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## **Coast Forest Products Association Calls on United Steelworkers To Drop Politics and Engage in Constructive Dialogue**

**VANCOUVER, BC** - In its usual uninformed and ideologically driven manner the United Steelworkers continues to propose actions that would put their entire Wood Council membership out of work. Bob Matters, Chair of the Steelworkers Wood Council, states: "We're tired of this excuse that the Canada-US Softwood Lumber Agreement stops us from protecting our industry, assisting Canadian workers, or improving the quality of our forests." His statement clearly demonstrates that the USW does not understand the Softwood Lumber Agreement and the benefits it is providing to the Canadian forest sector and the workers and communities reliant on the industry.

"In these unprecedented market conditions the Agreement protects Canadian forestry companies from anti-dumping duties and countervailing duties that would be in excess of 30 per cent," says Rick Jeffery, President and CEO of Coast Forest Products Association. "Duties at that level would shut down the sawmilling business in B.C. and drag the pulp and paper companies, remanufacturing industry and loggers along with it. It would be catastrophic."

Yet Mr. Matters and his union continue to advocate this approach and uncooperatively spout NDP anti-business rhetoric and unfounded accusations. Mr. Matters should have read the Forest Products Association of Canada's full press release. FPAC calls for urgent action on the black liquor subsidy, improved wood policies to encourage investment, including modernizing tax credits for R&D and capital investment, a competitive national rail transportation system, access to credit and support for the ongoing green transformation of which the forest sector is a world leader.

Nowhere does FPAC CEO Avrim Lazar call for the abandonment of the Softwood Lumber Agreement; in fact he underscores the need for action to ensure the "sustainability of the SLA". The federal and provincial NDP persist in trying to kill the Softwood Agreement because they are putting politics ahead of what's best for the workers they claim to represent.

"Our provincial government has been proactive in doing all it can to assist the forest sector as it battles dismal markets and a global recession," says Jeffery. "If the USW wants to engage in constructive dialogue on ways to help workers through these difficult times it should join the industry and government in our collective efforts."

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“We have actively pushed for better employment insurance assistance and worked to ensure \$129 million of federal and \$30 million of provincial money, dedicated to the Liberal’s Community Development Trust, gets spent to assist B.C. workers and communities.”

The industry has also been actively engaging the federal government to direct the budgeted \$1 billion in community assistance funding into shovel-ready forest management infrastructure projects that can immediately employ forest workers and improve the productivity and value of our forests for commercial and carbon management reasons.

The B.C. forest industry works closely with government to help build new markets, like China, and new products including renewable, clean green power and bio-fuels. Mr. Matters, on the other hand, is practicing crass politics to the detriment of his members.

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