

Premier promises revamp for KZN school

KWAZULU-NATAL Premier Willies Mchunu has pledged provincial government support to have Pholela High School restored to its former glory.

Addressing the annual gathering of the Pholela High School Alumni Association in Durban at the weekend, Mchunu announced major refurbishments for the Bulwer school which, following years of neglect dating back to 1937, is in a serious state of deterioration.

In June, *The Witness* reported that the school had been left to go to ruin, despite promises by the government to have it fixed.

A concerned parent at the school told *The Witness* then that the walls were mouldy, with paint peeling off them, and that there were exposed electrical wires.

The school also has not had running piped water and electricity for months. Pupils and staff use water collected in water tanks, and pit toilets.

Following a visit during Cabinet Operation Sukuma Sakhe in 2016, the Department of Education conducted an assessment and found that conditions at Pholela were also unsafe.

“Pholela will be extended into a larger educational centre, offering a mix of commerce, science, engineering and graphic art-focused curriculum.

“It is expected that the new school will be ready for handover in 2022, with the intake increasing from 800 to 1 000 pupils. The departments of Education and Public Works are leading the tender process for both the major refurbishment and minor repair and maintenance of Pholela High School,” said Mchunu.

He said that mission schools such as Lovedale, Pholela and many others, were islands of quality in an environment geared to undermine the destiny of the black child.

“Mission education produced an intellectual class that would see themselves as no less than their white counterparts.

“They instilled values of intellectual quality, hard work, discipline, honesty and spiritual uprightness, characteristics that allow any learner to thrive anywhere in the world. In many ways they also produced patriots and revolutionaries.”

He said institutions like Pholela were caught between the need for quality education and the reality of inadequate infrastructure and public finances.

“These institutions are victims of our success in broadening access to education. Model C schools have taken up many learners who would otherwise go to schools such as Pholela, Mariannhill, Amanzimtoti, Inkamana, Inanda Seminary, Ohlange Institute, Little Flower and Ixopo Seminary among others.”

Keith Wimble of the Turntable Trust in Bulwer, who acts on behalf of the Saint Columbus Presbyterian Church, where the school is built, said they had been trying to get the KZN Education Department to fulfil its contractual agreement since 2014.

“The year 2022 is four years from now. Those children are using a school that was condemned by the Environmental Department.

“I don’t know what game they are planning because certainly, we are not getting anywhere,” he said.

Wimble said the trust had re-initiated litigation against the KZN Education Department.

— Witness Reporter.

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