



UNITED STEELWORKERS
USW
MÉTALLOS
Local 1-2010

The UNION ECHO

**Serving the workers of Northern
 and North-western Ontario**



Volume 13 Issue 1

Unity and strenght for workers

Summer 2011



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

CLOSURES, LAY-OFFS AND BANKRUPCIES ARE STILL THE TOPIC OF THE DAY IN THE WOOD INDUSTRY

Kapuskasing;

The Local has been very busy trying to find a solution to the mill closures and wood allocation issues. The more fortunate members whose operations have continued or were idled for a short period of time have seen some hardship, but those whose operations have ceased to operate or have been idled for a lengthy period of time have faced horrible conditions.

As most of you have in your Collective Agreement, the language on severance entitles you to some amount of weeks of pay for every year of service worked for your employer. Well, with the financial climate endured, some employers went bankrupt, receivership or protec-

tion under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) which means our members lost their severance and termination pay or only received a percentage on every dollar they were owed. And, as if this wasn't enough, our provincial government is taking their wood allocation and giving it to other companies.

If we look at Hudson and Dubreuilville for example, the company has filed for bankruptcy and a holding company, which is owned by the same people, is the major creditor. That means if the mill is sold or is evaluated to a sum of money, the major creditors get their money first and the employees and government, who are not major creditors, may

get their share if there's any money left. Both of these communities have lost their wood allocation as the Liberal government has allocated their wood supply to another company.

It should be illegal to do business in this way. Severance and termination must be protected by law and the government must grab the bull by the horns and put workers and their families first. The government must introduce legislation in order to ensure that if and when companies go bankrupt or under receivership and CCAA, whatever money is secured goes to employees first and not to the banks and holding companies. Labour movements have been lobbying the gov-

ernment for years to make these changes and until these problems hit home we don't realize the impact they can have on our members. It is of utmost importance that every member speaks to their M.P and M.P.P to demand changes to the law of the land because we all know we could be next. The local will continue to fight for these members and their communities, and together we will find a solution to this intolerable situation.

In closing, summer vacation time has finally arrived; do enjoy the season's pleasures but please think safety in all your outdoor activities.

In solidarity ;
 Guy Bourgoiun

THE WSIB AND YOU

UNDERSTANDING THE WSIB'S DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

The WSIB's Drug Benefit Program allows Canadian pharmacies to bill electronically for your medications.

When you take a prescription to a Canadian pharmacy to be filled, the pharmacist will electronically submit your names, your WSIB claim number, and the drug identification number (DIN) to the WSIB. The pharmacy may also ask you to verify your date of birth.

If you have an allowed claim and the drug has been approved for your work-related injury or illness, the pharmacist will usually get an "OK" message, and will bill the WSIB. You will then receive the drug at no cost to you.

If the pharmacist does not receive an "OK" message – for example, if the drug is not approved or your claim has not been allowed yet –

he or she can call the WSIB to speak with a drug verification clerk (DVC) at 1-800-655-4631. The DVC will review your entitlement to the medication and give the pharmacist further instructions.

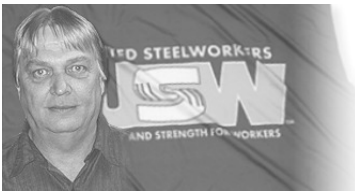
Ongoing entitlement

Some medications are for short-term use only, and others are used only in certain circumstances, so you may not always be entitles to

have your medication paid for.

The WSIB may contact the prescribing doctor if more information is needed to determine entitlement.

You will be told how long the medication will be paid for, and whether further medical reports will be required if you need to keep using the medication after that time.



ON THE WESTERN FRONT

ACCESS TO WOOD SUPPLY IS KEY TO RECOVERY FOR LUMBER INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE

Abitibi-Bowater;

The payments from AbiBow related to the grievances settled during the bankruptcy protection period have still not all been made, delays are blamed on a number of issues but payouts are expected over the next few months.

Meanwhile, issues caused by the contracting out of certain harvesting, processing and delivery of wood fibre, logs, chips and hog fuel from the limits to the AbiBow mills have reappeared and are the subject of grievances and likely arbitration.

During and after the bankruptcy protection - reorganization the company continued to operate so employment levels have been good for both the company and contractor operations like Shuniah, Firesteel, Renewable Resources and Highstone Logging

Buchanan Group

Atikokan Forest Prods;

AFP entered into bankruptcy in January after an extended shutdown. Severance and termination

pay remain unpaid and likely uncollectable unless the mill is sold as a going concern, the chance of which is very remote especially due to the lack of a wood supply commitment from the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR).

Brother Bourgooin and I met with the Minister Michael Gravelle in May to discuss wood supply issues; we were assured that follow-up meetings with MNR staff would be arranged. We have had discussions and plan to meet with the Mayor of Atikokan as we have shared concerns over the wood supply.

The majority of AFP employees have applied for up to \$3,250 under the Wage Earner Protection Program Act (WEPPA). This program has strict guidelines and not all members will qualify for payments.

McKenzie Forest Products, Hudson;

MFP followed Aticokan and three other Buchanan mills into bankruptcy in April. This was caused at least in part by the loss of wood supply

during the wood competitive process by the MNR. In their 'infinite wisdom' they denied MFP access to the wood supply that would allow the mill to reopen as markets return. We have had discussions with the company and the town; we will continue to fight to change this flawed decision that has caused great distress to our members and their communities.

WEPPA remains the only hope of these members in obtaining a portion of what they were owed in severance and termination pay. We believe that the majority of the affected members here should qualify as they either worked last summer or had their severance payments deferred as part of the revised agreement accepted last spring.

Lumberyards;

Negotiations will begin June 9 with the employer group representing Biltrite Home Hardware, North American Lumber and Wanson Lumber. We expect to achieve improvements in wages and benefits com-

pared to the current three year agreement that expired February 28.

Integrated Distribution Systems LP (Wajax);

At the time of this writing we believe that we have reached a grievance settlement that will stop the employer from requesting a criminal background check and substance abuse testing upon recall from lay off. We also have a sick leave grievance which has just started. The agreement expires at the end of October, renewal may be challenging.

North American Mill Yard Services;

NAMYS operates the yard equipment at the expanding AbiBow Sawmill in Thunder Bay, with the expansion will come a few new jobs. Work at this operation has been consistent through the recent past.

In unity there is strength, have a great summer.

In Solidarity;
Bruce Frost

BALANCING WORK AND FAMILY STRESSES

FIVE EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE FAMILY TIME AND BRING QUALITY TIME INTO YOUR DAY

Balancing work and family stresses; five easy ways to improve family time and bring quality time into your day.

The pace of life seems to quicken every year. More and more time is spent rushing from job to after school activities or evening meetings. It's easy to get overwhelmed and to lose a sense of family and

relaxation in our homes. Here are a few ideas to help strengthen your family and to keep some of life's pressures and stresses out of the home.

1-Be involved but learn how to say NO, once in a while. You want to be an involved informed parent but you need to keep your schedule sane. So don't volunteer for everything

and don't sign your kids up for every after school sport or activity. Set limits on these activities, car pool whenever possible, and limit the activities you volunteer for and your children participate in to two for each half of the school year.

2-Week long family vacations are great but sometimes you need a family break more

often. Plan mini retreats that give you a break from your routine and allow down time where you can just hang out. See if a local hotel with a swimming pool has off-season rates. Then get together with one or two other families whose company you enjoy and book a night in the hotel. Bring swimsuits for the kids and a good book for yourself. ►



COCHRANE IN DIRE STRAITS

WHILE KAP & GOGAMA MAINTAIN OPERATIONS DESPITE DIFFICULTIES

Cochrane;
As reported last fall, the members from the True North Hardwood Plywood plant had faced enormous challenges and we were hoping for some improvements in the near future for the plant, the workers and their families. But unfortunately it has all turned for the worst. On November 2010, the company officially closed its doors permanently. Over 180 employees were laid off with severance pay but no termination pay. We immediately filed a grievance on their behalf to obtain this much needed termination pay. Then early in the New Year, the company applied for protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) and on June 1st the creditors had to vote to accept or decline the judge's proposal. At the time of this report we are told that the proposal has been accepted but no payments have yet been issued to the members.

Meanwhile, since the closure of the plant, the Local

has been working hard with a crisis team in Cochrane to try to get this mill going again. This crisis team consists of the Local, a group of investors, lawyers and government officials to evaluate the long-term viability of the project. At this time approximately 112 employees have left their severance pay in trust with the Minister of Labor as long as talks are still ongoing. We are seeing progress on the issues and, hopefully, the next issue of The Echo will have something positive report for our members from the True North plant.

Also in Cochrane, our members at the Tembec - Cochrane plant have taken some down time in May and June because of bad market conditions. We are scheduled to meet in June with the membership to start taking demands for their upcoming negotiations. Their Collective Agreement will expire on August 31st, of this year.

Kapuskasing:
Our members at the Spruce

Falls woodlands operation and the Opasatika woodlands operation were laid off sometime in late February, early March and some of them were back to work in May. Harvesting operations are scheduled to start sometime in July. As for negotiations we are still waiting for the rest of the coalition to finish their local issues so that we can then move on to the main agreement.

Also at Spruce Falls in Kapuskasing, our members from the Office Workers are in the process of setting dates to get their negotiations going.

Gogama:
We renewed a new Collective Agreement with EACOM Gogama Forest Products effective April 1st, 2011. This new 5 year agreement includes a wage increase of 0.40\$ in July 2011, plus an 8% wage increase over the last 4 years of the agreement. Also an increase of \$2.00 per hour for all tradesperson effective upon date of ratification increases on tool allowance to \$325 in

2011, \$425 in 2013, and \$525 in 2015. Also increases in travel allowances and on boot allowances.

Sudbury:
The members from the Centre de Santé in Sudbury have met in May with their employer to start negotiating a new Collective Agreement and more days are scheduled later this summer to try to come to a mutually beneficial agreement.

Meanwhile at the Canadian Blood Services, talks around the self-scheduling process are still on-going. Both parties agree that the process may not be perfect, but that all want it to work. The company and the employees have agreed that working together on this issue will result in a functional system that all can live with.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a great summer.

In Solidarity,
Eric Carroll

► You can also turn off the TV, telephone, computer, and CD player for the night, cook an easy meal or order take out and tell stories or play cards or a board game. Teenagers may think it's okay at first but they really do appreciate the change of pace and the time with their family.

3-Eat dinner at the table not in front of the TV or standing in the kitchen grabbing a quick bite just before rushing out to

the next activity. Consciously eating your meals not only improves digestion but also allows you thirty minutes to slow down and reconnect; sharing things that happened during the day. Make it mandatory and after a few weeks you will see how everyone really looks forward to this short piece of family time each night.

4-Develop family traditions with your immediate and

extended family members. Come up with a special night once or twice a year that isn't tied to a holiday. Have everyone who comes make something to eat, even the littlest ones. (Identify a theme to make more fun). Share what you have been doing since the last get together and come up with some fun game everyone can get involved in. Horse shoes, softball, badminton, the game isn't important it's the time you spend together just

goofing around without judgment and the pressures of the regular schedule of life.

5-Keep expectations of achievement in school at a reasonable level; encourage your children to strive for things and work at a level that always gives them a bit of a challenge, but don't push them into situations that are too different or may regularly affect their self-esteem

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White River;

There are no new developments to report on at the White River sawmill. The woodlands operation however is scheduled to resume its activities this summer with a few of our members working.

Olav Haavaldsrud;

On April 18, our members have again voted in favour of extending until July 1st, 2011, an agreement signed 2 ½ years ago which included wages cuts of \$2.00/hr, in order to help the company to get through tough times. With the Co-generation plant's construction still on the back burner this company is facing uncertain future. With no banking support, the company has still managed to run the operations with the cash flow generated from sales. As of press time we have learned that the Co-gen construction is a go, which is extremely good news for the employees at Olav Haavaldsrud and for the community.

Nakina;

This sawmill has not been in operation for quite some time now. We did not have a chance to meet with the members there, but looking forward to do so in the near future. With the Terrace Bay paper mill reopening, giving an outlet for the Nakina mill's chips, we hope that this sawmill will reopen sooner than later, but the company has not yet come forward with a confirmation on this.

Kenogami Industries Inc.;

Like other plants in the region, the former Longlac Wood

**OPERATIONS CURTAILED
MOST MILLS SUFFER LAY-OFFS AND GOV.
FREEZES PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES**

Industries Inc. plants, which are now under new ownership, and presently named Kenogami Industries Inc. have not been in operation for several months now. This new ownership is now looking at opening a new Value Added plant in the former Plywood building, with a possibility of re-hiring approximately 30 of our members. Since our last meetings in negotiations last fall we haven't heard anything from this company.

Lecours Lumber;

After being on lay off since October, 2010, employees at Lecours Lumber are now back to work. The sawmill has been in operation since May 31st. The mechanics started back on May 2nd to do maintenance on the machinery while the millwrights were called back on May 9th to prepare the sawmill equipment. The members are now working on 1 shift at the sawmill and planer mill while the debarkers are on a two shifts operation.

Tembec-Hearst sawmill;

As of press time this plant is on a scheduled two weeks shut-down. Despite the weak price of lumber, we are hoping that the operations will resume for good after this down and that our members will be back at work without having to go through anymore downtime.

Hearst & Area;

Our members have voted in favour of a renewal their Collective Agreement. Due to the the government freezes in public services, this agreement is a 2 year one ending on May

31st 2012, with changes in the language but with very few increases in wages and benefits.

Aramark;

Our members have voted in favour of a new Collective Agreement on February 13th. This 3 years agreement will expire on December 31st 2013. We have been able to secure increases in wages, shoe allowance, shift premium, Long Term Disability, Dental Plan, Vision Care Plan, pay in lieu of benefits and new language in the Bereavement leave which increases the coverage.

Le Nord;

Our members have agreed to extend their present Collective Agreement for one year. With the economic difficulties the employer in facing, the members have decided to contribute toward the future of the enterprise.

Maison Renaissance;

As of press time, the members did reject unanimously a final proposal from the employer. We are now following the procedure with the Ministry of Labour to get the No board report and proceed to the next step which is a last chance to get an agreement in mediation.

Columbia Forest;

Thereis nothing to report from Columbia, save to say that they continue to struggle under difficult market conditions.

In solidarity;
Jacques Jean



HAPPY SUMMER VACATIONS TO ALL!