

[Home / News](#)**(AFX UK Focus) 2009-09-09 18:52****Western Canadian forestry labor talks to resume**

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, Sept 9 (Reuters) - Talks will resume next week on what could become the pattern agreement for labor contracts in British Columbia's interior sawmills, union and company negotiators said on Wednesday.

Talks between the United Steelworkers union and Conifer, the bargaining agent for most of the major sawmills in northern British Columbia, had broken off in mid August, but they will be back at the table Sept 14.

Labor negotiations in British Columbia's forestry industry are conducted largely on a regional basis, and the union has pursued a contract with Conifer that it hopes will set the pattern for the other contracts.

Neither the union or employers have released details of their demands, but the industry is reported to be seeking contract concessions to help sawmills hit hard by the collapse of the U.S. home construction market.

The union, which says it represents about 11,000 workers in British Columbia's southern and northern interior regions, has said it is willing to consider measures to reduce costs in return for improved job security.

Most sawmills in the western Canadian province have either been idled or are operating at reduced capacity.

The union's previous contract expired at the end of June, but there have been no public threats of a strike or a lockout.

West Fraser Timber Co. Ltd, Canfor Corp, Tolko, AbitibiBowater Inc. and Tembec Inc. are among the companies with mills in British Columbia southern and northern interior forest regions.

The contract for sawmills in British Columbia's coast forest region does not expire until June 15, 2010.

(Reporting by Allan Dowd, Editing by Frank McGurty) Keywords: CANADA FORESTS/LABOR

(allan.dowd@thomsonreuters.com; 1+604 664 7314; Messaging:
allan.dowd.reuters.com@reuters.com)

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