

Speech by the MEC for Education at the Occasion of the Funeral Service at Khokhovela Primary School on 07 August 2010

Programme Director

Imindeni yaka, Nyathi, Mhlongo neka Phakula

Cde Milton Marema, Executive Mayor of Bushbuckridge

Mr. MJ Lushaba, Regional Director of Ehlanzeni Region

Members of Senior Management

Representatives from Transnet Freight and Rail

Representatives from the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport

Principal of Khokhovela Primary School

Circuit Managers

Principals

Educators

Representatives of COSAS

Educator Unions

Learners and

Parents

We have gathered here to pay homage to the fallen sons of the Khokhovela community. We do so with heavy hearts, grief and sorrow.

We moan their sudden and untimely departure because it is an open secret that every parent takes his/her children to school knowing that at the end, the school will nurture this child to become equipped to change their lives for the better.

Every parent trusts and hopes that a school will instill and equip the child with knowledge, discipline and courage to face the realities of life.

It becomes very devastating then, that a parent would learn that his /her child has passed on as a result of pursuing an educational endeavour.

It is for this reason that we are one and united with you in your grief because we know and feel your pain.

We are indeed saddened by this tragedy and can only hope and imagine that this was their predetermined fate.

In situations like this there are often more questions than answers. One may ask why these young lives had to pass on so tragic. The book of Isaiah 57 says:

*Good People pass away
The goodly often die before their time
But no one seems to care or wonder why
No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil
to come
For those who follow goodly part will rest in peace when they die.*

In times like this we find solace in the knowledge that God the almighty is with us in this bereavement. Let us find comfort in his word and strength in his refuge.

We know that your lives will be empty since Vincent, Wade, Hlulani and Thabo are no longer with you. Please know and be assured that your loss is our loss.

The whole Province has been shocked and saddened by the news of this accident. Upon receipt of this sad news last Saturday, we had to stop everything we had planned to do to have time to be with the grieving families. This is a clear demonstration of how we value human life and our children.

This tragic passing on of our beloved colleague and learners requires all of us to join hands to ensure that safeguards are put in place where possible for such a tragedy never to repeat itself. That railway crossing must be looked at and it should not continue to be an accident zone. This must be done as a matter of urgency.

As we pay tribute to Vincent, Wade, Hlulani and Thabo, let us agree that every effort will not be spared to ensure that school trips are well coordinated in a manner that all parties i.e. parents, learners, educators and officials of the Department collaborate purposefully.

It is our wish that when we gather in such numbers it should be to celebrate outstanding performance of our learners and not to bid them farewell as we bury them.

In this case, I want to appreciate the fact that teachers of Khokhovela were in a bus with the learners unlike instances where you learn that learners were ferried in their own transport without the supervision of their teachers.

To the teachers, I want to say you were with these learners all the way, your courage and sense of professionalism goes a long way.

I want to make an appeal to all schools, teachers, School Management Teams and Principals to adhere to the requirements set for organizing school trips. The procedure and guidelines for organizing trips must be enhanced and be inline with the education framework that governs them.

Death brings sadness, no matter who is dying. When we lose someone we truly love, it's devastating.

To the bereaved families; may you be comforted in that your sons have found lasting peace. This was an accident and an accident can

happen to anyone. In this case it happened and stole your treasured children.

It is good to moan and to cry your loss, however draw your strength from the holy book as it says in Psalms 23:

“The lord is my shepherd, I shall not want
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures
He leadeth me beside the still waters

He restored my soul
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.
I will fear no evil for thou art with me and thy staff they comfort me.”

I want to take this time to appreciate the manner in which the coordinating team managed all activities following the news of the accident. The contribution made by different institutions and the Department are appreciated. Please keep on supporting these families.

We must also take this time to wish those in hospital a speedy recovery

Once more, on behalf of the leadership of the Mpumalanga Department of Education, I want to convey my deepest sympathy and profound condolences to all who are affected by this tragedy.

May their souls rest in peace.

God Bless You.