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Western Canadian forestry workers reach labor deal

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VANCOUVER (Reuters) - Unionized forestry workers in British Columbia's coastal region have reached a tentative four-year agreement with firms bargaining through the Forest Industrial Relations association, the United Steelworkers said on Monday.

The contract, which covers about 400 members of the union, is modeled on an agreement reached earlier with Western Forest Products, which also operates in the coastal region but bargains independently.

The agreement, which still has to be ratified by union members, is retroactive to June 15 and includes 2 percent wage hikes in each of the last two years of the contract, with changes in job security and severance provisions, according to the USW. There are no wage increases in the first two years of the contract.

The forest industry on Canada's Pacific Coast has been hit hard by the economic downturn, especially in the U.S. housing sector. (Reporting Allan Dowd; editing by Rob Wilson)



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