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Page: 2

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Shocking electricity bill

TAXPAYERS: PAY MILLIONS TO KEEP POWER ON AT HOMES OF MINISTERS

» Over R18m spent on power for houses in Cape Town and R7m in Pretoria.

Molefe Seeletsa

As the country continues to experience load shedding, at least R7 million has been spent on alternative power supply for ministers' official residences in Pretoria since June 2019.

This was revealed by new Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Sihle Zikalala in response to written questions by Democratic Alliance (DA) MP Leon Schreiber.

All ministers and their deputies have two official homes in Pretoria and Cape Town.

In a cost breakdown, Zikalala confirmed that his department has spent R18.3 million on electricity alone for ministers and their deputies' homes in Cape Town, while R7.4 million has been forked out for water.

No money was spent on alternative power supply – which include generators, inverters and solar – and water supply solutions such as water reticulation and purification for ministerial homes in Cape Town, in addition to security upgrades.

With respect to their official residences in Pretoria, however, just over R22 million in public funds has paid the ministers' electricity and water bills.

The public works department said this included the R7 million on procuring and installing alternative power supply systems for the Pretoria houses.

Both ministers and their dep-



GLEEFUL

The Cambridge Boat Club squads celebrate their wins over Oxford University after the 168th annual men's boat race on the River Thames in London yesterday. The boat race was first raced by crews from Oxford and Cambridge University in 1829 and is now one of the world's oldest and most famous amateur sporting events. Picture: AFP

uties have not received any alternative water supply system in the country's capital.

Regarding security upgrades, the money spent amounted to R1.3 million for ministers and R2 million for deputy ministers.

According to the Ministerial Handbook, the ministers are capped at R5 000 per month for each house, and have to pay any amount exceeding that in their personal capacity.

President Cyril Ramaphosa last year scrapped the limit, which would have seen ministers

receive electricity and water for free. He later reversed his decision after the public expressed outrage at the politicians being exempt from paying for municipal services.

Earlier this month, Ramaphosa denied that his ministers were "living like rock stars" as suggested by the DA.

The party recently marched to the lavish Bryntirion Estate in Arcadia, Pretoria, where ministers reside.

According to Schreiber, the DA has asked the public protector's

office to investigate whether the perks received by Cabinet ministers were legal.

"We have laid a complaint with the public protector to investigate the fact that we don't find any law that authorises the president to do this. That was submitted in October last year," Schreiber told *The Citizen* on 13 March.

"It is still being considered by the public protector, but we don't know when that will be finalised – and it doesn't seem to be getting any urgency."

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