

Community: Closure of the Pulp Mill

The Town of St. James is home to the St. James Pulp and Paper Mill. The Mill was built in the early 1900s. The Mill employs 400 people and is one of the major employers in the area. The Mill also provides indirect employment to the community in the logging, forestry and service industries.

In 2008 there was a recession and global paper prices and demand decreased. In the past there were periodic rumours circulating in the community regarding layoffs and reduction in production quotas. More recently, however, there have been rumours circulating the mill might close permanently.

In the past the health professionals and community service workers observed that when layoffs were threatened, there was a rise in cases of anxiety and depression and domestic violence. This included cases admitted through the Emergency Department of the local hospital, the local women's shelter noted an increase in cases of women and children seeking protection. Again, when rumours of layoffs circulated in the community alcohol sales increased and alcohol related illness and accidents increased.

The recent discussions regarding closure of the pulp mill concerned community leaders and health professionals. The potential closure of the mill would have a significant economic impact on the community. There was concern among health professionals regarding the detrimental health effects related to the closure.