

DEAL STRUCK

DSW workers resume duties

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WASTE collection and removal will return to normal after a deal was struck between striking workers and the eThekweni Municipality yesterday.

Services had been interrupted since Friday after the workers responsible for keeping the city clean downed tools, leaving large parts of the city covered in piles of litter.

About 100 contract workers employed under the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) by the department of Durban Solid Waste (DSW) protested outside the DSW's head office in Market Road yesterday morning.

The workers were demanding to be absorbed by DSW as full-time employees.

Following a marathon meeting between city officials and the workers yesterday, the city announced that the workers would be resuming work.

"Workers embarked on a strike action demanding full-time employment. The staff members will work around the clock to ensure the backlog is completed by tomorrow, and normal waste collection patterns resume," said eThekweni Municipality's Deputy Head of Communications, Mandla Nsele.

"The municipality would like to thank residents for their patience during this time," he said.

Shortly after the announcement by eThekweni, some of the striking workers claimed the deal reached was that



Protesting Expanded Public Works Programme workers demonstrate as a Durban Solid Waste truck leaves the waste unit's head office in Market Road yesterday. The workers went on strike on Friday, demanding permanent jobs.

PICTURE: GCINA NDWALANE/AFRICAN NEWSAGENCY (ANA)

eThekweni would absorb them as permanent employees, albeit in stages.

"There is nothing tangible that the municipality has brought to the workers. There is no guarantee they will keep that promise," said one employee who asked not to be named for fear of victimisation.

He said some of the work-

ers had put their names down (to be considered when permanent jobs became available), but "some of the workers have not put their names down because there is nothing concrete about this deal that has been 'struck in the street'".

Earlier workers had told The Mercury they faced difficulties regarding their "poor wages".

"We have been working under this programme for the past four years. Every six months our contract lapses and is renewed.

"We are still earning around R130 a day. Last year we were given a salary increase of R9, which brings my salary to a total of around R2 400 a month.

"How can anyone survive on this amount?" asked one

worker. "We do not work in our wards so we have to travel and it is expensive.

"I spend R700 a month travelling and I still have to support my family."

Others said they worked in very difficult conditions and there were no work spaces allocated to them to keep their food during the day or to shower after work.