

Property boss excited about BCM talks

Great opportunities coming on stream

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The SA property industry is in a challenging space - as the country's building spend declines, most of the giant construction companies have hit the wall, and jobs throughout the sector are being shed daily.

However countering this is the fact that there are great opportunities coming on

stream. This is according to Graham Green, president of the South African Property Owners Association (SAPOA). He was bullish about the industry in his address to SAPOA members in East London on Friday.

One of the main reasons for his enthusiasm was that SAPOA's meetings with the national government had met a positive reception.

"Meetings with several ministers had a very supportive outcome. These included Tito Mboweni [finance], Patricia de

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Lille [public works & infrastructure], and Ebrahim Patel [economic development], to name a few.

"We set forth our challenges and the hurdles the industry is facing. I think we will get positive results."

Green said the sector employed more than 600,000 people, from workplace to management, which is more than 10% of all jobs.

The total value of the sector is R5.8-trillion, which is about the same value as SA's estimated

GDP for 2019.

However, on a sombre note, Green said that the government owed various players in the sector an estimated R5.8bn, and "we have appealed for this debt to be settled".

SAPOA has had talks with the Buffalo City Metro Development Agency (BCMDA).

He said BCMDA had refreshing plans for the CID (central improvement district), which was good news.

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projects are in the pipeline."

He mentioned plans for the Sleeper Site, the undersea cable linking India to SA via Mauritius, and building projects that are on the drawing board and are directly linked to Mercedes-Benz SA.

The government, he said, had the power to radically change the prospects of the sector and there were hopes that it would increase spending on development.

The industry needed to align itself with the government's

thinking.

The old days where the industry was often at loggerheads with the government seemed to be over.

He said one thing that supported SAPOA's view on the change of sentiment was that the calls for expropriation had been toned down and in some cases faded away.

SAPOA has 70 current court cases, which Green said were both costly and time consuming, but a necessary service to members.