Fight for Gauteng as DA, ANC, ActionSA coalition talks underway



South African political parties intensified coalition negotiations following the announcement of the results from municipal elections that produced no outright winner in seven of the eight biggest cities and saw a further weakening in support for the African National Congress.

Final tallies released by the Electoral Commission of South Africa on Sunday showed the ANC remained the largest party with 30.8% support, down from 46% in the last local government vote in 2021 and its worst showing since it took power after apartheid ended in 1994.

Its biggest rival, the Democratic Alliance, narrowed the gap by increasing its share to 24.6% from 22%.

The 257 municipalities are responsible for distributing water and electricity, collecting refuse and overseeing some roads, and the mismanagement of many of them has angered residents, pushed up businesses' operating costs and deterred investment.

Some councils are unable to collect the money they are owned for services and are themselves in debt to state utilities to the tune of billions of rand, with business lobby groups warning that they pose a threat to the nation's finances.

2026 municipal election results

Party	Support
ANC	30.8%
DA	24.6%
MKP	9.8%
EFF	6.2%
ActionSA	5.7%
IFP	4.7%

Coalition talks begin

Cape Town was the only metropolitan municipality in which a party — the DA — secured an outright majority of council seats, meaning the rest will be run by coalitions.

In Johannesburg, the DA won the largest share of the vote with 35%, short of a council majority that would have secured former Cape Town Mayor Helen Zille the top post in the country's biggest city and financial hub.

ActionSA, led by former mayor Herman Mashaba, emerged as a potential kingmaker after increasing its support.

Informal coalition negotiations kicked off on Friday.

Several parties in Johannesburg including the ANC, Action SA, former President Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe Party and the Economic Freedom Fighters are considering forming an alliance that could possibly elect Mashaba as mayor and shut out Zille, according to people familiar with the situation who asked not to be identified discussing private information.

The cooperation agreement may extend to Tshwane and Ekurhuleni, the two other metros in the central Gauteng province, they said.

ActionSA's Chairman Michael Beaumont met the ANC's secretary-general, Fikile Mbalula, on Sunday.

Another configuration could include a tie-up between the DA and ActionSA that would enable the latter party's Nasiphi Moya to remain as mayor of Tshwane, which includes the capital Pretoria, while Zille would become mayor of Johannesburg, according to the people.

The ANC could alternatively decide to work with the DA, with the two rivals already part of a 10-party national governing coalition.

Mashaba quit the DA in 2019 after a fallout with Zille. He told Johannesburg's Business Day newspaper that he had no interest in repairing the relationship and that Zille could only become mayor if the ANC decided to support her.

Talks need to be concluded within the next 14 days, after which the new councils must hold their first meetings, placing pressure on parties to speedily reach agreements.

Zuma's party was a beneficiary of the decline in support for the ANC, consolidating its support in the eastern KwaZulu-Natal province.

The party, which first contested the polls in 2024, won outright majorities in three municipalities and the most votes in 20 this year, and aims to lead a coalition in eThekwini, which encompasses the port city of Durban.

The ANC's losses are likely to intensify scrutiny of President Cyril Ramaphosa's leadership before the party's 2027 conference to elect his replacement.

Regional and provincial structures within the party are pressing for its leadership to account for the further decline in support, according to people familiar with the discussions.

The party's national executive committee, its top decision-making body, is expected to assess its performance at a meeting set for Thursday.

The ANC's performance was "concerning," Ramaphosa told reporters before the announcement of the final results in Pretoria on Sunday.

"We accept that this is how the people of South Africa in our towns cities and metros have spoken and this is their verdict. We accept it with humility," he said.