

The Brantford Expositor

OFL holds summit in support of ECP workers;

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Ontario Federation of Labour president Sid Ryan will be in Brantford on Monday to participate in a labour summit organized in support of striking ECP workers.

The workers will be marking their second anniversary on the picket line on Monday.

Billed as an anti-scab summit, the event will include representatives from the Canadian Labour Congress, CUPE Ontario as well as local municipal leaders and mayoral candidates. It is being organized by the Brantford and District Labour Council and is being held at the labour centre on Clarence Street.

Organizers say the event will begin with an open session from 9:30 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. followed by a press conference for local media. Labour leaders will then meet in a closed session to develop an action plan and talk about an afternoon rally at the ECP picket line.

Speakers at the rally include Ryan, Marie Clarke Walker, a Canadian Labour Congress vice-president, Fred Hahn, president of CUPE Ontario and Hamilton Mountain MP Chris Charlton. The event will also include a barbecue sponsored by the Hamilton Steelworkers Area Council.

Workers at ECP on Elgin Street, Brantford have been on strike since Aug. 23, 2008. The approximately 80 workers are represented by the United Steelworkers Local 1-500 and they walked off the job after the company demanded wage concessions and cuts to benefits and pension plans.

Union officials have said the company had demanded wage concessions of about 25 per cent and said ECP rejected a proposal from the workers which would see them take a 12 per cent cut in wages. Company officials have said wage concessions and rollbacks were necessary to keep the Brantford plant viable but haven't publicly stated a figure.

Company officials have also said they plan to keep the plant open.

ECP is part of the Intertape Polymer Group that operates 10 plants in North America.

The company has been bringing in replacement workers to keep the plant running for well over a year now and workers say that without provincial anti-scab legislation, the company has little incentive to negotiate with the workers.

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