

Workers at Kellogg plant ratify new deal

Tue, June 30, 2009

Will be headed back to work tomorrow

By [NORMAN DE BONO, LONDON FREE PRESS](#)

The corn flakes will flow again at London's cereal maker.

Kellogg Canada workers ratified a new collective agreement this morning, ending a 25-day lockout, meaning they will return to work tomorrow morning.

"We got an overwhelming response for such a controversial contract, the vote was solid," said Bob Martin, president of The Bakery Confectionery Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Local 154-G at the London Kellogg plant.

Of the 488 locked out workers, 442 attended and cast a vote at the meeting this morning at the Ukrainian Hall on Gore Road and 338 voted in favour of the agreement.

The sticking point in bargaining was the weekend shift, where about 100 workers work 12-hour shifts Saturday and Sunday at overtime pay and don't work the rest of the week, meaning they get paid for 42 hours of work over two days.

The company needed to move away from that shift to reduce costs.

"We are sick and tired of being laid off and if the weekend shift was to blame, we had to do something about it," said Martin.

The plant had scheduled seven weeks of downtime this year and four weeks last year.

"Hopefully, this makes us more viable to land (more production)," he added.

The company also cheered the news, saying it will help the plant's "future viability."

"Kellogg is pleased to have a new agreement in place," Francois Rouilly, president and chief executive Kellogg Canada Inc., said in a statement.

"We would like to thank the union's negotiating team for their commitment to finalizing this agreement. Through these successful collaborations, we have achieved a fair and equitable agreement for both parties that will help to ensure the future viability of the London plant."

The deal will see the weekend shift phased out over two years. The plant may also lose workers to layoff, but Martin was not certain how many would leave or when.

But the union won language against forced overtime and saved wages for displaced workers meaning that after a layoff, workers retain the wage of the higher job category for the life of the

agreement. The union also won a 7% wage hike over three years and improvements to its pension and benefit plans and an early retirement provision over the three-year agreement.

The company also wanted to hire contract workers and the union fought that and won. Any new hires will be entry level, full-time employees.

Negotiations between Kellogg Canada and the BCTGM Union have been ongoing since February 10.

A first collective agreement was rejected by the workers on June 19.

Kellogg locked out its workers June 5.