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New deal for WFP workers

By [Black Press - Ladysmith Chronicle and Krista Siefken - Ladysmith Chronicle](#)

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Ladysmith sawmill to start up again in September

A tentative agreement with Western Forest Products and the United Steelworkers Union is hoped to bring stability for all involved, says USW Local 1-1937's president.

"It creates stability and that's what's needed right now: stability for our members and their families," Darrel Wong said of the tentative four-year agreement announced July 26.

"And for the marketplace, the stability that is created by a longer-term agreement is also a benefit to employers."

The four-year agreement replaces the contract that expired June 15 and is subject to ratification by members in the coming weeks.

"I think the agreement is a good agreement that provides more protection to our membership with respect to management working. It [also] deals with improving our health and welfare coverage, it eliminates the pharmacare formulary as of Oct. 1, it improves the life insurance and accidental death insurance, and there are a number of other areas but that's about as far as I can [say] today," Wong said.

WFP spokesman Gary Ley said company officials would not comment on the agreement until it's ratified, which he expected would take several weeks.

Wong, meanwhile, said contract talks went relatively well.

"Negotiation is an art in itself," he said. "There were some pretty hardline positions by both sides to get to an agreement both sides could support, but I think it was a pretty decent round of bargaining, a pretty respectful round of bargaining, and I think the results are pretty reasonable based on the circumstances we're in today."

News of the tentative agreement was coupled by a WFP announcement about the Ladysmith sawmill.

WFP is re-starting the sawmill on or around Sept. 7. It was idled April 26, 2008 due to poor market conditions. The mill will employ approximately 29 workers, operating on a one-shift basis, WFP officials indicated in a media release.

A new four-year labour agreement for those workers expires Dec. 31, 2014 and includes annual wage

increases of zero per cent, zero per cent, two per cent and two per cent respectively.

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