



Workers sort wood at Murray Brothers Lumber Company woodlot in Madawaska, Ont. on April 25. Canadian softwood producers are getting a temporary reprieve as U.S. preliminary duties were dropped.

U.S. softwood duties decrease, for now

Ross MAROWITS *The Canadian Press*

MONTREAL — Canadian softwood lumber producers are getting a temporary reprieve as a large portion of preliminary duties in place for four months have ended pending a final decision.

Most lumber companies will pay 6.87 per cent in anti-dumping tariffs after a 19.88 rate for countervailing duties formally ended as of Saturday.

Five producers singled out have paid duties between 9.89 and 30.88 per cent. All others paid 26.75 per cent.

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced late Monday that the Department of Commerce postponed the final determinations in the anti-dumping duty and countervailing duty investigations of imports of softwood lumber from Canada until no later than Nov. 14

“I remain hopeful that we can reach a negotiated solution that satisfies the concerns of all parties,” Ross said in a statement.

“This extension could provide the time needed to address the complex issues at hand and to reach an equitable and durable suspension agreement.”

Although countervailing duties formally came off in recent days, Canadian

producers have been able to ship products south of the border without CVDs since Aug. 14 by delaying paperwork by up to 10 days, says lumber analyst Hamir Patel of CIBC World Markets.

Countervailing duties target what the U.S. considers unfair subsidies, while anti-dumping tariffs go after the alleged selling of softwood below market value.

Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard said Monday that higher lumber prices have raised prices for American consumers buying new homes and hurt U.S., not Canadian, workers.

“It will become more and more apparent that the most threatened jobs by these policies are not Canadian but American jobs in several states, notably in the construction sector,” he told reporters after a meeting in Charlottetown between eastern Canadian premiers and New England governors.

Lumber prices, which ran up in anticipation of export duties, have begun to soften partly due to the lowering of duties.

Western SPF prices were US\$385 per thousand board feet on Friday, said Madison’s Lumber Reporter, which tracks prices. That’s down four per cent from US\$414 a month ago but up from

US\$330 a year ago.

Lumber prices are typically weaker in the fall after the main home building season.

“This is sort of this limbo period of 10 days or two weeks,” said Madison’s editor and publisher Keta Kosman.

“It will be interesting to see what the new floor is now.”

Hurricane Harvey, which has battered Texas, and the impact from wildfires in Western Canada could be factors influencing lumber prices this year.

Canada’s share of the U.S. softwood lumber market fell to 23 per cent in July, down from 32 per cent in September 2015 before the expiry of the 2006 softwood lumber agreement, according to monthly Canadian government reports.

The Conference Board of Canada has said U.S. softwood lumber duties paid at current export levels will cost Canadian producers \$1.7 billion a year and cut about 2,200 jobs until a settlement is reached.

Efforts to reach a new softwood lumber agreement appear to have been overtaken by the United States’ efforts to negotiate an update to the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico.

UN panel calls for halt of Site C build

Mike BLANCHFIELD *The Canadian Press*

OTTAWA — A United Nations panel says the construction of British Columbia’s \$8.8-billion Site C dam should be halted until there is a full review of how it would affect Indigenous land.

The recommendation is contained in a report by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which has completed its periodic review of how Canada complies with the world body’s treaty to end racial discrimination.

The recommendation comes three weeks after British Columbia’s NDP government requested a review of what had been a signature megaproject for former premier Christy Clark.

The government asked the B.C. Utilities Commission to determine the economic viability of the massive hydroelectric dam on the Peace River and issue a final report by Nov. 1.

Site C has become controversial after the previous provincial Liberal government’s clean-energy laws allowed some projects to bypass a review by the regulatory agency.

The UN panel says a full review should be conducted in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples to “identify alternatives to irreversible destruction of Indigenous lands.

The committee also says it is “deeply concerned” about the land rights of Indigenous Peoples and focuses on Site C, saying “environmentally destructive decisions for resource development” are taking place.

It says construction began “despite vigorous opposition of Indigenous Peoples affected by this project, which will result in irreversible damage due to flooding of their lands leading to elimination of plants medicines, wildlife, sacred lands and gravesites.”

Gov’t will not remove first PM’s name from buildings: Trudeau

The Canadian Press

OTTAWA — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says the federal government has no plans to delete the name of Sir John A. Macdonald – Canada’s first prime minister – from anything under federal responsibility.

Trudeau made the comment today outside of Rideau Hall, the Governor General’s residence, following a cabinet shuffle.

Ottawa has faced increased pressure from Indigenous advocates to confront the way historical figures are celebrated after an Ontario teachers’ union passed a motion last week calling for the removal of Macdonald’s name from elementary schools in the province.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde commended the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario for its motion, but Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne said she thought it missed the mark.

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