



Published April 15, 2011
CITY & REGION

Forestry workers poised to strike after vote

Interior forestry workers are poised to strike, a move that could shut down several area mills, including the Tolko sawmill at Heffley Creek.

Marty Gibbons, the president of United Steel Workers Local 1417, said workers voted 95 per cent in favour of a strike three weeks ago, to protest the slow pace of negotiations with the Interior Forest Labour Relations Association, the management group representing employers.

Gibbons said the Interior group of workers has been without a contract since 2009. Employers in other parts of the province, including the north, the coast and the Kootenays, have signed agreements with their workers identical to what has been proposed locally.

Gibbon said the union has served the IFLRA with 72-hour strike notice, but has agreed to suspend job action pending a meeting with an arbitrator Tuesday and Wednesday.

“We hope a mediator will bridge the gap between us. If not, it’s going to get ugly,” Gibbons said. He would not say what stands in the way of an agreement between the parties, but noted wage increases are not an issue.

The Tolko mill in Merritt, as well as Aspen Planers and Aspen Industries, would also be closed by a strike.

IFLRA negotiator Gary Wishart could not be reached for comment.

© Copyright 2011, Kamloops Daily News

Story URL: <http://www.kamloopsnews.ca/article/20110415/KAMLOOPS0101/110419829/-1/kamloops0101/forestry-workers-poised-to-strike-after-vote>