



Eastern Cape Ministerial Imbizo led by **Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams**

The Minister for Small Business Development (SBD), Ms Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams hands on deck with the Executive Mayor Princess Faku led a Ministerial Imbizo (MI) at the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, City Hall, East London on 08th September 2023.

Delegates from Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) led by Acting Chief Executive Officer Nkosinathi Mbatha as well as Mxolisi Matshamba the head honcho at Small Enterprise Finance Agency (sefa) also participated in the Ministerial Imbizo.

The Ministerial Imbizo is an integrated planning model implemented by the DSBD which seeks to ensure an integrated approach to tackling small business problems and providing long term solutions. The engagement is also aimed at fostering collaborations between government, businesses, and residents to find solutions to existing small business challenges.

The Department of Small Business Development is driven by the mandate to lead and coordinate an integrated approach to the promotion and development of Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) and Co-operatives, and to ensure an enabling legislative and policy environment to support their growth and sustainability. The execution of this mandate will lead to a transformed economy, increased employment, and the reduction of poverty and inequality.

The Ministerial Imbizo was a get together and information sharing session between Ndabeni-Abrahams her departmental leader's hands in glove with various Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs), Co-operatives, informal traders, government officials and big businesses representatives gathered in a room and sharing tips on how best to resuscitate the economy in the port city and bring in small entrepreneurs on to the table.

The Executive Mayor of Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, Princess Faku delivered the opening address, welcoming Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams and her entourage which included Seda's Chief Executive Officer Nkosinathi Mbatha and sefa's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Mxolisi Matshamba as well as members from the Department of Small Business Development.

Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality is one of the two Metropolitan municipalities in the Eastern Cape Province and is a pivotal port city used to export automobiles from the giant Mercedes Benz plant on the shores of the Nahoon river mouth as well as being a strategic location with a booming East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ) which is home to various small and medium enterprises producing a variety of export goods and automobile spares.

The metro includes rural towns of Tsholomnqa, Bisho and the sprawling Mdantsane which is home to over two million residents as well as a host of small villages bordering the metropolis and King Williams Towns (KWT) on the doorsteps.

"On behalf of the people of BCMM, it is my greatest honour to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to each one gathered here at his historic city hall. We come together with immense gratitude and appreciation for the unwavering support we have received from Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams and her very dedicated team at DSBD and its twin agencies Seda and sefa," said Ms Faku. Executive Mayor Princess Faku is the first female to don the mayoral chains at the metro council since its amalgamation in 1996.

"Just recently we hosted a successful BRICS Ministerial Outreach Programme, which exemplified the District Development Model in action. "The approach emphasizing a unified plan for the entire government, has been instrumental in promoting a coordinated and efficient provision of services, ultimately minimizing the duplication of efforts," Ms Faku said.

"Within the BCMM, we have established a dedicated unit for small enterprise development under the Directorate for Economic Development and Agencies (DEDA). It operates through three business support centers in Duncan Village, Mdantsane and KWT," said Ms Faku. Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality has a long-standing relationship with established SMMEs, business institutes like Nelson Mandela eHub, Black Umbrella and the famous Lovedale College.

"Honorable Ndabeni-Abrahams, we firmly believe that the spirit of entrepreneurship should find its anchor in strong partnerships and collaborative efforts here in BCMM, such as large corporates like Coca-Cola's 'Bizness in a Box' initiative which is an attempt to lift up townships businesses by converting containers to small business spaces such as spaza shops, internet cafes and food shops" added Ms Faku. Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams rose to the podium and urged local big businesses to team up with SMMEs in all aspects of businesses.





“We also urge big businesses like in East London to work with SMMEs.”

“In government procurement policy we give a certain percentage of work to SMMEs or Co-operatives in order to uplift them and ensure they also participate in meaningful state economic welfare,” said Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams. “In that case we also urge big businesses like Mercedes Benz here in East London to work with SMMEs in its production lines and not only rely on imports or big businesses to supply it with components,” Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams added.

“I think local companies can supply top quality components for any vehicle, hence I urge the leaders at the plant here in West Bank to consider using local companies when sourcing out components like brake pads, seats, seat covers, electrical work and dashboard covers,” Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams elaborated.

National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NAFCOC), Provincial Chairperson, Ms Chwayita Zitute called for more state intervention in the policing in the metro, citing recent incidents involving robberies and kidnapping of small businesses owners in various districts of the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality.

Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, City Manager, Mr Mxolisi Yawa called on SMMEs to be bold and stand up and fight for their slice of pie from the city’s big businesses.

“Local small and medium businesses must stand up and be counted, when it comes to doing business with big conglomerates, we cannot

always wait for hand downs when we have the capabilities of downing our own work and trading with big companies abroad and her at home,” said Mr Yawa.

“Let’s make quality products that are needed by the market and stop making mediocre products that will not even sell here at home. Mercedes Benz needs high quality products, which can be made here by locals and not be imported from Germany, hence I call on our industrialist to come up with business strategies to make quality products that can be used by either Mercedes Benz or by other vehicular manufacturers in the world,” Yawa added.

Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams disbursed business equipment to 63 various informal traders listed as beneficiaries under the DSBD flagship Informal and Micro Enterprise Development Programme (IMEDP).

Informal and Micro Enterprise Development Programme is a programme aimed at unlocking the potential of informal and micro enterprises by creating an enabling environment which allows them to sustain their businesses and evolve into thriving entrepreneurs that will participate in the economy. IMEDP is a 100% grant which aims to develop and strengthen the capacity of credible Informal and or Micro Enterprises through the provision of access to information, business development support services, business infrastructure (machinery, tools, equipment).

Ms Chwayita Metele an entrepreneur from Mdantsane received catering equipment for her catering business in Mdanstane township.

"I was one of the recipients of Informal and Micro Enterprise Development Programme and I will now grow my business and will be hiring three more people to assist me during meals preparation and serving periods," said Ms Metele.

Chief Executive Officer at Small Enterprise Finance Agency (sefa), Mr Mxolisi Matshamba and Chief Executive Officer at Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) Nkosinathi Mbatha from Seda called on Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises to make use of the two agencies fully by submitting funding as well as business model applications for consideration.

The Department of Small Business Development used the Ministerial Imbizo and Informal Micro Enterprise Development Programme handover to provide businesses with opportunities to grow and become part of a more inclusive economy

where the exhibitors had the opportunity to sell their products and promote their businesses. The Department and its agencies SEDA and sefa made sure that present various exhibitors and local members were provided with the information about the offers of the Departments programmes on the exhibition stand, offerings like The Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) which is a youth start-up support programme intended to stimulate the establishment and growth of youth-owned businesses, SheTradesZA improves access to investment for women-owned enterprises and promote business opportunities.

The Township and Rural Empowerment Programmes (TREP) supports informal, micro, and small enterprises and cooperatives in the rural and township economies. The mentioned programmes were promoted at the exhibition stand during the Ministerial Imbizo held in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality.

