

NEWS STORY

Labatt strikers reject offer

Walked out June 16. Brewery says it has three months' supply

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The Gazette

Thursday, June 26, 2003

If Blue is your brew, it's going to be a bit harder to find it or any other Labatt brands in Montreal.

Workers at Labatt's LaSalle plant, who have been on strike since June 16, yesterday rejected what management called its final contract offer.

"Beer supply is not the problem. The difficulty will be with its distribution," Paul Wilson, a Labatt's spokesperson, told The Gazette. "Our beer is going to be more difficult to get, but only on the island of Montreal.

"We had a contingency plan, so we have about a three-month supply of beer on hand to get us through the summer."

Until the dispute is settled, managers will deliver the brew to various outlets.

"It will be a problem only in some places in Montreal. The rest of the province is OK," Wilson added.

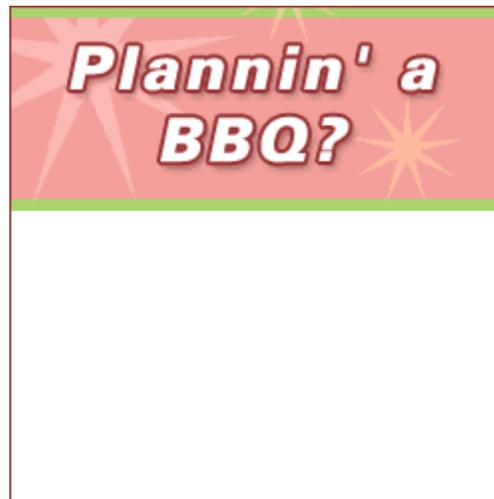
He said the company is "surprised and disappointed" that its "quality offer" was rejected in Montreal by unions affiliated with the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, even though the same offer was accepted by 97 per cent of workers in every other region of the province, where employees are represented by the Teamsters Union.

The contract offers a wage increase of \$4 an hour, spread over seven years.

Labatt's offer to its LaSalle workers was rejected yesterday by 97 per cent of the 661 employees affected.

"The employer put too much emphasis on wages," CSN spokesman Robert Daneau said.

"Job security and contracting out are the issues, not wages. We will go to

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the wall on that."

The company's offer would increase delivery workers' annual income to \$67,200 from \$58,900, while maintenance employees' pay would rise to \$70,900 from \$62,600. Labatt said the offer would also improve pensions and create 20 new full-time jobs.

The workers at the LaSalle plant have been without a contract since December 2002.

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