

Dispatch live

EC reshuffle to follow swearing-in

By [Zine George](#) -
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ANC provincial chairman Oscar Mabuyane and his deputy Mlungisi Mvoko will be sworn in as members of the Bhisho legislature today

This is the clearest indication that premier Phumulo Masualle's days are numbered and that Mabuyane is more likely to deliver this year's State of the Province Address (Sopa).

ANC provincial secretary Lulama Ngcukayitobi confirmed the swearing-in ceremony, saying it would happen simultaneously with the meeting of the ANC provincial deployment committee (PDC) in Calata House today to discuss a "reconfiguration" of the cabinet. Their recommendations are then given to the premier, who has the final say.

Mabuyane and Mvoko will replace Nomvuzo Mlombile-Cingo, as well as former sports, recreation, arts and culture MEC Noxolo Abrahams-Ntantiso, who resigned as MPLs last week. Mlombile-Cingo is the new mayor of Port St Johns, while Abrahams-Ntantiso "will pursue her other private interests," according to Ngcukayitobi.

The name of speaker Noxolo Kiviet has not been ruled out as Masualle's successor, as the party has a policy resolution of having gender balance when it deploys its members to parliament, legislatures and councils.

The shake-up follows a meeting between ANC top officials from the Eastern Cape with their counterparts in Luthuli House two weeks ago, where the Mabuyane-led leadership tabled a report painting a bleak picture of governance in the Eastern Cape.

Ngcukayitobi confirmed yesterday that the party submitted both names to Kiviet, so that "comrade Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane and Mlungisi Mvoko can be declared new members of the legislature". Rumoured to be in the firing line are: social development MEC Nancy Sihlwayi, economic affairs, tourism and finance MEC Sakhumzi Somyo, public works MEC Thandiswa Marawu and ANC chief whip Zolile Mrara.

Marawu would likely take over as deputy speaker, while other MECs would be shifted to new positions.

These include cooperative governance MEC Fikile Xasa, whose report on the state of municipalities was criticised as "outdated" at the recent ANC lekgotla held at the East London International Convention Centre.

Transport MEC Weziwe Tikana would likely be moved to human settlements and incumbent Helen Sauls-August is likely to move to public works, if the PDC sticks to suggested changes.

The most controversial reshuffle, if effected, would be that of recalling agriculture MEC Mlibo Qoboshiyane, who is regarded as the most effective political head in the Masualle-led cabinet. By late last night, it was unclear whether Qoboshiyane would face the chop, as this would be viewed as a factional decision. This follows Qoboshiyane's decision at the hotly contested provincial elective conference to support Masualle against Mabuyane for the chairman position. To make matters worse, Qoboshiyane led a group which marched out of the conference venue and convened a press conference at the East London City Hall where they announced they would not recognise the Mabuyane-led executive.

Mvoko has been tipped to take over as finance and economic affairs MEC, a move which would leave Somyo with tourism and environmental affairs.

Ngcukayitobi refused to be drawn into any discussion on who would get fired and who not, saying: "All I can tell you is we have met the national officials and presented our reasoning for reconfiguration of the cabinet.

"The deployment committee will discuss this matter [today] and we will inform you once there is finality on the matter.

"It is a matter of fact that the cabinet will be reconfigured. As to who goes where, I cannot discuss that with you at this stage."