



Feb 20, 2010 6:51 PM

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Canfor And Steelworkers Reach Tentative Deal

By [250 News](#)

Saturday, February 20, 2010 12:42 PM

Prince George, B.C. - The Chair of the United Steelworkers' BC Wood Council is calling a tentative deal with Canfor, 'unprecedented' in the history of collective bargaining in the B.C. forest industry.

In Prince George today to announce the just-reached agreement, Bob Matters says, "Despite the fact the forest industry has experienced its worst financial crisis in history, we have reached an agreement that I would characterize as 'unique and innovative'."

Matters says, for the first time, wording has been included in the package on the issues of: seniority protection, severance protection, and employment security, in general.

The United Steelworkers' 11,000 members in B.C. have been without a contract since the end of June 30, 2009. In reporting progress with Canfor earlier this week, the bargaining committee had said collective agreement language was needed on both permanent and partial closures to "prevent employers from simply running their workers out of seniority and then announcing a permanent closure of their operation to avoid the payment of severance."

Matters says, while this has not been the case with Canfor, it was important for the union to secure the language in this agreement, as it will now form the template for negotiations between the union and its other employers.

Matters says the proposed deal will be discussed with union members before its term and full details will be released. He does say it offers the potential for significant pay increases down the road. He is confident the membership will be buoyed by the history-making job security terms.



This deal would cover local 1-424 members here, local 1-405 members in Radium, and local 1-417 members in Vavenby. Matters expects a ratification vote will be held in a few weeks time.

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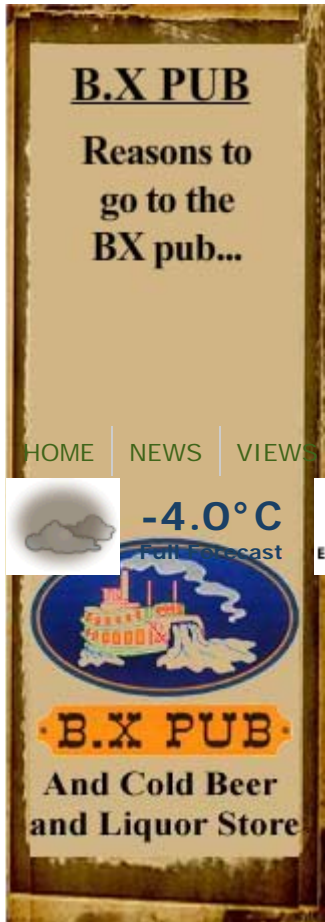
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Posted by: Eagleone on February 20 2010 2:39 PM

Sounds good because that clearly was the top priority for the union at this time. The ambiguity of the seniority call back (severance) for mills with down time was the biggest issue at a lot of the smaller forest companies. If Canfor sets the precedence, then it puts the smaller mills into a box when they try games that effect their employees in the future.

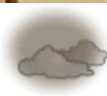
All mills need to have contingency funds to take care of their employees when the operations are no longer viable and need to be held accountable for their financial management in that regard. This is a good first step... something considered irrelevant by the union and employers in past years.

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