repellent, curtains, generators and swimming pools ... this is what your hard-earned taxes are paying for

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**A**bout R1.4 million to upgrade a kitchen, R240 000 to get rid of cockroaches, R54 000 to replace a curtain rail and R50 million to make sure that ministers' and their deputies' generators are working...

These transactions form part of the approximately R93 million the public works and infrastructure department spent from 2019 to last year to maintain the official residences of ministers, their deputies and directors-general, as well as to pay for their municipal services.

Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Sihle Zikalala revealed the amounts in response to a parliamentary question from DA MP and party spokesperson for public works Leon Schreiber.

**'SECURITY SENSITIVITIES' HINDER DISCLOSURE**

Since 2019, government has spent about R22 million on municipal services and R29.4 million on maintaining 68 ministerial houses and apartments in Cape Town.

For the 63 houses and flats in Pretoria, about R21.4 million was spent on municipal services and almost R19 million on maintenance.

A total of R93.1 million was spent on municipal services and the maintenance of the houses. Each transaction was indicated individually, although Zikalala would not say which officials live in which houses or apartments due to "security sensitivities".

The big transactions were the roughly R50 million to install generators, ensure the availability of fuel for generators and to maintain devices.

These costs were identified as the "filling of generators", "servicing of generators" and "repairing of generators", and were requested 297 times by government officials.

Almost R500 000 was paid for the installation of a generator at one ministerial residence in Moreleta Park in Pretoria.

The second-largest expenditure was R43 million for municipal expenses including property tax, garbage disposal, and water and electricity.

The single biggest expense was the R1.4 million paid to upgrade the kitchen of a minister's house in Cape Town.

**POLITICIANS AND POOLS**

Schreiber says that some of these transactions reveal possible tender corruption and need further investigation.

"For an ANC cadre housed on Albert Street in Waterloof, [Pretoria], the state paid more than

R240 000 to fumigate cockroaches, charged through three different invoices [each for R79 375].

"The replacement of a fallen curtain rail at a house on Johann Rissik Drive in Waterloof Ridge cost R54 000. And the replacement of light bulbs at a ministerial mansion located on Clark Street in Waterloof cost more than R19 000.

"Ministers and their deputies seemingly feel strongly that their swimming pools must be in working order. Since 2019, the taxpayer has had to cough up 388 times for upgrades or repairs to swimming pools.

"This was the single most common maintenance expense," Schreiber points out.

Also, air conditioning systems were installed, repaired or upgraded 90 times.

Another regular expense was making sure that the security systems at ministerial residences function correctly. For example, a minister who lives on Clark Street in Waterloof once asked for R191 000 to fix broken cameras, while the maintenance of an electric fence costs about R25 000 each time work is carried out on it.

**MINISTERIAL BENEFITS COST MORE THAN R1 BILLION A YEAR**

Schreiber told City Press' sister paper Rapport that these benefits, all of which are granted to ministers by the Ministerial Handbook, cost South Africans more than R1 billion a year.

"This is why we [the DA] have also already tabled the Cut Cabinet Perks Bill in Parliament, which will bring transparency and oversight to the process of including benefits in the ministerial handbook.

"Our country simply cannot afford to keep paying for the luxurious lifestyles of ministers who live like rock stars while load shedding, unemployment and poverty are at crisis levels."

The amendment bill will place the Ministerial Handbook, which is regulated by the president, under the supervision of the National Assembly. The matter will soon be heard by the National Assembly.

The bill was drawn up after City Press' sister publication Rapport broke the news last year that President Cyril Ramaphosa quietly changed the rules governing the Cabinet's benefits to completely exempt ministers and their deputies from paying for any municipal services at their official residences.

A week later, the presidency revoked this decision after it provoked great public outrage, even though former minister in the presidency Mondli Gungubele had initially defended the decision, saying that a minister's job security is "very uncertain".

In an interview with journalist Stephen Grootes on SABC in October, it was pointed out to Gungubele that ministers earn astronomical salaries - about R2.4 million per year - and live comfortable lives.

In reply, Gungubele said: "I'm also a minister, so I



**CAF, HERE WE COME** Relebohile Ratomo of Orlando Pirates celebrates a goal during his team's Dstv Premiership match against AmaZulu at Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban yesterday. Pirates' four goals in their final game of this season guaranteed them a spot in the CAF Champions League next season. They finished second on the Dstv Premiership log  
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can come across as being defensive, [but] the ministerial job is one of the most insecure jobs. Ministers buy their own houses, they don't have a housing subsidy; including MPs.

"They also pay for their medical aid ... I think I am paying R10 000 a month, as a minister. A lot of things are not subsidised. [This is] a job that you can leave at any time, and [it is] a job that [needs one to be] involved 24/7."

The public works and infrastructure department

**R19k**

WHAT IT COST TO REPLACE ONE LIGHT BULB AT A MINISTER'S HOME

failed to respond to enquiries by the time of going to print.

Last year, City Press reported that of the country's 59 ministers and deputy ministers, 22 had bought a new vehicle since March 2019. Collectively, they spent R19 million on their purchases and 11 of them paid more for their new vehicles than they are allowed to according to the Ministerial Handbook. According to the handbook, since the end of 2019, ministers are allowed to spend up to R700 000 on a new car.