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## Mill workers asked to sign deal

Laid-off workers at Canfor Vavenby will vote on a tentative contract in the next two weeks that promises wage increases and profit sharing if the mill returns to operation.

But the president of Steelworkers Local 1-417 said Monday there is no indication Canfor will restart the mill immediately and put 200 workers back on the job.

The union completed negotiations with Canfor in Prince George for a “pattern” agreement it intends to bring to other companies operating in the B.C. Interior, including at Tolko Industries Ltd’s operations at Heffley Creek and Merritt.

“The reason the (Canfor Vavenby) mill is down is not wages,” said union president Marty Gibbons. “They have major issues with stumpage and chip prices and marketing.”

But Gibbons said the four-year contract, which includes two per cent increases in each of the third and fourth years “is an incentive” to get mills operating again.

“This is more in line with the Jimmy Pattison philosophy,” Gibbons said of Canfor’s major shareholder.”

Part of the deal gives workers extra pay based on a company’s profitability, as measured by return on capital earned (ROCE) a standard measure of profitability.

Nearly 2,000 workers at eight Canfor mills will vote to ratify the deal.

Gibbons said the union agreed to some deferrals of benefits, but not base pay, if the lumber market does not rebound. Lumber prices have climbed over the past three months and are thirty per cent higher than the same time last year.

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