

BUDGET VOTES

Vote 38: Tourism

Hon. KP Sithole, MP

22 July 2020

Honourable Members, South Africa is in its worst possible state since the dawn of democracy filled us with the hope that our beautiful country and cultures would bring about economic development and sustainability through tourism.

Tourism in South Africa must not only protect our cultural heritage but also encourage world class tourism and leading innovations, attractions, buildings and sites.

We accept that the demands of Covid-19 - under which this budget has been adjusted - have found no place for international and even domestic tourism.

The pandemic demands that we practise social distancing and impose travel restrictions to safeguard our people. As a result, this Department has been the hardest-hit by the lockdown regulations, with over 700 000 jobs at risk, causing widespread financial instability and hunger.

With tourism generally adding R272 billion into our economy each year, we cannot afford for this sector to not return to - at minimum - its former level of contribution.

The IFP is concerned that the reduction of budget from this Department will negatively affect the sector's ability to remain prepared for a potential and partial opening of the economy.

During this time, this Department should not take such a huge reduction in their budget. In fact, the Department should be implementing training programmes to ensure proper education on social distancing and hygiene for tourism activities in the near future.

If there are no tourist activities under lockdown, what are municipal officials assigned to tourist activities doing? Officials must not be left to sit at home while they could be preparing or even assisting government to come up with a strategic plan to reopen the sector with the necessary precautions.

Furthermore, this Department is very weak on providing a plan and is already bailing itself out from providing a well-thought out recovery plan by stating that Covid-19 is unpredictable.

The tourism industry needs clear support, and incentives must be offered to local citizens to encourage them to support South African tourism, like what was done in Germany.

We need certainty with this industry, and currently the only certainty we have is that of corruption. For example, we have no idea as to what happened to the R200 million

relief scheme. There has been very little transparency and we want to know who benefitted from the money - and they must account for every cent.

Finally, the Department needs to work on a plan for better communication about and exposure for rural tourism.

The neglect of rural tourism is a hinderance to our economy, as there is a large market that has been untapped. Rural tourism needs to be at the top of the agenda, especially when promoting it for local travel.

The IFP very cautiously supports the Budget.

I thank you.

Contact:

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