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USW Members Ratify New Domtar Master Agreement

Pittsburgh—The United Steelworkers (USW) union announced today the ratification of a four-year master agreement with Domtar covering over 3,000 workers. The agreement was reached after a week of negotiations in Nashville over key economic and security issues and after a year of strategic planning and meetings, culminating with a 35-person bargaining committee representing nine locations: Port Huron, Mich., Nekoosa, Wis., Rothschild, Wis., Hawesville, Ky., Owensboro, Ky., Plymouth, N.C., Kingsport, Tenn., Johnsonburg, Pa., and Ashdown, Ark.

“These negotiations are particularly important for our union and for the paper sector,” said USW International President Leo W. Gerard. “Domtar is the largest uncoated free sheet producer in North America and the second largest in the global industry. The company is committed to producing paper in North America and to sound environmental practices and innovative approaches to promoting the continued relevance of paper in our society such as its Paper Because campaign.

“This agreement demonstrates that it’s possible for labor and management to work together to retain viable family-supporting, green jobs in North America with good wages, benefits and working conditions,” he said.

The local unions ratified the offer during the month of November. Besides a two percent wage increase each year, there are gains in every economic area of the agreement and opportunities for more during local bargaining as well as a transition to one of the best health care plans in the industry. This plan will assist in controlling cost increases and involve local leaders in plan development. The agreement also provides for wage retention in the event of a machine or department shutdown and enhanced security provisions to protect workers in the event of a sale, merger or other corporate transaction.

This accord represents another step forward for Domtar members in the paper industry. In the past, locals bargained site by site, even though most companies approached bargaining as part of a national strategy. The Domtar locals changed that when they bargained their first master agreement in early 2008 after a 2007 campaign to change the way Domtar bargained with them.

“For this second-generation master, the company recognized the value of working with the union and its locals to craft a package that addressed issues facing both parties, like health care, pension

and protection for workers in a declining industry,” said USW International Vice President Jon Geenen, who heads bargaining in the paper sector.

“One of the main benefits of all the locals bargaining together at the same time is that everyone gets a voice in shaping the package,” said Leeann Foster, Assistant to International President Gerard and the Domtar Union Council Chair. “What made the difference in these negotiations was the activism and participation of our local unions. They were engaged, active and vocal about their priorities and their solidarity paid off.”

The USW represents about 100,000 paper workers in the U.S. and Canada and is the largest industrial union in North America. It has 850,000 members in the U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean and represents workers employed in metals, rubber, chemicals, paper, oil refining, renewable and atomic energy, plus the service sector.

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