



2019 - 2020 Forest Industry Bargaining

USW LOCAL 1-1937 UPDATE

2020 BARGAINING UPDATE #48 – February 6, 2020

Coast Bargaining Committee - News Release

USW MEMBERS WANT MEDIATION BUT HAVE SERIOUS CONCERNS OVER A REPEAT OF 2004

Today the Minister of Labour, Harry Bains, announced that the Government has asked Mediators Vince Ready and Amanda Rogers to reengage the Parties in an attempt to reach an agreement pursuant to Section 76 of the Labour Relations Code.

Minister Bains went on to state that if the Parties still cannot come to an agreement, he would ask the Mediators to make recommendations to the Parties on terms, if agreed, may bring an end to the strike.

While United Steelworkers (USW) Local 1-1937 members support the call to have the mediators reengage the Parties, they remain seriously concerned that WFP will once again refuse to remove their concessionary proposals and simply wait for recommendations from the mediators, in the hopes of achieving concessions if recommended. Dropping and then reinstating their contracting out concession has been a repeated practice with Western Forest Products (WFP) negotiators and is the biggest reason the strike is dragging on.

WFP stopped making public statements many months ago; instead, they have relied on their proxies (including certain mayors, certain contractor owners, and the provincial opposition BC Liberal party) to speak for them in echoing WFP's call for intervention. It appears this may succeed if the process that is now being implemented, leads to a binding process.

While there was no mention of a binding process at the end of today's announced procedure, it remains a very serious concern of workers that a repeat of the 2004 government intervention may loom, if WFP remains strategically dug in on issues, for that very reason.

The membership of USW Local 1-1937 clearly remembers the Provincial Government intervention in 2004, which forced a binding process on workers and stripped their right to say no to alternate shifts they felt were dangerous. The process in 2004 also allowed companies to contract out entire bargaining units in the logging sector. Workers were then forced to subdivide further into smaller bargaining units during the last recession, over fears of job loss if they refused. This severely impacted many workers job security and eroded their seniority rights.

As we enter today's announced process, it is our sincere hope that during the time mediators have been working with the Parties, that they heard our members' concerns over safe shifts, secure jobs and other important issues, loud and clear.

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Without the mediators understanding of the clear and present danger of unsafe shifts to our members physical and mental wellbeing, as well as their serious concerns over the dismantling of our members job security through contracting out, and other key issues, our members fear this process ultimately may force them to accept an inferior agreement that forces them back to work with an increased risk of suffering a serious or fatal injury or in having their job contracted out.

It is also the memberships hope that WFP takes the announced process seriously and actually negotiates with the USW.

The membership of USW Local 1-1937 urges the Provincial Government **not** to institute a binding process if this announced procedure fails to result in WFP seriously addressing our members fight for safety, security and a fair contract.

The Local Unions Bargaining Committee remains committed to negotiating a fair collective agreement that our members can support and one can be used as the pattern agreement for the rest of the Coastal Forest Industry.



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