

[USW - United Steelworkers - Métallos \(http://www.usw.org/\)](http://www.usw.org/)

<http://www.usw.org/member/subscribe>

Your Email Address      Postal Code     

<http://www.usw.org/francais>

Unity and Strength for Workers

[District 3 News \(http://www.usw.ca/districts/3/news\)](http://www.usw.ca/districts/3/news)

## Interior Bargaining Committee and IFLRA to Meet in Kelowna

28 February 2011

**KELOWNA, BC** - The United Steelworkers Interior Bargaining Committee will be meeting with the Interior Forest Employment Labour Relations Association (IFLRA) on Wednesday here as it looks to kick-start stalled contract negotiations.

Talks broke off last November when the employer association tabled a revised set of proposals including concessions over a long-term contract.

"This time around we hope the IFLRA will be serious about bargaining a collective agreement," says USW Wood Council chair Bob Matters, the union's bargaining committee spokesperson.

Sitting at the table with the IFLRA will also be Local 1-405 president Stan McMaster, Local 1-417 president Marty Gibbons and Local 1-423 president Bruce Gardner.

"The IFLRA is well-versed on the pattern agreement with Canfor, CONIFER with West Fraser (at two sawmills) and that it can reach an agreement with our union without much difficulty," says Matters.

Those pattern agreements include wage increases of 2 per cent in years three and four, additional seniority retention provisions, benefit improvements and wage rate adjustments for trades and power engineers.

Since contract talks began in May of 2009, there have been 14 overall days of talks with the IFLRA. Needless to say, while the union has inked collective agreements in the north and on the Coast of BC (with Western Forest Products, Forest Industrial Relations and "me-too employers"), southern Interior employers have put up barriers to a settlement.

"The IFLRA has both Tolko and West Fraser and these employers have already settled with our union in the northern Interior," adds Matters. "There should be no hold on the talks with the IFLRA at all."

"In 2009 we told the IFLRA that it could get out front and be a leader in helping setting a pattern agreement for the Interior industry - instead they are following the pattern," says Matters. "Our members expect no less - although some IFLRA members companies have spent a good deal of time trying to convince our members they are not worth of the pattern agreement."

The IFLRA has insisted on a 6-year agreement with wage and overtime concessions and concessions on Sunday work pay, shift premiums and health and welfare benefits.

"We have told the IFLRA that concessions are out and that they need to seriously address our members' concerns, including job security against supervisors doing union work," says Matters. "Our people have to be working and have their seniority respected."

USW members have already accepted new language in the north (on the use of supervisors) and Tolko, which has 6 IFLRA operations, has a hand in shaping.

Matters says it's time for the IFLRA to move forward on other non-monetary issues like the participation of union OH&S committee members in WorkSafe BC workplace inspections visits and allowing a local union representative to come in during investigation of serious accident and fatalities.

"There's a lot of contract language we can get to right away as we also deal with job security, shift scheduling, wages and benefits and other issues," says Matters.

- 30 -