



2024 Forest Industry Bargaining

USW LOCAL 1-1937 UPDATE

2024 BARGAINING UPDATE #7 - JULY 30, 2024

Coast Bargaining Committee - News Release

WFP CONTRACTOR OLYMPIC FOREST PRODUCTS TABLES MASSIVE CONCESSIONS WITH USW BARGAINING COMMITTEE

USW ADVISED THAT WFP DIRECTOR OF LABOUR RELATIONS IS IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH WFP CONTRACTOR REPRESENTATIVES

To: All USW Local 1-1937 Members in the Coast Forest Industry

When the USW and Olympic Forest Products (WFP's contractor in its Powell River area tenure) met to exchange bargaining proposals on June 5th, it became crystal clear that a number of WFP contractors are looking to create labour relations chaos, as Olympic tabled numerous serious concessions including the complete removal of contracting out protections for our members under Article 25.

We note that Olympic was represented at the bargaining table by WFP's former long-term manager of its Mid-Island Forest Operation, Jeff Ternan. Ternan was known for his confrontational style with the Union. Olympic and 12 other contract companies who work directly for Western Forest Products stated they want to bargain directly with the Union and will not sign the USW/WFP Me-Too Letter, which most of them have signed in the past.

Your Bargaining Committee has been wondering why Olympic and we believe other contractors would take such a leap to attack our members' job security protections in such a brazen manner.

A very credible source then advised the Union the WFP Director of Labour Relations, Roger MacDougall, is regularly in contact with the representatives of the 13 WFP contractors. We have to wonder why a WFP rep is meeting with contractors that WFP claims are independent of WFP when it comes to bargaining? What advice is MacDougall giving them?

The same source attributed comments to MacDougall that are very concerning to the Union. As a reminder to members, Roger MacDougall was the spokesperson who led WFP's attack on the Union in 2019 tabling over 20 massive concessions that directly led to a prolonged 7.5-month strike against WFP and its contractors.

From the outset of bargaining, WFP has adamantly opposed our proposal to have their contractors sign Me-Too Letters. Their CEO told us they were allowing these entrepreneurs to make their own decisions. This explanation is difficult to accept given MacDougall's regular contact with the contractors during bargaining. Consequently, we believe WFP is hoping their contractors gain concessions WFP was unable to achieve in 2019.

“The Union believes the coast forest industry desperately needs stability, WFP knows it and their contractors know it, yet WFP and some of its contractors have chosen a path that leads them away from labour certainty,” stated Brian Butler, President of USW Local 1-1937.

Recall that during 2014 bargaining, we discovered an internal WFP letter showing that WFP was directly involved in efforts to discourage its contractors from signing a Me-Too Letter in the hope that they could weaken the Union. In 2019, WFP directly attacked our members with a proposal that sought massive concessions which led to a lengthy strike. Ultimately, those contractors (who had resisted) signed a Me-Too Letter.

Five years later in 2024, Olympic and 12 other contractors sought to bargain a group. The Union rejected this idea and opened bargaining with Olympic, who tabled unwarranted and unacceptable concessions. For those who don't know or recall, our members' protection from contracting out was won by our members during a 4.5-month strike in 1986 (38 years ago). Those rights must remain protected, now, and forever. Without them, many of our members' jobs would be lost.

June 17th

Our bargaining committee met with WFP representatives to advise them we had learned of comments attributed to MacDougall and his regular communication with Olympic and other contractors' representatives who tabled massive concessions. Once again, we offered WFP the opportunity to adopt the relevant Union proposals, including the Union's proposal to have all WFP contractors Me-Too the USW/WFP Collective Agreement.

We reminded WFP that by not having their contractors Me-Too, they dramatically increase the very real risk of labour disruption in the WFP operations where they work. The bottom line is that if WFP truly wants labour stability for their company, their customers, and their markets, they need to accept the Union's proposal.

The Company has stated their legal counsel's opinion is that they cannot legally make their contractors sign a Me-Too Letter. The Union's legal counsel has also given a legal opinion that WFP indeed can make an agreement with the Union that ensures its contractors sign a Me-Too Letter.

We also reminded WFP that we are not seeking a provision that doesn't exist elsewhere, as the Local Union has an agreement with another licensee requiring its contractors sign the Union's Me-Too Letter. The bottom line is that WFP chooses not to agree.

At the end of the June 17th meeting, we advised we were going to talk to our operational leadership about the issues we raised. WFP asked the Union to hold off communicating on this issue while they spoke with their contractors and their Indigenous partners and urged their contractors to sign Me-Too Letters.

The Union agreed hoping WFP would have their contractors sign Me-Too Letters with the Union which is in all of the party's best interests. It costs WFP **“ZERO DOLLARS”** to simply agree that their contractors abide by the same collective agreement terms and conditions as WFP. **The question is, why wouldn't WFP want to have labour peace as they have communicated to the Union? The answer we believe is, ultimately it is WFP who pays these contractors for their services through commercial contracts, so if their contractors gain concessions, WFP gains by paying those contractors less and starting a race to the bottom.**

The other question is, why would our members want their job security taken away? Why would they want to have their hours of work and overtime reduced by the introduction of casual workers? Why would they want lower wage rates for training?

The obvious answer is, they don't.

The Union also wants to be clear that not all of WFP's contractors are operating in such a confrontational and provocative way. The majority of USW-certified contractors are good employers, who have no problem abiding by the collective agreement terms and who just want to keep working. The contractor community many of you will recall, asked the Union in 2014 for a level playing field when they bid on contracts with the licensees. The Union provided that level playing field, yet now some contractors want an advantage over others.

July 25th

WFP returned to the bargaining table with a proposal that went backwards from its previous proposal on the issues. During the meeting, **WFP falsely claimed** the contractor job security issues we had proposed do not affect WFP employees. The fact is that the attack on our members' job security by some WFP contractors affects all of our members. If job security is lost in one operation, it will find its way to other members' operations in time. In our Union, an injury to one is an injury to all. The Union represents all members' rights and won't allow them to be attacked in isolation. **WFP also claimed their contractors heard them and they expect many will sign Me-Too Letters. However, five (5) weeks after they started talking to their contractors not one new Me-Too Letter has been signed.**

Based on credible reports of WFP's actions and the backward steps they have taken on key issues; your bargaining team is taking the necessary time to meet with our operational leadership and explain the likely impacts and severity of these actions. From there we will plan our path forward.

"The bargaining committee knows that this update on the actions of WFP and some of their contractors will cause members' concern. Please do not allow these circumstances to distract you on the job. We urge you to keep the health and safety of you and your co-workers at the forefront of your thoughts," stated Chris Cinkant, 3rd Vice President & Safety Officer.

WE WILL UPDATE THE LEADERSHIP OF OUR OPERATIONS IN MORE DETAIL IN THE COMING WEEKS



Issued on behalf of your Bargaining Committee Members, Brian Butler – President, Richard Arnason – 2nd Vice President, Chris Cinkant – 3rd Vice President, Jason Cox – Recording Secretary, Nolan Paquette – Warden.

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