

SA Life, 19 April 2018

135 works programme contractors to lose jobs

WANT TO BE HEARD: Workers under EPWP say they will close the municipal offices to force them to listen to their grievances.

MORE than 100 workers under the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in the Ray Nkoyeni municipality on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast will be jobless at the end of the month when their contracts come to an end.

The 135 workers have been working for the municipality for more than three years and were paid R2000 a month. They are pleading with the municipality to extend their contracts since their services are still needed.

In an SMS sent to the workers and written in Zulu, the municipality said that it would not be extending the contracts. “You are reminded that your contract is lapsing at the end of the month and we

have no intention of renewing it,” reads the SMS in part.

Speaking on behalf of the workers, Mape Nxumalo said according to “reliable” sources the political leadership of the municipality was trying to pave the way for the jobs to be taken over by their “friends and relatives”.

“We feel that the municipality is flouting the country’s labour laws as some of us have been here for more than three years and they should have employed us on a permanent basis. Instead, they are removing us in order to pave the way for positions for their friends and

relatives,” Nxumalo said.

He said their efforts to meet with the municipal manager, Max Mbili, had failed as he kept telling them that he was not available and said their only option now was to picket. “On Friday we will shut down the municipal

offices to force them to listen to us and extend our contracts. We have no skills and we depend on these jobs for a living,” Nxumalo said.

The spokesperson for the municipality, Simon April, said the contracts were coming to an end, “Their contracts had a start and an end date and when each individual signed it he or she was aware of that and it was not the first time that there were beneficiaries of the EPWP who had their contracts terminated.

“Whenever the enlistment of beneficiaries is done people are made aware of the conditions under which they are enlisted and the programme itself requires rotation of beneficiaries,” April said.

He said the municipality understood that there was a high rate of unemployment and was sympathetic to the workers’ plight. However, the government had limited resources at its disposal.

“We will continue as the government to try to create an environment where the unemployment rate is minimised or eliminated and this involves encouraging investment by the private or business sector and promoting economic activities that will contribute to the creation of job opportunities,” April said.

sihlem@thenewage.co.za