

**Publication:** Witness - Main**Title:** UMKHANYAKUDE ACCUSES COGTA MEC OF MISREPRESENTING AG'S LETTER**Publish date:** 29 Jul 2025**Page:** 2**Reach:** 6180**AVE:** R 21528.54**Author:** LONDIWE XULU

## UMKHANYAKUDE ACCUSES COGTA MEC OF MISREPRESENTING AG'S LETTER

### LONDIWE XULU

Tensions are escalating between KwaZulu-Natal Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) MEC Thulasizwe Buthelezi and the uMkhanyakude District Municipality, which has accused the MEC of misrepresenting a letter from the Auditor-General (AG) of South Africa.

On Sunday, Cogta issued a statement claiming that AG Tsakani Maluleke had instructed Buthelezi to intervene in the troubled municipality due to its failure to implement a credit and debt collection policy, as required by Section 62(1)(f)(ii) of the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA).

According to Cogta, Maluleke warned that the municipality's continued failure to recover long-outstanding consumer debt risked material financial losses. She said this had triggered a material irregularity report and resulted in formal recommendations with a deadline for remedial action.

Cogta further stated that the AG had requested a comprehensive report from Buthelezi by August 15.

However, uMkhanyakude District council Speaker Solomon Mkhombo has pushed back, accusing Buthelezi of politicising the matter and spreading misinformation.

"In the 2019/2020 financial year, the Auditor-General raised concerns about a number of matters or material irregularities.

"It is important to mention that 10 material irregularities were raised, nine of which were resolved in the 2023/2024 financial year. The material irregularity in question is the failure to collect long-outstanding debt, which the imposed administrator, Ndwandwe, was expected to address during his term in 2022 — but he failed dismally. uMkhanyakude District Municipality is largely owed by government departments with-

in the district, such as the Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, Correctional Services, Department of Public Works, and Cogta," said Mkhombo.

He added that the municipality had sent numerous communications to Cogta without receiving any response.

"We are disappointed that the MEC chose to address the AG's concerns through the media, rather than working collaboratively with the municipality as per the AG's directive. Public criticism without constructive support does little to resolve the underlying issues, which require support — not intervention," Mkhombo said.

Earlier this month, Buthelezi made headlines after forcibly entering the municipality's offices to enforce a Section 139(1)(b) intervention, which the council had rejected. The district has since approached the Pietermaritzburg High Court to challenge the intervention.

According to court papers seen by *The Witness*, the matter is between the district municipality and its council versus the KZN executive council, the MEC for Cogta, the KZN premier, Cogta, the Minister for Cogta, and the National Council of Provinces.

The municipality is asking the court to suspend the KZN executive council's decision to invoke Section 139(1)(b), declare it unconstitutional and invalid, and interdict the appointment or continuation of any ministerial representatives.

The matter is expected to continue in court on Friday.

Meanwhile, KZN Treasury last week withdrew its support team from uMkhanyakude, citing a lack of co-operation from municipal leadership. MEC Francois Rodgers said the team had, on several occasions, returned to Pietermaritzburg without completing any work after being told that the municipality's management was unavailable.