

ECP strike marks second anniversary

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It's an anniversary Earl Smith never thought he'd see.

Monday marks the second anniversary of the strike at Engineered Coated Products on Elgin Street and Smith, a spokesman for the striking workers, shakes his head when asked if he ever thought it would have lasted this long.

"Never," Smith, the chairperson of United Steelworkers Local 1-500, said. "I've been here for 16 years and we've never had anything like this.

"But they (the company) want to bust the union. That's what it's all about and as long as they can bring in replacement workers, they don't have

to negotiate."

And so the labour dispute, which began Aug. 23, 2008 when 80 workers walked off the job continues with no sign of ending anytime soon.

The two sides haven't met for months and no new talks are scheduled.

"We gave them a proposal back in March 2009 which they rejected," Rick Leckner, a spokesman for the company, said. "There has not been a counter offer and so that's where it stands.

"But as we have said many times before. We're committed to Brantford and keeping that plant open."

Previously known as Flexia Ltd., the Brantford facility was purchased by Intertape Poly-

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mer Group in 2005. It produces commercial and industrial packaging and is one of 10 North American facilities owned by Intertape Polymer.

Concessions in wages and benefits are at the heart of the dispute but for the striking workers, the issues go well beyond financial. They believe the company is trying to break the union and is being helped by a provincial government that refuses to introduce anti-scab legislation.

"They have demanded wage concessions of 25 per cent," Smith said. "We offered to take a 16 per cent cut and they said no.

"They told us that unless we're willing to start at a 25 per cent rollback there wasn't anything to talk about.

"They don't want to negotiate. Why would they when the can bring in scabs."

Leckner wouldn't comment

on what the company has been seeking with respect to concessions and wage rollbacks.

"We have always said that we won't negotiate through the media," he said.

However, he acknowledged that the company has been looking for concessions that he said are necessary to keep the plant viable in tough economic times.

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ECP strike 'poster child' for legislation

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As the strike at Engineered Coated Products enters its third year it will become the 'poster child' for a campaign to get anti-scab legislation reinstated in Ontario.

The campaign will kick off with a summit to be held in Brantford on Monday, the second anniversary of the

labour dispute between the company and its workers represented by United Steelworkers Local 1-500.

The summit will begin with an open session at the Brantford District Labour Centre, 1100 Clarence St. S. featuring Ontario Federation of Labour president Sid Ryan as well as many other provincial and local labour leaders. Organizers say many candidates for

the upcoming municipal election are also expected to attend the event.

Following the open session, union leaders will meet behind closed doors to develop an action plan which will be announced at a rally to be held at the ECP picket line in the afternoon. The rally will include speeches, music and a barbecue and is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m.