

Workers are arriving in Big River, as the Sawmill prepares to open a second shift at the end of March.

In 2006, when nearly 200 people lost their jobs due to the closure of the saw mill, many families were forced to look elsewhere, or have their spouses working out of town. In 2010, Carrier Forest Products purchased the saw mill after it being closed for nearly 4 years. Production began again in 2013, allowing families to reunite back at home and begin work at the saw mill.

“When the second shift comes in, it all indicated more locals will come back to the community,” said Wilson. Wilson also stated that even though the citizens have gotten used to their significant others having a commute to work, they now have a choice to work closer to home. President of Carrier Forest Products, Bill Kordyban, states that many employees are those who had worked at the mill before it had shut down in 2006.

Currently the saw mill employs approximately 60 people. 80-100 staff are planned to be working when both shifts are up and running. The saw mill and the planer are the two plants that operate in Big River. They both share the same building but have different procedures. Approximately one month’s time after the second shift of the sawmill (8-10 People), the planer will open a second shift, according to Kordyban.

“If everything goes well, we should be starting the second shift in the mill on March 24th,” he stated “if not the 24th, than the week after.” Kordyban said the company is still filling positions for the second shift at the saw mill.

“Skilled trades positions are difficult to fill,” he said. In order to fill some positions, the company had to look outside the community. “Whenever possible we try to hire locally,” said Kordyban. “We have been very fortunate because a lot of people want to move back to the community.” The shortage of trade’s people is an attribute to the economic growth in Saskatchewan according to Wilson. “This is a challenge for every community that is experiencing growth and more economic activity.”

With that, even though the saw mill also owned by Carrier Forest Products is closed, it is still being used to finish the processes in Big River. This mainly includes shipping purposes. Carrier Forest Products are currently putting all efforts into the Big River Saw Mill. “We concentrated all our resources in Big River because it is a much larger operation.”

Allyssa Yarrow – Fortier Mattila Appraisals Inc.

Source: Shellbrook Chronicle