

2 June 2020

Cape Town

Dear Minister Gordhan,

Almost 2 months ago, on 9 April 2020, I wrote to you and pleaded for the life of SA Express. I was touched and impressed that you took the time to phone me that afternoon and discuss my letter and the SA Express saga with me, and I understood from our conversation that SA Express was probably doomed.

It is now two months later. I have spent almost every hour of those two months applying for jobs all over the world, scrounging for any work I could find (I worked as a doorman/hand sanitizer/temperature checker at a pharmacy for minimum wage) and selling personal items to avoid losing my home, but I still hoped that DPE would do the right thing and at least fund the liquidators to retrench the SA Express employees and pay outstanding salaries, but there has been no indication from the liquidator that retrenchment is on the cards and we are 7 days away from final liquidation.

Now it seems from media reports that the Department has agreed in principle to retrench excess SAA staff at a cost of around R2 billion, but there seems to be no attempt at doing the same at the sister company.

Do you know that it would cost less than R150 million to pay all SA Express employees their outstanding March, April and May salaries AND retrench everyone properly?

I know that the 50 and 70 seat aircraft which SA Express operated would soon be missed in the SA market. Demand will remain low for a while, and some routes will stay very thin for a very long time, but I don't think SA Express can be revived, so that capacity is lost.

What I would like to know Minister Gordhan, is what SA Express did to you that our employees deserve to be treated with such disdain and abandoned to a market where there are no jobs with 3 months of outstanding salaries, while employees at our sister company SAA, are treated fairly and ethically? As employees, we have been trying to help each other. Those who have a little have shared it with those who have none, but the desperation under SA Express employees is palpable.

This time I would plead with you to treat SA Express employees equally, and at least do the same for them that you are doing for SAA staff who are also no longer required, especially since the costs are so much lower compared to the costs at SAA.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. van der Merwe', with a stylized, cursive script.

Captain Willem van der Merwe