

# Tree planters hurt by pessimism

Local tree planting companies are calling for a quick resolution to uncertainty in the logging industry, saying the current pessimism is hurting business.

"The optimism of the client until the lumber agreement is signed just isn't there," says Wayne Wood of Nechako Restoration Services Ltd. "Until that's done they won't be in a better mood to deal with when you sit down and negotiate a contract."

Mr. Wood says companies are still cutting the same number of trees as required in their annual allowable cut, but are not spending as much money on details, leaving silviculture companies to pick up the tab.

"We're planting 30 per cent less than we were three years ago," he says.

Through the process of certification, planters also require more training to make sure trees are planted in an environmental manner. Tree planters that do exist tend to be relative newcomers, making experienced fast and thorough staff harder to come by. "We haven't seen an increase in pay for two or three years and some of them are more likely to take a job at Earls," he says.

One of the biggest changes has been to employment standards, that's mostly what has increased our costs," he says. Add rising gas prices that are — or aren't — picked up by clients and the cost to send three planters even to Quesnel or Houston woods rises significantly.

Bob Butler, of Roots Reforestation Ltd., says this summer marks the first time his company hasn't sent tree planters out into the woods since 1978. Roots chooses instead to focus on grooming existing stands, brushing and spray herbicide as a more reliable source of income.

"For the last three years we've really cut back," says Mr. Butler. "But we found that even with one or two crews running as cheap as possible we weren't making any money."

In addition to a general slowdown in the industry where "everybody is planting less and less" he says the industry is being asked to conform to new standards that have made running crews in the wood more expensive.

## Still no deal in transit dispute, but no strike either

It's been over a month since transit employees issued strike notice and still no contract.

Then again there's been no strike action either.

Pacific Western Transportation's Ron Burrows says he's waiting for the union to respond to an offer

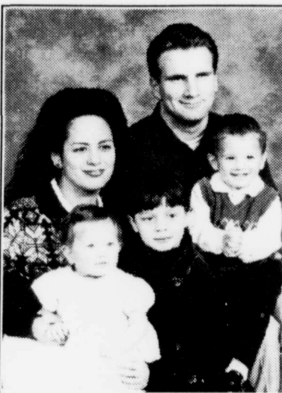
given to them early Monday. The package follows a two-day bargaining session May 23 and 24, after which Teamsters spokesperson Jeff Jeffery said strike action is "imminent."

"They've been saying a strike is imminent, but that's entirely their position,

whether they are planning any strike action or not is their prerogative," says Mr. Burrows.

The two bargaining parties have no further meetings scheduled, and Mr. Burrows would not say how many issues were still on the table.

The union represents 36 to 38 bus drivers and maintenance people who want to limit Pacific Western from contracting out and are demanding better wages and benefits. They also want the company to take several health and welfare plan concessions off the table.



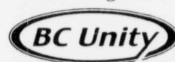
Eldon & Christine Matte and Children

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We congratulate Paul Nettleton, Shirley Bond and Pat Bell on winning the voters' support and we look forward to seeing you work hard to build a strong, growing and prosperous northern economy to benefit all British Columbia. We hope and pray:

1. That as part of a long-term strategy to reduce the tax burden, you will work to gear our legislation and policies to strengthen and elevate the foundation of our civilized society - The Traditional Family.
2. That you use the principles our country was founded on (see our Constitution - first sentence of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms) as your metewand when drafting and enacting new laws.



Yours truly,

*Eldon Matte*  
Eldon Matte

Authorized by Marcel Perron, Financial Agent 565-8503

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