

# Western Region News

Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada

February 2008



## Campbell River's Elk Falls the Latest Victim of Forestry Downturn

TimberWest Forest announced early this month that it is permanently shutting down the Elk Falls sawmill in Campbell River. The decision comes at the depth of the worst lumber downturn in memory and will put 225 CEP members out of work.

Local President Scott Doherty was shocked by the decision saying "That's 225 good paying jobs that are going to be leaving the community permanently, not to mention the spin-off jobs."

The mill produces lumber for the Japanese market and is to shut down May 9, TimberWest said in a news release. It is the second coastal sawmill to announce it is going down within a week. Fraser Pulp Chips, of Surrey said Feb. 1 that it is going out of business permanently.

The company says it had been trying to sell the mill since 2005, saying it is no longer part of its core business. TimberWest sells its logs on the open market to the highest bidder and with lumber markets depressed, has been focusing on marketing some of its higher-use lands as real estate. It is the province's single largest exporter of logs.

Doherty went on to blame the company's inability to sell the mill on the fact that it does not come with a guaranteed timber supply. He said "For anybody buying the mill, there's obviously an issue of trying to secure a fibre supply." TimberWest would be one of the companies in a position to provide raw product to any new owner of the sawmill and they are selling logs to the highest bidder on the open market.

As well as the concern about the lack of a guaranteed timber supply, there is the fact that the sawmill has an agreement with Catalyst Paper, which has a mill adjacent to the TimberWest plant, to provide wood chips for pulp. When the sawmill shuts down, the traditional source of chips will disappear and to continue operating Catalyst, will have to secure another reliable source of wood chips.

## Directory workers get deal with new owners

Local 7 members at Yellow Pages Group ("YPG") ratified a new two-year collective agreement that gives the parties some breathing room – and the workers a three per cent increase each year of the deal.

The bargaining unit, which produces the yellow and white pages directories, was recently sold by MTS Allstream to YPG. This sale split the media unit from the larger Local 7 agreement with MTS.

After the sale there was job loss as YPG eliminated most clerical positions, leaving the Winnipeg commissioned sales force as the hub of the now 31-member unit. The sales people were

looking to protect their commission structure and roll-over the mature agreement until the parties get to know each other better.

## Local Settles with School Board

CEP Local 1990 has reached a new three-year deal with Calgary's Catholic School Districts. The agreement calls for a 4.92 per cent wage increase retroactive to Sept. 1, 2007, and wage increases tied to Alberta's Average Weekly Earnings Index for the subsequent two years. Improvements were also made to employee health benefits, including a health spending account.

Local 1990 President Bonnie Landry observed that the agreement was not overwhelmingly accepted by the 1,100 members, who voted 59 per cent to accept the deal.



The Local represents a variety of workers, from special education assistants and librarians to business managers, secretaries and social workers.

## 100 Days and Counting

Locked out members of CEP Local 481 marked 100 days on the picket line on February 13th. Supporters from across the Saskatchewan labour community joined the picketers outside the Saskatchewan Government Employees Union offices in both Saskatoon and Regina on what was a bitterly cold day. As wind chills dipped to -40, Local President Kelly Diebel vowed to "...continue to resist the anti-worker, anti-union tactics..." shown by the SGEU.

As we go to press, we note that both sides have agreed to mediation.

## A Message from Don MacNeil



Well, 2008 has already been quite a year.

The forestry industry has not stopped its blood letting and as you will read on the front page of this newsletter, the Elk Falls Sawmill is the latest victim in all this madness. Despite our many attempts to convince governments, both Federal and Provincial, to step up to the plate and save this industry, very little has been done.

We are experiencing an unprecedented staff turnover. We are in the process of filling a position in Prince George and another in Edmonton. Within a fairly short period of time we will have two vacancies in Regina. All this is good news and bad news. I am very sorry to lose the experience we do when good people retire, but it also means that we can create opportunities for young activists.

It allows us to bring in some new blood. Change will help us revitalize, it will challenge us and keep us on our toes.

Don't forget March 8<sup>th</sup> is International Women's Day. This is an important celebration of women's achievements. Let's get out there and be loud and proud of the gains that have been made and to point out the work that still has to be done.

Finally, on a personal note, everyone has been complaining about the flu going around this year and just when I thought it had passed me by, I really got hit. Boy did I get hit. I have been laid out with pneumonia over the last while. I am back on my feet but I confess that I am still moving a little more slowly than usual.

### Winnipeg weeklies merge with daily in unique first contract

Employees of Winnipeg's *Canstar Community News*, members of CEP Local 191, voted on a historic first contract in February that merges the community newspaper chain with the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

The 35 employees were faced with the prospect of the employer – parent company FP Canadian Newspapers Limited Partnership (“FPLP”) – closing the money-losing operation. The Union and the employer came to a unique first contract arrangement where *Canstar* will be merged into its “sister” newspaper, the daily *Winnipeg Free Press*.

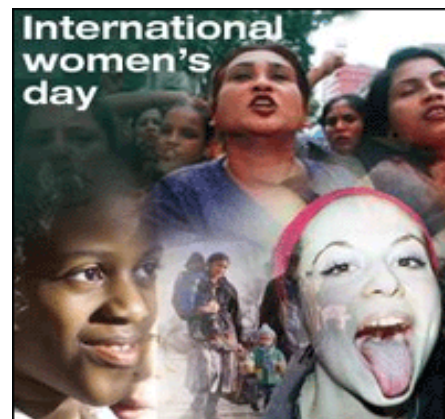
About 30 employees of *Canstar* are now part of the *Winnipeg Free Press* contract after today's vote. *Canstar* publishes free weekly neighbourhood-zoned newspapers such as *The Herald*, *The Metro*, *The Times*, *The Headliner* and *The Lance*, as well as the entertainment weekly *Uptown* and *The Prime Times*, a seniors' publication. FPLP

also owns the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Brandon Sun*, which have members from CEP 191 and CEP 900G.

CEP became the bargaining agent for *Canstar* employees in Editorial, Advertising, Creative Services, and Distribution in May 2007. After a protracted and difficult set of negotiations the parties determined that the long-term success of *Canstar's* publications and its employees lay in a merger with the *Free Press*.

Many employees will receive a raise in pay and take part in the *Free Press* benefits package, including pension. Sadly, the merger will result in job loss for five *Canstar* employees in the bargaining unit. CEP Local 191 bargained recall rights for three of those employees in Creative Services (Graphic Designers). The first contract deal also restructures the advertising department for a more equitable distribution of sales accounts for commissioned sales reps.

Next up for the “new” *Canstar* is the 12 trucking agents represented by CEP 900G. Their contract talks have been on hold while the future of *Canstar* was being decided in the Local 191 bargaining talks.



### International Women's Day

Annually on March 8th, thousands of events are held throughout the world to inspire women and celebrate their achievements. While there are many large-scale initiatives, a rich and diverse fabric of local activity connects women from all around the world, ranging from political rallies, business conferences, government activities and networking events through to local women's craft markets, theatric performances, fashion parades and more.

The unfortunate fact is that women are still not paid equally to that of their male counterparts, women still are not present in equal numbers in business or politics, and globally women's education, health and the violence against them is worse than that of men.

CEP encourages your involvement this March 8th.



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