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UPGRADES

# R10.3m bill for ministers' homes, including R143 000 for curtains

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TAXPAYERS have footed a bill of R10.3million for the maintenance of ministerial residences since the formation of the Government of National Unity. This figure, revealed by Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Dean Macpherson in response to parliamentary questions, includes R143000 allocated for the replacement of curtains at one of the residences.

The inquiry was sparked by MK Party MP Visvin Reddy, who sought a detailed breakdown of expenses related to maintenance projects such as kitchen refurbishments, pest control, curtain installations, and generator servicing at ministerial residences in Bryntirion Estate, Pretoria, and Groote Schuur Estate, Cape Town, since April last year.

According to Macpherson, R7.3 m was spent on maintenance in Cape Town, while R3.5m was allocated to

the Pretoria residences.

Notably, the minister confirmed that there were no kitchen upgrades or pest control services rendered at Bryntirion Estate.

Macpherson reported that maintenance work carried out in Pretoria included various repairs to ceilings and floor coverings, door repairs and lock replacements, fixing water-damaged cupboards, replacement of damaged wooden floors, wall crack repairs, and painting, as well as replacement of a water-damaged ceiling.

"The total amount spent is R1 582 160.54," he said.

Additional expenses included plumbing repairs of R1 310 641.82, generator servicing costing R364 125, and R558 040 spent on mechanical services, which included servicing fire extinguishers, servicing of kitchen and laundry equipment, repairs of gates, and servicing of air conditioners.

A total of R956 682.54 in costs was incurred on electrical services such

as servicing the mini substations, repairing damaged underground electrical cable, repairing street lights, wall plugs, and dead light bulbs. Only one set of curtains was procured for a house assigned to an unnamed deputy minister.

"Pretoria office has only procured curtains for one house allocated to a deputy minister at an amount of R143 000.00 due to the extent of damage suffered to them," Macpherson said.

He said the total amount spent on Bryntirion Estate was R3 591 649.90.

"The specified transactions were supported by the head of technical maintenance and approved by the director as per the delegation," he said.

Turning to Groote Schuur Estate, Macpherson indicated that there were also no kitchen upgrades or curtain installations. However, the pest control services were rendered at a cost of R12 320, with five generators serviced for R478 907. The maintenance of

grounds and garden was conducted at a cost of R1454 760, alongside cleaning fees of R185 200.

Additional charges for electrical repairs totalled R59 598.40, plumbing repairs were R36 920.75, and fees for fire extinguishers and hydrants were R25 722.68, while automated garage doors and gate motor repairs were R61 263.17.

Macpherson said the largest sum of R5053 761.13 was spent on structural repairs, which included roof repairs, damp wall fixes, waterproofing, painting and varnish, repairs to wooden floors, storm water drainage, and laundry equipment. "The total amount spent is R7 368 453.13. Work was approved by the maintenance team."

Meanwhile, the minister has disclosed the value of the 119 ministerial houses. In a reply to ActionSA MP Malebo Patricia Kobe, Macpherson said the total book value for Cape Town residences is R81 824 575, and

for Pretoria residences, R44 439 054. He also said the total market value for Cape Town residences is R324 641 000, while that for Pretoria residences was R91 336 000.

The minister furnished this information in a follow-up question by Kobe after earlier this year, he said he was not satisfied with the information that had been provided to him, and in large parts it was incomplete, with a mix of Land Affairs Board valuations for properties on estates and no valuations on standalone properties.

Macpherson said that for evaluations given by the Land Affairs Board, there were differently evaluated properties of similar size in the same estate or complex. "I also questioned why municipal valuations were not used."

He stated that the reason given to him was that the department could not source municipal values for some properties, resulting from incorrect property descriptions, and others that were privately owned.