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MSUNDUZI SAYS EPWP POSTS ARE SHORT-TERM AS WORKERS DEMAND JOBS

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M sunduzi Municipality says that Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) jobs are temporary, after EPWP workers blockaded the municipali-

ty's waste offices at the KaMagwayi depot in Havelock Road on Tuesday, demanding permanent posts, proper protective clothing (PPE), and fair wages.

"What hurts is that we volunteer, and when permanent positions come up, they



EPWP employees brought Msunduzi Municipality waste department in Havelock Road to a standstill, demanding permanent employment. PHOTO: MOEKETSI MAMANE

don't consider us, especially those from Pietermaritzburg," said one worker, who has been in that position for five years. "When your contract ends, you just go back home. Most people who get permanent positions are from outside Pietermaritzburg. I also want to be employed." Responding to the protests and concerns raised, Msunduzi Municipality spokesperson Ntobeko Mkhize said the illegal protest led to temporary disruptions in waste management operations. She added that the City regretted the disruption and appealed to the public for patience as services return.

"Management immediately attended to the matter to ensure stability and the continuation of services. Addressing the issues, Mkhize said there are 259 EPWP workers employed in the programme, which makes provision for a 12-month period, after which new participants are taken in.

"There are, therefore, no 'long-serving' EPWP workers," said Mkhize.

But workers insisted that their grievances went beyond contracts, pointing to poor conditions and low pay. One worker said the wages were not enough to survive on.

"Who can live on R120 per day in this economy? We have families to support. We work extra hours and sometimes knock off at

1am. This is unfair," he said. "Sometimes we get paid less than that and we don't even get payslips." He added that part of the frustration stems from seeing new permanent workers arriving while long-time contract EPWP staff are overlooked. "Why didn't they consider us first? They know how desperate we are. This is not right." Mkhize, however, stressed that all permanent positions are openly advertised and available to all South Africans.

"Recruitment is done in line with human resources policies and processes. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided. There had been a challenge with allocation of funds to procure PPE, but this has since been resolved and supervisors have been requested to submit sizes for all staff. "EPWP workers are paid R126 per day, which is the gazetted minimum wage. However, there was one instance where a transition occurred from the previous rate of R121 to R126. Workers were back paid in full," she added.

Scan the QR code to watch a video of EPWP employees protesting outside the KaMagwayi depot on Tuesday.



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