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Some live in comfort without load shedding . . .

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Taxpayers have shelled out more than R7 million over four years to keep the lights on at ministers' and deputy ministers' homes in Pretoria during state-controlled rolling blackouts.

In addition, since June 2019 the public has paid R18.3 million for Cabinet members' power consumption and R7.5 million for water use at their homes in Cape Town.

In Pretoria, their power and water bills amounted to R22 million.

Sihle Zikalala, minister of public works and infrastructure, said in a written reply to questions from DA MP Leon Schreiber that South Africans paid an additional R3.4 million for the upgrade of security measures at ministerial houses.

The questions are part of a wider investigation into the misuse of the Ministerial Handbook.

Schreiber says the total bill for free water, power and security upgrades at close to 100 ministerial homes amounts to close o R60 million.

"Members of the Cabinet have already used almost R58 million of taxpayers' money for free water, power and security upgrades at 97 luxury homes in Cape Town and Pretoria, for which the taxpayers are also paying. The worst is that while South Africans have had to bear the irreversible consequences of load shedding, these ministers are protected from years of mismanagement and corruption at the power supplier," he says.

"While the people suffer, the ministers can sit next to their swimming pools, enjoy uninterrupted power and free water behind impenetrable security systems, in a country with 30 million people living in poverty and suffering from crime every day."

He says the DA wants South Africans to realise how much the benefits enjoyed by ministers really cost



Khumbudzo Ntshavheni



Sihle Zikalala

them, precisely because there is no law that covers this issue.

Schreiber says the party informed the Public Protector that there is no law that provides for the benefits described in the Ministerial Handbook.

"We are in the process of investigating other abuses that the manual allows, so as to make sure that money is not wasted," he says.

In her feedback about the Cabinet meeting, Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni on Thursday said that Cabinet was concerned about the continuous misrepresentation of the manual and Cabinet members' benefits.

"Ministers do get load shedding," she emphasised, but only in their Cape homes.

The state should provide housing for Cabinet members, she said.

"Keep in mind that they have to work at Parliament in Cape Town and in Pretoria.

"That's why the Groote Schuur and Bryntirion estates in Cape Town and Pretoria, respectively, were purchased for their use before 1994, and continue to be used to provide housing to ministers and deputy ministers during their tenure."

Bryntirion Estate forms part of the Union Buildings and Mahlamba Ndlopfu, which are national key points and therefore are not subjected to load shedding.

"The benefits are continuously reviewed to promote good governance, especially in terms of cost cutting, cost effectiveness and efficiency."

According to Ntshavheni, MPs are entitled to support staff, but the number of posts in this regard has also been reduced over time. Ministers may now appoint seven members of staff - they were previously able to hire 13 support staff members.

Their advantages are aligned with their dignity, knowledge and experience in managing their departments, Ntshavheni said.