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## THE COALITION GOVERNMENT IN THE CITY OF EKURHULENI

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### Election Results

The coalition government in the City of Ekurhuleni came into existence following the 2016 local government elections. As was the case with all the metros in the Gauteng Province, the ANC was unable to receive a majority, although it maintained plurality. In these elections, the ANC obtained 49.04 percent of the total vote against the DA's 34.43 percent (Independent Electoral Commission, 2016). The EFF won 25 seats in Council, comprised of one ward seat and twenty-four proportional representation (PR) seats. The AIC won four PR seats while the IFP and Freedom Front Plus gained two each. The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), the Patriotic Alliance (PA), the Congress of the People (COPE) and the Independent Ratepayers Association of South Africa (IRASA) each won one PR seat. Because there was no outright winner, this resulted in a hung Council that necessitated the formation of a coalition in the country's fourth biggest metropolitan municipality. An ANC-led coalition was thus formally formed with the AIC, PAC, PA and IRASA. The IFP entered into an agreement to partner with the coalition on key issues, although this was not formalised within the constructs of the formal coalition.

### The History of Ekurhuleni and Conditions that Led to the ANC's Decline in Support

The 2016 local government election was the first time in the City of Ekurhuleni's establishment as a metropolitan municipality that the ANC had lost power in the region. Although this was the case with all the metros lost by the organisation across the country, the case of Ekurhuleni is especially nuanced given the history of struggle in the communities – tied closely to the ANC and the broader mass democratic movement. Ekurhuleni, also referred to as the East Rand, was the site of intense political violence between the ANC and IFP in the latter years of apartheid. Townships in the region, particularly Thokoza and Katlehong, were greatly traumatised by this violent conflict that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of people. These were not only those belonging to rival political

parties but ordinary people whose only crime was to live in "territories" marked as ANC or IFP. Kynoch (2013) provides a nuanced perspective on this political violence, arguing that while the IFP was responsible for much of the violence, aided by police and military groups, ANC-affiliated militants also conducted murderous campaigns. And while on the ANC's part the violence was largely retaliatory, the political environment of the East Rand had always been highly charged. Support for the ANC in this part of the country was thus grounded in a history of struggle. It was embedded in the hearts of families and communities that had lived through the IFP instigated and apartheid-state sanctioned brutality that characterised the late 1980s and early 1990s.

However, by 2016, there was a sense of dejection with the trajectory of the democratic project, which many believe is employing a glacial pace in the transformation of society. To understand this sentiment necessitates understanding the socio-economic and spatial conditions of Ekurhuleni, which are still reflective of the amoral past.

The City of Ekurhuleni metropolitan municipality was established only twenty-one years ago in 2000, superseding the Eastern Gauteng Services Council, the Khayalami Metropolitan Council, and the previous administrations of Alberton, Benoni, Boksburg, Brakpan, Edenvale/Lethabong, Germiston, Kempton Park/Tembisa, Nigel and Springs (City of Ekurhuleni, 2020). The establishment of this municipality was the logical conclusion to a protracted struggle by the democratic government of South Africa to annihilate the vestiges of our apartheid past – a past that continues to find expression in our spatiality. In merging these historically fragmented locales into one municipality, the democratic government succeeded in undermining the legacy of separate development that had made it improbable to bring about meaningful material change in the lives of the oppressed majority who to this day continue to navigate the difficulties informed by that legacy.

It is important, therefore, to understand that the Ekurhuleni municipality that was inherited by the first-ever Mayor, the late Ambassador Bavumile Vilakazi, is not the same metropolitan municipality that we live in today. Spatially, the municipality was severely underdeveloped in areas that were historically demarcated for Black and Coloured people. As was the case everywhere in the country, the apartheid regime had succeeded in ensuring that these areas were infrastructurally underdeveloped. The result of this underdevelopment led to lack of access to meaningful opportunities in education, healthcare, and other public services. Prior to the establishment of the metro, there was extraordinarily little institutional assistance provided to the residents of Ekurhuleni, particularly in townships and outside historically White suburbs. It was only in 2004 that Customer Care Centres were established to assist residents of the City with municipal services. These had only been accessible to historically White areas. The bucket system was also prominent in Black townships. The bucket system, which refers to a basic form of a dry toilet whereby a bucket (pail) is used to collect excreta,