

EC cabinet reshuffle in NEC's hands

PEC hopes it will be finalised during March

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THE plan to reshuffle the Eastern Cape cabinet is now in the hands of the ANC's national leaders, provincial secretary Lulama Ngcukayitobi said yesterday.

This follows weeks of uncertainty after the party's provincial leaders announced last month it wanted to make changes to premier Phumulo Masualle's cabinet.

The ANC changed its list in the Bhisho legislature, a move which saw the swearing in of ANC provincial chairman Oscar Mabuyane and his deputy, Mlungisi Mvoko, as MPLs.

Ngcukayitobi yesterday said the province's top officials had already submitted the provincial executive committee (PEC) recommendations on whom they would like to fire and hire in the provincial cabinet.

"The matter is now in the hands of the national executive committee (NEC). Our understanding is that it will be discussed in the next NEC meeting. We don't know when that meeting will be at this stage, but I'm sure within this month," said Ngcukayitobi.

The Dispatch has reported several times about the plan to "reconfigure" the cabinet, and how the PEC has recommended that the axe starts with Masualle.

Others in the firing line are social development MEC Nancy Sihlwayi, public works MEC Thandiswa Marawu and their economic development counterpart Sakhumzi Somyo.

Cooperative governance and traditional affairs MEC Fikile Xasa may be moved to another

department and sport, arts and culture MEC Pemmy Majodina may move back to social development.

Ngcukayitobi said there were a few more changes to be made to the ANC's list of MPLs, "with two thirds of it having been implemented already" in Mabuyane and Mvoko.

"The only outstanding issue is the finalisation of the recommendations the officials submitted to national, so that we can reconfigure the cabinet and move on," said Ngcukayitobi.

● A PEC meeting was convened yesterday to decide the fate of Walter Sisulu municipal speaker Kholekile Lange who, according to Ngcukayitobi, has "defied an instruction" to resign.

This follows Lange's arrest last February for allegedly submitting subsistence and travel claims using vehicle details of an unsuspecting member of the public. He is out on R5 000 bail.

The municipality – formed in a merger of Maletswai and Gariep municipalities after the August 2016 local elections – is one of four troubled Eastern Cape municipalities.

The PEC resolved last month to replace the troikas of all four. Such changes have already taken place in Port St Johns and in Enoch Mgijima municipality in Komani. Still outstanding is Walter Sisulu and Mnquma in Butterworth.

Ngcukayitobi said the plan was to reshuffle the council executives of all four by last week, but the ANC's Amathole regional structure asked for more time to deal with some internal issues.

"We agreed to such an extension. But we are hoping a special council meeting in Mnquma on Wednesday [tomorrow] to effect those changes.

"In the Walter Sisulu case, we will have to brief the PEC about all these developments, and get guidance on what to do next," said Ngcukayitobi.