

May 13, 2021

Unprecedented Times Call For Unprecedented Measures

To: Grocery store employers at Superstore, Extra Foods, No Frills, Safeway, FreshCo, Sobeys and Red River Coop

If I were to show up to any of your stores today with no shirt, or no shoes on, I would be escorted out of the store immediately and refused service. But if I show up with no mask, I can still freely shop and get my groceries at most of your stores.

As an Employer, you have a duty to provide a safe workplace for your employees and the security guards at your entrances, and you also have a duty to provide a safe environment for your customers. Customers being allowed to shop in your stores without wearing a mask needs to be fixed, just as it has been at many other retail locations in Manitoba.

This pandemic has affected all of us differently, but the one thing we all know is that we need to get through this together. The majority of our populations are now eligible to access vaccines, but that doesn't mean we're through this chaotic time. Worker safety needs to become your top priority.

Every day we receive notifications about COVID cases within your stores, and thankfully these cases are mostly individual. Our members (and your employees) are telling us that now, more than ever, customers are showing up without masks. They are a safety hazard to our members and your customers. Our members feel unsupported -- some have even quit because you, as their Employer, are not doing enough to ensure they are safe.

As the Union representing workers in your stores, we firmly believe that the right thing for you to do is to commit to the following:

1. **Keep our members safe by enforcing a no mask, no service, no exceptions policy in your stores.** Have security at the door informing unmasked customers that they are not allowed inside without a mask. If they disregard this guidance and enter the store, you should have security call the police to have them removed as trespassers.

There are many other ways for customers to shop and access food supplies if they cannot wear a mask for a health reason, but we're told that the customers with legitimate health concerns are not the problem.

2. **Support your staff.** The right thing for you to do is to commit to a consistent, supporting response from management when a worker exercises their Right to Refuse Unsafe Work. Right now, if a member exercises this right when an unmasked customer approaches, there is an inconsistent response from management across your companies. Some managers are absolutely doing the right thing, and we thank them. However, other managers are slow to help or won't help. In the worst instances, managers threaten to discipline workers for trying to exercise their rights. The response from management needs to be consistent, it needs to support the workers, and it needs to be a priority from all levels of management.

We at UFCW Local 832 are proud to represent your employees who have shown up and masked up at work throughout these turbulent times to ensure we can all access necessities in a safe manner. We expect you to take these words to heart and make their workplace as safe as it can possible be. I look forward to your response.



Jeff Traeger
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c: Manitoba's media outlets