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QUESNEL CARIBOO OBSERVER

## Let the talks begin

By Annie Gallant - Quesnel Cariboo Observer

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USW exchange demands with forestry companies

Opening statements and an exchange of demands have set the stage for negotiations between United Steelworkers of America and Conifer (Council on Northern Interior Forest Employees Relations.)

Contracts between many forestry companies and USW members are up for renegotiation June 30, including Dunkley's and Tolko Industries in Quesnel and Tolko and West Fraser planer mill

in Williams Lake.

Canfor officials met with USW representatives June 10 and presented its list of demands.

Included in the two-page document was a proposed six-year term (longest ever proposed, USW is asking for a two-year term) and the implementation of an overall labour cost reduction of \$50 million to enable Canfor to reduce cash losses and survive.

The company also indicated its intention to link changes in the contract to a profit-based cash incentive plan dependent on lumber prices increasing substantially.

The document also included a laundry list of items the company would like to address during negotiations.

USW local 1-424

president Frank Everitt, who was reached on his way to Kelowna where he is attending contract meetings, said the Canfor document contains much the same wish list as other company bargaining demands.

"We anticipated they might be looking for concessions from the union," he said.

"The membership believes they have assisted the employers in the last couple of years in these difficult economic times.

"Obviously they see this as an opportunity to secure more concessions from the employees.

"They have a fair list but so does the membership."

Everitt agreed the current forestry conditions do nothing to enhance the negotiation process but said this



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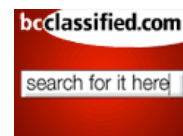
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But Everitt also said there's only been three strikes in the last 42 years, 1967, 1981 and 1986.

"Other than that, we've negotiated agreements without work stoppage," he said.

Everitt fully expects negotiations to continue well past the June 30 contract deadline with the current contract remaining in force.

"I think through our discussions with employers, we'll work through their issues and ours and come to an agreement," he said.

As to what is likely to create stumbling blocks, Everitt said it was too early to tell but expects once they get further into discussions, key issues will surface.

And as to the current uncertainty in the forest industry, he said its not about the cost of the product, its about the lack of orders for wood.

"That's why we're seeing curtailments," Everitt said.


"Having a lower wage isn't going to sell any more wood."


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