

**Tribute by the MEC for education at the occasion of the Memorial Service for the late Mr BM Shongwe on 09 January 2014**

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Programme Director

Mdeni wakaShongwe

Mndeni waka Sibiya

Mndeni wakaMndaka

Abafundisi

Representatives of the African National Congress

Officials of the of the Department

Representatives of different structures present

**Sanibonani**

Our flags are halfmast in our hearts because one of our own has departed. For this reason, we have gathered in our collective to pay homage to this wonderful son of the soil.

We do this without any fear of contradiction for Mr Shongwe lead a life informed first and foremost by the desire and commitment to serve the people, and had a track record that is appreciated by the department and communities alike.

He embraced our intentions of building a people-centred, people-driven and gender-sensitive communities and the desire to build and strengthen a movement that organises and leads the people in the task of social transformation.

It is for this reason that he found it easy to let his wife participate in this glorious movement that celebrated 102 years yesterday, the African National Congress.

He did this because he himself valued the need to deepen our democracy and culture of human rights and mobilise the people to take active part in changing their lives for the better and to strengthen the hold of the democratic movement on state power.

At the occasion of the announcement of the 2013 Grade 12 results on Tuesday, 07 January 2014 the entire hall stood at standstill for a moment of silence after the Head of Department stated that one of us could not be with us because they had responded to the heavenly call.

At that moment I realised that indeed we are empty without him. It painfully dawned in my heart that here we are celebrating not only the 77.6% achievement but the fact that we managed an incident free examinations for four years in succession because of efforts of the examination team where he was leading.

We have lost a resource, a manager, a humble personality, state machinery and a transformation agent of note that was forever ready to serve the cause of social change; to pursue economic growth and development.

We will always honour his contribution and courage to improve the people's quality of life; and to work with progressive forces throughout to promote and defend our transformation, advance Africa's course and build a new world order."

Mr Lushaba I know that words cannot describe what you are going through following this sad and unfortunate development. You must find solace in the fact that he served with dedication and passion. He did all he could for the welfare of our children and South Africa at large.

All we can do is to accord him his deserved respect, appreciate his dreams by accelerating all that he desired.

Indeed the spare has fallen, let's pick it up and move on with courage.

Cde Thandi please find comfort and peace in your heart for the fact that he loved you dearly. He was a good father to you and your children. You would not have had a better husband than him. God has a way of doing things and His wishes should at all times be appreciated painfully as they may seem at the time.

Trust in His word when he says "for I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future".

To the children Fikile and Billy you know the wishes of your father, please respect him by taking from where he left.

On behalf of the Department of Education I take this time to pay homage to the bereaved families and wish that they accept the will of God.

May the soul of the departed rest in peace.

Shongwe, Kunene, Mntimandze.

Nginyabonga