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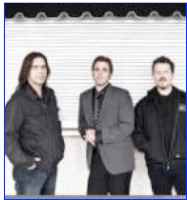
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Kelowna Tolko Sawmill Workers to Endorse Strike

March 10, 2011



Thursday, March 10, 2011 9:00 AM
by James Moore |

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Union officials expect Kelowna's saw mill workers to vote in favour of a strike. About 3,000 forestry workers across the Southern Interior have been without a contract for well over a year, with 200 employees at Tolko's saw mill in Kelowna among them. Local United Steelworkers president Steelworkers Bruce Gardner just wants to get the deal done. He says the union will try to get the companies they work for back to the bargaining table by threatening to strike. He expects a walkout to be approved in a landslide vote completed by Friday, Mach 25th. Workers in the Southern Interior are frustrated that many of the same employers that operate across the Interior struck a deal with unions in the North over the summer. "Its funny that [the Interior Forestry Labour Relations Association] signed it up there in the North, but they're not willing to give us the same language in an agreement with the South," Gardner



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says, "we're feeling sort of like second-class citizens down here," he says. Severance pay, benefits and shift scheduling are the key issues in both regions.

Gardner's contention is there's no reason why both sides should not be able to agree on a new contract. He says the lumber business is bouncing back. "People are just ticked off, lumber prices are up and times are good," Gardner explains, "there's no need for negotiations to stall at this point," he says. Gardner hopes that using the threat of a strike will convince the IFLRA to resume contract talks.

- [So You Think You Can Sing Kelowna](#)
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For background information on negotiations between the Southern Interior forestry workers and the IFLRA, [click here](#).

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