



Molson to close Edmonton plant

EDMONTON · Striking Molson employees were on the afternoon picket line for 30 minutes today when they learned their brewery is closing permanently and all 102 unionized employees are out of a job.

JULY 31, 2007



EDMONTON · Striking Molson employees were on the afternoon picket line for 30 minutes today when they learned their brewery is closing permanently and all 102 unionized employees are out of a job.

Company officials say consumers' tastes for canned rather than bottled beer doomed the brewery, which produces only bottled beer.

Nationally, 25 per cent of beer is consumed in cans, said Molson chief brewing officer Daniel Pelland. In the west it was in the 50 per cent range and it's now up to 60 per cent.

Another factor in the closure of breweries throughout Canada in recent years was an interprovincial trade agreement in the early 1990s that allowed domestic beer to be moved across provincial boundaries. Prior to that, domestic beer had to be produced in the province in which it was consumed.

In future, consumer demand for Molson products will be picked up by Molson breweries in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Moncton, and St. John's Nfld. said company spokesman Ferg Devins.

The fort-like Molson House at 104 Avenue and 121 Street had been in operation since opening in 1904 as a Sicks brewery. Molson took the plant over in 1958.

Workers at the local plant had been on strike since May 30 when they walked out to demand a new three year contract that promised an end to the brewery's two-tier wage system. Officially, starting wage at the brewery was \$29.15, the president of the union representing local workers says, but new workers received \$8 an hour less than that. They also received fewer sick days and had a pension scheme that required them to pay half the cost of their pension whereas the company paid the full cost of the pension scheme for full-time workers, Garth Sanderson said.

With Alberta's red-hot economy, it should prove relatively easy to land another job. It will be difficult to find jobs that pay as well, some workers say.

I'd probably be alright with my millwright's ticket but the guys who worked on the bottling line will find it tough getting jobs that pay as well, said Larry Skoreiko.

Molson will be discussing separation packages for its workers with union officials, said Pelland. A closed-door meeting of employees, union officials and company representatives is planned for Wednesday morning at 9 a.m.

jfarrell@thejournal.canwest.com

© (c) CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc.