

Fire MECs or be fired

Masualle faces recall from ANC caucus

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PREMIER Phumulo Masualle faces being recalled by the ANC caucus at the Bhisho legislature should he refuse to fire the four MECs by the end of this week.

The Daily Dispatch can reveal today that there was a plan crafted by all ANC whips at the legislature on Monday, which would have seen the 45-member ANC caucus convening a special meeting tomorrow, where the plan to oust Masualle would have been effected.

But a senior ANC member of legislature confirmed yesterday that the plan had to be shelved following Monday's developments where the ANC top six officials, including president Cyril Ramaphosa, instructed Masualle to implement the decision of the ANC provincial executive committee (PEC) to fire agrarian reform and rural development MEC Mlibo Qoboshiyane, finance MEC Sakhumzi Somyo, public works MEC Thandiswa Marawu and social development MEC Nancy Sihlwayi by Friday.

While Masualle faced a barrage of questions from senior

party leaders, including deputy president David Mabuza who led the charge on why he continued to defy the Oscar Mabuyane-led PEC, the Dispatch has learnt that ANC whips in Bhisho also plotted Masualle's downfall.

This saw some provincial working committee members missing the Monday meeting at Luthuli House in Johannesburg, at which Masualle's handling of the planned change to the cabinet was scrutinised.

"The whippy met behind closed doors on Monday, and we have crafted a plan," said one senior ANC MPL, who attended the meeting.

The plan was for the ANC caucus to vote Masualle out as premier at a caucus meeting scheduled for tomorrow.

"Since Monday's developments, we are confident that he won't stretch our patience any further.

"If he fails to fire the four and effect the changes, we will be left with no choice as ANC caucus but to recall him. The Thursday ANC caucus meeting is shelved for now," said a senior party leader.

ANC provincial secretary Lulama Ngcukayitobi confirmed yesterday that Masualle has made an undertaking to change his executive this week. "By the end of the week, so surely it will be Friday or Saturday," said Ngcukayitobi.

Masualle's detractors accuse him of playing "hide and seek" using international trips and government events as delaying tactics.

It is understood that Masualle again asked for more time to assess his cabinet and table a report on the performance of each MEC. But Mabuza is said to have not been convinced by Masualle's reasoning.

"DD [Mabuza] told him that is not his responsibility but that of the PEC. DD was on fire at that meeting, saying Masualle has no

right to challenge PEC decisions, because he is an ANC deployee, so when the PEC wants to recall MECs, that has to be effected," said the source.

Insiders said ANC secretary-general Ace Magashule tried but failed to defend Masualle. Magashule and Masualle campaigned for Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma who contested against Ramaphosa for ANC presidency at the party's elective conference at Nasrec in December.

The ANC NEC last month declared the Mabuyane-led PEC legitimate. It also resolved to retain Masualle as premier but allowed the PEC to go ahead and reshuffle the provincial cabinet.

Masualle and his supporters who lost to the Mabuyane-led team during the provincial conference held at the East London ICC last October have tried every trick to remain in power.

In the meeting where officials instructed Masualle to act against the four MECs, Ramaphosa reminded Masualle about a call he made while on his way to China late last month. During their conversation, he pleaded for more time, and Ramaphosa granted him the extension. However, Masualle shot himself in the foot when he failed to give the president another call to inform him how he planned to effect the PEC cabinet changes.

Instead of calling the president on his return from the China trip, Masualle wrote a letter addressed to Magashule, asking for a meeting on Monday, the one which coincided with the PWC and national officials meeting.

"He had no business to be there. But this was a blessing in disguise, as we are glad that Comrade Masualle got a chance to receive the instruction to recall the MECs straight from officials," said the second source.

The officials are expected to be back in Eastern Cape "soon" to try and find common ground between ANC rival factions. "We are glad that this is almost over. He has no choice but to act," said the source.

Masualle could not be reached for comment yesterday.



PHUMULO MASUALLE