

# BC INTERIOR

## USW WOOD COUNCIL 2009

**BARGAINING BULLETIN #2**

**MAY 26, 2008**

### **WAGE DEFERRAL WON'T SELL LUMBER, SAY STEELWORKERS**

IFLRA, the employer bargaining association for most Southern Interior forest companies, has indicated they do not want to pay the negotiated 3% wage increase due on July 1, 2008.

At the request of the companies, your bargaining committee met with the IFLRA to hear what their position is. We indicated to them that, before deciding whether we could discuss changes to the negotiated agreement, we would need to see their books. In other words, we asked how not paying a 3% increase would help sell 2x4s, Plywood or OSB? How would a wage deferral prevent layoffs and stop the shutdowns being experienced in the industry?

Instead of explaining, the companies chose to argue with us over whether access to their books was appropriate and, similarly, offered no explanation at all as to how a wage freeze would help sell our products; the very same products they cannot sell at a profit today. The companies gave no commitment that laid-off workers would return to work and no commitment regarding future layoffs or shutdowns.

As a result, your bargaining committee rejected the IFLRA's take-it-or-leave proposal. The problems in the Interior industry are not a result of wages or wage costs and we see the IFLRA proposal for what it is – the companies taking advantage of difficult times to take a bite out of your negotiated wages and working conditions.

There will undoubtedly be a backlash from some companies. It is important that USW members take on the companies and explain that:

- ◆ The USW is always prepared to discuss solutions with companies that are having difficulties, but we are only able to do so as a legitimate “partner”. That means we need to see the books, understand what other steps the companies are taking and ensure that we only get involved in a program that will truly make a difference for USW members.
- ◆ We are already preparing for bargaining a renewal to the Collective Agreement, which expires next summer. Bad economic times are not an excuse to push aside our freely negotiated and legally-binding contracts.

*If you have any communication about this issue from your employer, please let you Local Union and the Provincial Negotiating Committee know.*



If you would like to receive information via e-mail, please send a quick message to Scott Lunny at [slunny@usw.ca](mailto:slunny@usw.ca).