

KZN's premier surprise

Dube-Ncube knocked out, Zikalala still favourite

CLIVE NDOU

CO-operative Governance and Tradition Affairs (Cogta) MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube is out of the KZN premiership race following the party provincial leadership's decision to opt for a younger candidate.

Reliable sources within the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) in the province told *The Witness* the provincial executive committee (PEC) has given in to the youth wing's demand that the next premier should be a younger person.

The PEC, which held a meeting on Saturday to decide on the three names to be sent to the ANC national leadership who will make the final decision, settled for provincial chairperson Sihle Zikalala, deputy secretary Sipho Hlomuka and provincial spokesperson Nomagugu Simelane-Zulu.

"While as the ANCYL we respect the fact that it is the ANC top six leadership that has a final say on the issue of the premier, we have always maintained that young people should also be given an opportunity to occupy leadership positions in government.

"In fact we made it clear that we would prefer the current ANC provincial chairperson, Sihle Zikalala, to be the next premier, but if it happens that the national leadership opts for someone else then that person should be from the young generation of leaders currently within the party," a source within the ANCYL said.

By virtue of being ANC leader in the province Zikalala has the best chance of being endorsed by the party's national leadership, but there has been pressure from outside and within the



SIHLE ZIKALALA: Currently the MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), Zikalala occupied several positions within the ANC before being elected provincial chairperson in 2015 — a position he still holds. He was appointed as EDTEA MEC during the 2016 provincial cabinet reshuffle. **PHOTOS: FILE**

ANC for the party to pick a female candidate.

Gender groups and the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) have been complaining about the fact that KZN has never had a female premier.

The pressure on the ANC national leadership to appoint a female premier saw groups within the ANC in the province pushing for Dube-Ncube to become the next premier.

However, with Dube-Ncube's name no longer featuring in the three names that the PEC sent to the ANC Luthuli House headquarters, Simelane-Zulu will be the only choice should the ANC provincial leadership resolve that the

next premier should be a woman.

The provincial ANCWL, which had been pushing for Dube-Ncube to become the next premier, yesterday said it supported the PEC's decision.

"Yes, it is true that as the ANCWL we were of the view that comrade Dube-Ncube had the experience and credentials to be appointed to that position.

"However, as a structure of the ANC, we support the decision of the majority," said ANCYL provincial secretary, Nonhlanhla Gabela.

Dube-Ncube, who spent several years as eThekweni Municipality Speaker before being promoted to



NOMAGUGU SIMELANE-ZULU: Elected to the KZN Provincial Legislature in 2014, Simelane-Zulu was appointed ANC provincial spokesperson last year. A lawyer by training, Simelane-Zulu served in the structures of the provincial ANCYL before being elected to the ANC Provincial Executive Committee (PEC) last year.

Cogta MEC in 2009, has been in government since 1994.

On the other hand, while Zikalala, Hlomuka and Simelane-Zulu have limited government experience, the ANC has adopted a policy advocating for the inclusion of young people in leadership positions across all spheres of government.

While Simelane-Zulu confirmed that the provincial leadership had agreed on the names to be sent to Luthuli House, she declined to divulge them.

"In the ANC they are certain processes and protocols that should be followed before a public announcement is made. A public announcement will

be made in due course," she said.

The race for the premiership heated up following the incumbent Willie's Mchunu's April announcement that he would not be available for appointment after the general elections.

Zikalala's supporters want the ANC provincial chairperson to be appointed premier to prevent what they describe as the "two centres of power" that are often created when the leader of the party in the province is not the premier.

The issue of the premier is being raised against the backdrop of Wednesday's elections where the ANC lost 10% of its support in KZN.

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SIPHO HLOMUKA: A former ANC Youth League (ANCYL) Ukhahlamba regional secretary, Hlomuka was elected ANC provincial deputy secretary during last year's provincial conference held in Durban. Previous positions occupied by Hlomuka include Ladysmith municipality chief operations officer (COO) and Public Works Department district manager.