

THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PUBLIC WORKS DEPUTY MINISTER, MR NTOPILE KGANYAGO, MP, ON THE OCCASION OF HANDING OVER COMPUTERS TO A SCHOOL

VENUE: MARANATHA PRIMARY SCHOOL, PEDDIE, EASTERN CAPE

DATE: 09 FEBRUARY 2006

TIME: 10:00

- **The Mayor, Ms N Nxawe**
- **The School Principal, Mrs Moshani**
- **The Programme Director, Mr Nxonxa**
- **The Regional Manager of Public Works at Port Elizabeth Office, Mr Johan Van der Walt**
- **Educators, Learners and members of the School Governing Body**
- **Government officials and other public servants**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

The National Department of Public Works is one of the ten public works departments in the country. The other nine are made up of provincial departments. Collectively, these departments are responsible for the provision of social and public infrastructure such as schools, clinics, hospitals, police stations, magistrate courts and prisons. Even the school that you are occupying is the product of public works.

Working together with the construction industry, public works ensures swift delivery of good quality buildings. To do that work immaculately, the Department and its officials require certain specific skills such as architecture, engineering, project management and quantity surveying. Because we work with the construction industry, artisans such as carpenters, electricians, builders, painters, and tilers, are also important.

I am mentioning all of these to bring to the attention of our learners the fact that for the country to develop, we require provision of infrastructure. Provision of infrastructure is only possible if we have a vibrant economy supported by competent industry and an abundance of skills. At the moment, it is acknowledged that the country will require more and relevant skills to increase our output as a nation, which will grow the economy. A growing economy is imperative for shared growth where there will be a need for more jobs. Also in growing economy more money becomes available to build more economic opportunities and support other poverty relief initiatives such as children's grants, houses, free health care and so forth.

For the past 12 years, government has worked very hard to create an enabling environment for the economy to grow. The democratic transition was peaceful,

political violence was overcome, multi-party democracy had been entrenched, national reconciliation achieved, and international investor confidence boosted. In addition government has brought business, labour, civil society and public sector together to find joint solutions to common problems.

One of these problems is unemployment. We all know that long before 1994, our economy began to shed many jobs because of international isolation brought by apartheid. When we achieved democracy in 1994, we woke up to the global forces that were changing rapidly around us. These included the end of the cold war between East and West, globalization and the growing gap between the rich Northern hemisphere and the poorer Southern hemisphere inclusive of Africa. Many traditional jobs which were reliant on primary industries such as mining & agriculture came under strain and were lost. At the same time, even the secondary industry of manufacturing and processing faced tough competition because of globalization and opening up of international markets. Cheap imports from other countries displaced our products like the textile industry in the Western Cape and more jobs were lost.

To get around the problem of unemployment, government prioritized skills development. Sector Education and Training Authorities were set up by law to persuade government and private sector to contribute to skills development. Government also expanded its public works programme to create even more job opportunities linked to skills development. The classical example is the famous Expanded Public Works Programme which in two years of its existence has created 220 000 job opportunities and achieved almost 2000 learnerships. More importantly, the President, Mr Thabo Mbeki, assisted by his panel of International Business Advisors, also identified Information Technology and Information Management as important to skills development and economic growth. That is the reason why we meet here today at Maranatha Primary School.

Business and commerce today, in the world of fast globalization, require IT and the management therefore to generate, apply, store and manipulate large amount of data for productive purposes. Computers are a tiny but necessary part of that environment. Basic computer literacy will inspire our children to learn more about the world of Information Technology. It will raise their curiosity about the composition of computer; what makes it work; how does it work; but most importantly, how can I make it work for me. Once we reach that stage, information and Telecommunication Technology will become our daily life like the cellphone has been. Twenty years ago one needed to be a trained photographer to take pictures and invest in an expensive camera equipment to take pictures. Today a single, simple cellphone allows you to do that and more. You can even send those images to the loved ones, immediately at a lesser cost than a postal parcel. Thanks to a cellphone, everybody has learnt high speed typing and invented a new shorthand programme. Today we all send SMS.

Our donation of 20 computers to the school is meant as a seed; to plant different ideas in our children about new possible career routes. We believe that by merely growing up in an environment surrounded by this type of technology, will inspire them to make other career choices. Who knows, some of these children might even grow up to become inventors of a new proudly South African computer – isiXhosa-speaking computer that understands the history, culture, challenges and aspirations of all the people of South Africa.

In conclusion, I am throwing a challenge to our learners who I believe are the beneficiaries of this technology. I want you to lead a new production revolution in South Africa, a movement that will make us as South Africans, less depended on others. For a long time we have been a nation of consumers, taking pride in consuming other people's products. I talk about French perfumes, Italian fashion, German cars, Swiss jewellery, Swedish phones, Japanese electronics, American films and music, Brazillian Football, British etiquette, Russian ideology, Chinese textile and other people's religions. In the spirit of Proudly South African, let us go out there and produce South African success stories. Even our banknotes and coins now talk isiXhosa. This is a great start.

As a public representative I will be failing in my duty if I did not remind and encourage all of you to go out and vote on 01 March 2006. Your ancestors fought for this opportunity and paid dearly for it, often with their lives. Do not disappoint them. Battles and struggles for liberation were fought and won here in the territory of Fish River. The ballot vote gives you an opportunity to continue those struggles. A decision not-to-vote is a short-sighted action because non-voting will never deliver the services nor alleviate poverty. Remember you misery and suffering came about as a result of a vote for apartheid, your vote can, and will help to reverse the ills of colonialism and apartheid.

I thank you.