

CANADA

Feds claim victory in NAFTA lumber spat

OTTAWA (CP) — Both the federal government and U.S. forestry company Pope & Talbot Inc. are claiming victory Tuesday following a NAFTA tribunal decision in a lumber dispute.

The federal government called it a victory that the tribunal decided to dismiss all but one of Oregon-based Pope & Talbot's five claims made in 1999 against the government and its implementation of the now-defunct Canada-U.S. Softwood Lumber Agreement.

Pope & Talbot won on one claim but said in a statement that "the financial ramifications of the decision cannot be determined at this time."

The tribunal said the company and the govern-

ment can make submissions about any damages that should be awarded.

Pope & Talbot, which has large logging operations in the B.C. Interior, had sought \$500 million US in damages under the North American Free Trade Agreement. It claimed it was unfairly discriminated against due to the federal government's administration of the duty-free quotas that were part of the softwood lumber deal with the U.S.

British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec were subject to export controls under the five-year deal signed in 1996, and Pope & Talbot complained that its quota to ship lumber to the U.S. was reduced every year while companies in the

Maritimes, which weren't covered by the agreement, could increase shipments.

The tribunal ruled that the federal government didn't breach any of its obligations regarding its implementation of the quotas.

"We won on all of the substantive issues," said Sebastien Theberge, a spokesman for the office of the Minister for International Trade. "The damages will be very significantly lower than what the company originally claimed."

The issue on which Pope & Talbot's complaint was upheld was regarding the government's process to approve the quotas each company was allowed. The government demanded to verify all

sales and production information provided by each company, and took issue with figures given by Pope & Talbot.

The government asked that documents be sent to Canada from the company's headquarters in Oregon, and a federal official said the tribunal found this request was unnecessary and caused expense and disruption.

The tribunal also found that Pope & Talbot gave sufficient explanations to the government.

"We believe the review was conducted in a manner that was fair to both parties and this decision brings the dispute to a close," Pope & Talbot's chairman and CEO Michael Flannery said.

Eight bikers plead guilty to gang, drug activities

QUEBEC (CP) — Eight bikers affiliated with the Hells Angels pleaded guilty Tuesday to gangsterism and other charges as law-enforcement officers scored yet another victory against biker gangs.

The bikers, described by Crown prosecutors as violent enforcers who would beat rival drug dealers with baseball bats and wooden beams, entered the surprise plea on more than 80 charges, including drug-trafficking, aggravated assault, kidnapping and weapons offences.

They initially faced 129 charges but more than 40 were dropped.

Crown prosecutor Robert Rouleau was pleased by the guilty pleas but didn't gloat.

"I'm not a football player and I won't do high-fives," said Rouleau. "But it's a very important victory."

"Let's say that this year is a good year for law enforcement."

Rouleau was referring to other recent blows registered by police in their ongoing war against biker-related crime. In Montreal on Tuesday, Quebec provincial police arrested seven people in the death of a bar-owner

who was beaten to death last October for not allowing bikers into his establishment. And two weeks ago, nearly 2,000 police officers launched a sweeping cross-country crackdown against the Hells, arresting more than 100 members and associates.

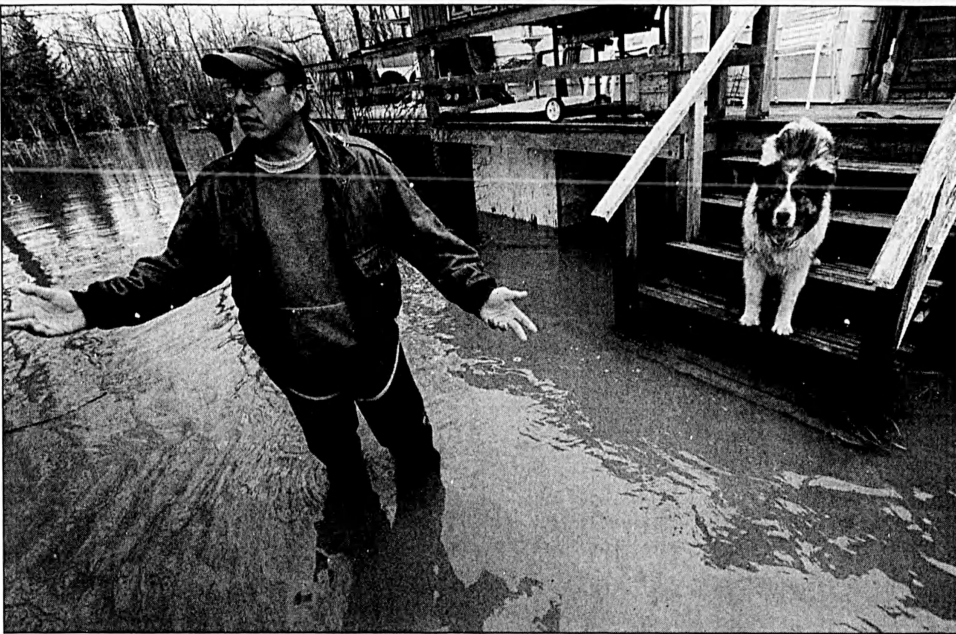
The bikers' plea in Quebec City came after about \$10,000 was spent on exceptional security measures for the trial, including the erection of a Plexiglas cage installed around most of the prisoner's dock.

The eight defendants showed no visible emotion as they stood one after another to enter their pleas.

Most of them were handcuffed and all wore formal suits — a far cry from the casual duds they sported during January's preliminary hearings.

The gangsterism charges carry a maximum prison term of 14 years, Rouleau said.

All are suspected members of the Blatnois, a gang affiliated with the Hells. A Crown prosecutor told the trial that Blatnois enforcers would kidnap and beat rival drug dealers and threaten to kill them for selling drugs not supplied by the Hells.



Norm Kipling woke up early Tuesday to hear ice chunks cracking through the bush and had to rescue his dog from flood waters in Breezy Point, Man., about 30 kilometres north of Winnipeg. An ice jam on the Red River backed up water in the cottage community. Manitoba flood forecasters are predicting extensive flooding of agricultural land in the Red River valley.

CP photo

Manitobans brace for more flooding

Canadian Press

Residents of southern Manitoba were anxiously watching the rising Red River on Tuesday as levels south of the border in North Dakota began to approach those of 1997's so-called Flood of the Century.

City officials in Fargo announced that as many as 150 homes will need to be sandbagged in the next few days to protect against flooding.

A new state flood forecast predicted water could climb to within 45 centimetres of 1997 levels.

"We're getting awfully close to the Flood of the Century," said Dennis Walaker, operations manager for Fargo's public works department.

In Manitoba, ice floes at the mouth of the Red River were raising water levels near the top of one-metre dikes.

Brent Hay of East Selkirk, Man., breathed a heavy sigh of relief when one ice jam broke, dropping the river level almost half a metre.

"It was close but when the ice went, the water dropped," said Hay.

Provincial weather forecasters are bracing for a Colorado-based storm front which they say could drop as much as 40 to 60 millimetres of rain on North Dakota — up to four times more than what had been expected just two days ago.

"If it falls in Breckenridge, Minn., and Wahpeton, N.D., then that won't have an impact but if they get 40 to 60 millimetres in Fargo (80 kilometres closer to the Manitoba border), then we'll be in trouble," Manitoba Conservation spokesman Larry Whitney said Tuesday.



AP photo

A farmer, who declined to be identified, carries healthy lambs on a farm near Peebles, Scotland, Tuesday as the lambing season continued despite the threat of the foot-and-mouth epidemic spreading.

Foot-and-mouth disease frightens many farmers

WOODSTOCK, Ont. (CP) — More than 500 farmers met Tuesday to learn what farmers across Canada must do to barricade the continent from foot-and-mouth disease.

Farmer have seen newscasts of the burning pyres of cows, sheep, pigs and goats slaughtered in Britain by authorities who are trying to contain the outbreak there. And they fear it's only a matter of time before the first case is discovered in Canada.

"It's gonna come," said Eric Johnson, a veal and beef producer near Mount Elgin, Ont. "And if it gets to Canada, we'll all be out of business."

Like others in the room, he was clasping one of the signs handed out at the door warning unauthorized visitors to stay away from his farm.

With their livelihoods threatened, farmers are beginning to think of their barns as "biosecurity" areas where tough rules must be enforced — where visitors must change into clean shoes and overalls and wear hairnets to walk among the herd and where constant disinfection becomes part of the routine.

Dr. James Clark, a veterinarian with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, said farmers across Canada are afraid, particularly in provinces like Alberta where the beef industry is so integral to the province's economy.

There are also fears in southwestern Ontario, where many farmers have family in Britain and have had to cancel summer visits to prevent any possibility of bringing the disease back to Canada.

We need your help to keep Canada free of Foot and Mouth Disease

A serious outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in European countries has led to the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of animals. This viral disease is highly contagious, affecting cattle, swine, sheep, goats, deer and other animals. Although it is not a significant threat to human health, you could bring the virus into Canada on your footwear or clothing, your baggage, or in infected imported food products. Travellers arriving in Canada from affected countries are required to follow a simple but effective disinfectant procedure. Inspections of personal baggage and imported goods have become much more stringent.

Here's what you can do to help keep Canada free of Foot and Mouth Disease.

After travelling to affected countries:

- Make sure that the clothing and footwear you wore during your visit are free from soil and manure, especially if you visited a farm while abroad.

- Declare any and all meat, dairy and animal products you want to bring back into Canada. There is no penalty for declaring these items, but a severe penalty exists for failing to do so.
- Stay away from Canadian farms for 14 days.
- If you must visit a farm, machine wash all clothing in hot water or have it drycleaned, and disinfect all personal effects (especially footwear) that were abroad with you in a solution of 50% water and 50% vinegar.
- If you plan to visit a zoo or a national/provincial park, please follow similar disinfectant measures.

If you farm in Canada:

- Prevent farm or ranch visits by anyone who has been to countries affected by Foot and Mouth Disease in the last 14 days.
- If visitors must come to the farm, they should take additional sanitary precautions such as washing and disinfecting all personal effects and equipment before they arrive.

For more information call

1-877-227-0677

(Mon – Fri, 8am – 8pm Eastern Daylight Time)

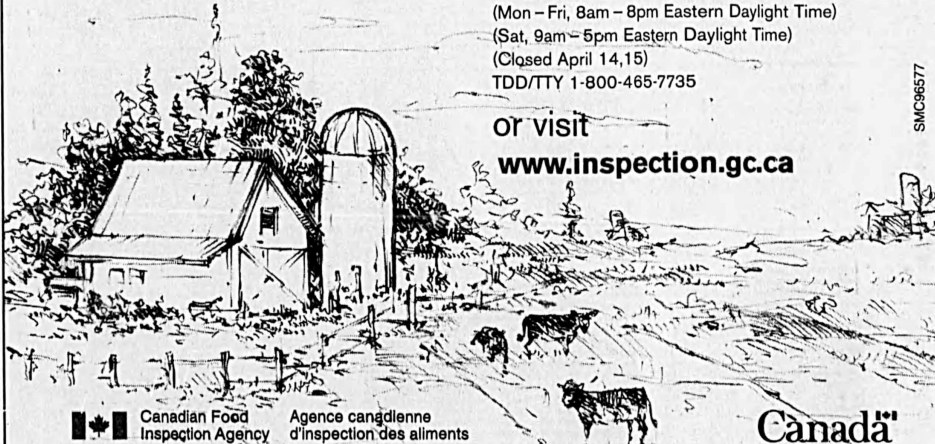
(Sat, 9am – 5pm Eastern Daylight Time)

(Closed April 14, 15)

TDD/TTY 1-800-465-7735

or visit

www.inspection.gc.ca



Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments

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