

Speech by the City's Executive Mayor, Alderman Patricia de Lille, during City/business engagement held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre today

Deputy Mayor, Alderman Ian Neilson,

Members of the Mayoral Committee,

Mr Stephen Seaka, Head of Absa Group Public Sector Coverage,

Representatives of business organisations,

Honoured guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, goeie môre, molweni,

I would like to welcome all of you to this important engagement.

I think that it is long overdue.

The City of Cape Town is committed to working with business to create the economic enabling environment that creates opportunities – not only for the private sector but for individuals as well.

This approach has resulted in us devoting a lot of time to direct meetings with companies and people within the private sector.

It has also meant a lot of bilateral meetings with business organisations.

Those meetings will continue as we need to give everyone a tailored approach to find the right fit for them in doing business with and in Cape Town.

But we have not yet had a meeting with this kind of forum, where representatives across the business world get an opportunity to interact with City leaders.

I wanted to create a space where we can engage in a dialogue with one another and strengthen our partnership even further.

Because I strongly believe that we need a partnership between civil society, government and business.

We are here to talk about part of that triangle: business and government.

I am sure that most of you here interact with all three levels of government to differing degrees.

What we want to assure you of is that you will always find a willing partner ready to assist in the City of Cape Town.

We know that we are not able to solve our social challenges alone.

We do not take an approach that says that government knows best and indeed knows everything.

And we do not take the resources that business provides for granted.

We regard all of our residents as shareholders.

And in that kind of board meeting, the private sector is a critical group.

Not only do you help us deliver quality services with your rates and tariffs, you create the jobs that help others contribute their part to our finances.

We believe that we are, to an extent, holding up our end of the bargain.

In Cape Town, as you know, you get accurate charges, your water runs and the lights come on when you flick the switch.

While we cannot predict everything, I would like to think that we will not soon be experiencing near city-wide black-outs for 48 hours like our colleagues up north.

What I can predict is that any black-out would be met with the swiftest action from the very top of the organisation, starting with the Mayor's office.

In fact, Eskom and the City now have a quarterly meeting which is a demonstration of how seriously we take electricity provision.

Indeed, we have the lowest interruption rates and duration of interruption rates in the country.

We are now providing Eskom with resources to extend electrification to those places in their supply areas that still require it.

In total, there have been over 186 000 connections.

But I think all of you know that – and you know how seriously we take you and your organisations.

But apart from what we already do for each other, I would like us to take our relationship to the next level.

I want us to explore ways where the private sector and the City can help each other even more.

We will only solve our social problems with a united front and a 'business unusual' approach.

I believe that the City is coming to the table in finding new ways to help business.

As you know, the Council has already adopted direct financial incentives for businesses willing to invest in Atlantis.

These incentives include medium-use electricity tariffs charged at last year's prices, waived development charges, and land made available for purchase at reduced rates per municipal valuations, which includes land intended for developments in the green technology cluster.

We have extended our general incentives programme throughout the entire metro by beginning a process of reorganising our Economic Development Department to promote business areas and provide an information service of the range of direct and indirect incentives across all three levels of government and government agencies.

And we are pioneering a new approach to business by appointing an investment facilitator in the Mayor's office – someone who will help direct and unlock the different types of investment when people approach the City.

This is in addition to numerous business improvement processes that are reducing application times and new zoning schemes that make for a rational planning environment.

And we have made sure that those who do business with the City get a fair deal in terms of City contracts and tenders.

The City of Cape Town has achieved a Level 4 BBBEE rating in the latest BEE verification audit conducted by leading economic empowerment rating agency, Empowerdex.

The City of Cape Town recognises the value of quantifying our BBBEE status as part of our commitment to redress and to building opportunities for all residents of our city.

This latest BBBEE rating achieved by the City of Cape Town reflects an improvement from the Level 5 rating obtained last year.

Our Deputy Mayor, Alderman Ian Neilson, will give further details of our procurement processes.

I have also asked Councillor Grant Pascoe to speak with you about events opportunities, Councillor Brett Herron to present our transport plans, Councillor Garreth Bloor to demonstrate our 'red tape to red carpet' approach and Japie Hugo and Claus Rabe to present our economic indicators for urban areas methodology.

These submissions should go a long way towards demonstrating our real commitment to working with the private sector and creating the space to engage constructively.

But we also then need you, your organisations and your companies to come to the party in as far as addressing our social challenges are concerned.

We know that many of you are engaged in some form of corporate social investment (CSI).

This spending leads to many worthwhile initiatives in our communities and, indeed, helps change lives in many cases.

But a real way of working together would be to combine the work that the City is doing with the investment available from business to truly maximise our impact out there in the world.

Instead of disjointed efforts, let's combine forces and guarantee that we make a real difference.

In that regard, I would ask you to help fund or join in four key programmes at this stage.

The first is our Neighbourhood Safety Officers (NSOs).

These NSOs patrol areas and become local experts and community protectors who help arrest many of the petty criminals that add to an area's decline.

We have seen tremendous results with them in areas like Muizenberg.

The second is the provision of traffic officers where businesses fund officers at key traffic points, helping with transport management in different areas.

The third is our Rent-a-Cop programme that helps install an enforcement officer in an area.

The fourth is to provide on the job training for recent graduates, such as the City does with our internship and apprentice programme.

And the fifth is sponsoring field workers for attending to social issues.

All of these are worthwhile initiatives that help improve communities directly, have been shown to have great value and great success, and are part of existing programmes that businesses can directly access.

I think that we all need to show each other signs of good faith in order to strengthen our relationship beyond rhetorical commitments.

And if we are able to do so, the people of Cape Town will be the ultimate winners.

In conclusion, let me thank you again for joining us in this forum.

I would also like to say a special word of thanks to our sponsors, ABSA, and our hosts, the Cape Town International Convention Centre.

This will not be a once-off affair.

I want us to meet with you, as the representatives of your organisations, once or twice a year and take this dialogue forward by making it a living commitment.

And I hope in turn that you take the feedback and issues provided here back to your members.

And when you do, let them know that the private sector has a constant and grateful friend in the City of Cape Town.

Thank you, baie dankie, enkosi.