

Mister President, save our small businesses by helping government get out of the way

By **Henro Krüger MP** - DA Shadow Deputy Minister of Small Business Development

It's an honour to serve the Business community in South Africa. Unfortunately, it's hell to do so under the ANC government.

The continuous mere lip service on the part of the President and his Cabinet on the importance of SMMEs as the engine room of this economy has transformed our small businesses into limping stepchildren of Government. This is evident if we examine the budget; maybe the Minister of Finance, in his self-proclaimed yet misguided wisdom, thinks that the Department of Small Business needs a small budget.

Year after year, we must witness the deterioration of the ease of doing business for entrepreneurs both old and young. Red tape is slowly but surely wiping out the business community.

The Department, Seda, and Sefa are examples of an extremely unfriendly business environment.

Their handling of the support to the small business community during the hard lockdown and the period after that is atrocious.

From start to finish, there was no leadership from the Minister, and they executed the process on a trial-and-error basis, all to the disadvantage of small businesses. The process was a textbook case of burdensome bureaucracy and administrative burdens.

Rural and informal businesses were hit the hardest by the irrational decisions of the National Coronavirus *cum* Communist Command Centre during the lockdown.

Chair, if you study the budget, you will understand that there is no light at the end of the tunnel for small businesses.

This ANC government is moving towards a disabled business environment because of the after-effects of the pandemic; three decades of excessive regulatory burdens have hindered the starting and running of small businesses, and subsequently also hindered economic growth and creation of jobs.

Policy uncertainty and reluctance to confront the Red Tape problem has resulted in tragedy and embarrassment from which there may be no return.

Chris Darren of SDI once said that "Red Tape is a symptom of failing regulatory governance, broken systems and deteriorating administrative capacity in service non-delivery."

Chairperson, you will agree with me that this shoe fits the ANC Government one hundred percent.

Government must:

- Create capacity to measure, control, and reduce the impact on business of regulatory measures;
- Ensure the due consideration of multiple options by organs of state to achieve the objectives of Government;
- Measure and reduce Red Tape and the costs associated with red tape when conducting business in the Republic of South Africa on all levels of Government; and
- Create a business-friendly environment in the Republic of South Africa.

Hence the importance of the Ease of Doing Business Bill that seeks to provide for the establishment of an administrative unit to assist the executive, members of Parliament, committees of the Houses, and self-regulatory bodies. The Bill also seeks to assist businesses in overcoming red tape and other counterproductive challenges in the business environment.

If the President is serious about the survival of our Small Business Community, he will convince his cabinet to work with the DA to make this Bill a reality and to reallocate the ministry to his office to the benefit of our entrepreneurs.

Mister President, please save our small businesses by helping government get out of the way.

It is inspiring to be alive in the season of change. Change is a reality, and the business community needs change now.