



BUSINESSBOTSWANA

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PRESS STATEMENT

TO: All media houses

FROM: Business Botswana President, Mr Gobusamang Keebine

DATE: 30 March 2020

SUBJECT: PRIVATE SECTOR PROPOSED MITIGATIONS TO RELIEF THE ECONOMY DURING COVID-19

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19, Business Botswana (BB) has been engaging with government on the economic impact as well as mitigations thereof to support business the industry during and after the pandemic.

BB is however, concerned about the conflicting statements particularly relating to truckers as providers of essential services and products. The fact that the action is with “immediate effect” has caught both business and the larger populace by surprise.

BB is also worried about the job losses due to the virus if preventive activities are not handled in a coordinated manner

Business Botswana’s response team, has made initial submissions to Government and is reliably informed that our areas of concern were adopted. We are therefore optimistic that our input will aid the strategies for combating COVID -19 including economic recovery.

Although Botswana has not yet recorded a confirmed case, Business Botswana supports all efforts by Government including the lockdown to minimise the spread of the virus. BB has therefore proposed a 72 hours’ notice period before lockdown to ensure a smooth transition and preparedness.

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BB recommendations on operations are as follows:

- i. Suspension of the BPC tariff increase.**

This increase is counter-productive to the assistance packages and any increase in BPC pricing would then need to subsequently be built into the assistance packages. Also at this time when businesses have been severely wakened, the increase in power shall exacerbate the already subdued business conditions which would lead to even more layoffs. Equally this increase in tariff directly impact employees who have lost their jobs or are on reduced salaries.
- ii. Public transport management systems**

We propose passenger limitation number to 60% of vehicle capacity before lockdown and at lockdown for essential services providers as they travel to their designated workstations. All necessary hygienic measures in place must be enforced including social distancing in buses, mini taxis, taxis and cabs.
- iii. BB is concerned at the proposed P 2 Billion budget, as in our view, this budget must be a discussed matter taking all into consideration. More so that Business Botswana has proposed the following multi-sectorial stimulus package:**
 - a) Tax holiday**

To help cushion businesses during the crisis, time frame: 4 months and must include PAYE, VAT reduction.
 - b) Wage Relief**

We recommend Government to boost wages in order to minimise abrupt layoffs which can destabilise the economic. BB proposes for government to consider a wage relief for workers earning between P1 - P5, 000 gross income for the next 3 months.
 - c) Loan repayment holiday**

This will ease cash flow pressures on businesses particularly the SMMEs; also accord them opportunity to restructure their operations, adapt to the new operating environment and survive the crisis.

Business Botswana has further proposed the following as essential services and goods to operate during lockdown:

GOODS

- 1) Food** *(i) Any food product (cooked or uncooked), including non-alcoholic beverages; (ii) Animal food; and (iii) Chemicals, packaging and ancillary products used in the production of any food product.*
- 2) Cleaning and Hygiene Products** *(i) Toilet Paper, sanitary pads, sanitary tampons, condoms, deodorant; (ii) Hand sanitiser, disinfectants, soap, alcohol for industrial use, household cleaning products, and personal protective equipment; and (iii) Chemicals, packaging and ancillary products used in the production of any of the above.*

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- 3) **Medical:** (i) *Medical and Hospital Supplies, equipment and personal protective equipment; and (ii) Chemicals, packaging and ancillary products used in the production of any of the above.*
- 4) **Fuel, including coal and gas**
- 5) **Basic goods,** including airtime and electricity.

SERVICES Categories of essential services shall be confined to the following services:

- 1) Medical, Health (including Mental Health), Laboratory and Medical services;
- 2) Disaster Management, Fire Prevention, Fire Fighting and Emergency services;
- 3) Financial services necessary to maintain the functioning of the banking and payments environment, including the BSE and similar exchanges, as well as Insurance services;
- 4) Production and sale of the goods listed in category A, above;
- 5) Grocery stores, including tuck-shops and quick shops;
- 6) Connectivity (telecommunication and internet), Electricity, water, gas and fuel production, supply and maintenance;
- 7) Critical jobs for essential government services, including Social Grant Payments;
- 8) Birth and death certificates, and replacement identification documents;
- 9) Essential municipal services;
- 10) Care services and social relief of distress provided to older persons, mentally ill, persons with disabilities, the sick, and children;
- 11) Funeral services, including mortuaries;
- 12) Wildlife Management, Anti-poaching, Animal Care and Veterinary services;
- 13) Newspaper, broadcasting and telecommunication infrastructure and services;
- 14) Production and sale of any chemicals, hygiene products, pharmaceuticals for the medical or retail sector;
- 15) Cleaning, sanitation, sewerage, waste and refuse removal services;
- 16) Services related to the essential functioning of courts, judicial officers, the Master of the High Court, Sheriffs and legal practitioners required for those services;

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- 17) Essential BURS services defined by the Commissioner of BURS;
- 18) Police, military medical personnel and soldiers, correctional services officials and traffic management services;
- 19) Postal services and courier services related to transport of medical products;
- 20) Private security services;
- 21) Diamonds, coal, copper & Nickel and essential mining;
- 22) Accommodation used for persons rendering essential services, quarantine, isolation and the lockdown;
- 23) Production, manufacturing, supply, logistics, transport, delivery, critical maintenance and repair in relation to the rendering of essential services including components and equipment;
- 24) Transport services for persons rendering essential services and goods, and transportation of patients;
- 25) Services rendered by the Executive, members of Parliament, , Members of Local Councils, the Judiciary, traditional leaders and National Office Bearers of Political Parties represented in Parliament;
- 26) Members of Private (Business Botswana) and Public Task Forces dealing with COVID19.
- 27) Transport and logistics in respect of essential goods as set out in and above to neighbouring countries.
- 28) Providers of cooked food as long as these are delivered with minimal contact for consumption off-premises, delivery will be defined as a) Delivery to a place of residence or work. b) Delivery to a vehicle via a drive-thru service or otherwise.

The list above is an evolving list hence more could be added.

Business Botswana still remain committed to supporting Government during this time and furthermore, Business Botswana is working on a private sector relief and recovery plan which will be shared with Government in due course.

We further encourage the business community and general public to continue to adhere to the health and safety measures as prescribed by the Ministry of Health and Wellness and World Health Organisation.

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