

Jeff Traeger:

Good evening, everyone. My name is Jeff Traeger and I am the president of your union, UFCW Local 832. I want to welcome you all to the February Telephone Town Hall General Membership Meeting for the members of Local 832, which is now called to order.

Before we formally start tonight's meeting, I want to say a huge thank you to all of you who continue to work on the front lines during this pandemic. Many of us thought that this was going to be a short-term inconvenience to our lives, but it has turned out to be much more than that. Through it all, you have continued to go to work, putting yourself and your loved ones at risk, and help the rest of us to get through this so far. I have always known the value that UFCW members bring to the fabric of our society. The only difference now is that all Manitobans, and indeed all Canadians, know it as well. I wanted to say thank you.

I also wanted to let you know that all this year at UFCW we're working extra hard during the pandemic to do everything we can to ensure our members are safe at work. We continue to be here whenever you need us, as we always have been. Our offices are under the same restrictions and protocols that many businesses are under, but rest assured that our union reps, our specialists, and leadership, will continue to work on behalf of all of our members as we have throughout the pandemic.

Tonight is our Winter Meeting. We have four of these town halls per year. Each one happens at the end of the season. With the cold weather Manitobans have been dealing with for the last couple of weeks, I hope we truly are at the end of this season. I hope you're all staying warm, as well as safe and healthy. With me in the studio tonight is our Director of Operations, Marie Buchan, who will be the emcee for tonight, our Communications Coordinator, Chris Noto, and our newest employee, Loreto Gutierrez, who started with us just two weeks ago and is our new organizer and also coordinating our efforts with member engagement. We also have two guests from our staff joining us on the line tonight. The Local has two current campaigns on the go, focusing on issues related to the assisted living community and to the security industry. Phil Kraychuk, who negotiates many of our assisted living contracts, will be on the line to give us an update on that campaign, and Sandy Forcier, who represents most of our guards, will join us for an update on the security guard campaign.

We have a full agenda tonight, so let's get started. First order of business required by our bylaws is that we vote to approve three reports at this meeting, and they are: the minutes of the previous meeting held on November 10th, 2020, the Secretary-Treasurer's report on the current finances, and the President's Report. We will not be reading these reports, which will give us more time for our guests and for you to ask any questions you may have. All three of these documents have been previously posted on our website at ufcw832.com for you to review. They will stay posted there in our archives so you can see all the documents from all of our Telephone Town Hall general membership meetings at any time. I should note that our Secretary-Treasurer Bea Bruske is not able to be here tonight, but she sends her regards to all of you.

Just a reminder, if any of you would like to ask a question, please press the star key followed by the number three, and you will be placed in a queue to ask your question. I would ask that you please remember that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss issues or ask questions about matters that affect all Local 832 members. If you have a question that's specific about a grievance or an issue that affects your workplace alone, I would ask that you contact your full-time union representative whose name and contact information is available on the UFCW bulletin board in your workplace or online at ufcw832.com.

We now need a motion to approve the minutes of our last meeting, which took place on November 10th, 2020.

PIF 5691 UFCW 832
February 16, 2021

Marie Buchan:
So moved.

Speaker 3:
Seconded.

Jeff Traeger:

It has been moved and seconded here in the studio, so please vote yes by pressing the number one on your keypad or no by pressing the number two on your keypad. Once again, to get in the lineup to ask a question, simply press the star key followed by the number three key and you'll be placed in the queue. With the introductory business done, I'm going to turn it over to Marie to interview our first guest. Marie.

Marie Buchan:

Thank you, Jeff. Good evening, everyone. I'm very pleased to introduce the newest member of UFCW Local 832 team, Loreto Gutierrez. Loreto has been hired as a member engagement organizing coordinator for the Local. We thought it would be great to bring Loreto on to the GMM to introduce her to everyone and give you all the opportunity to get to know her a little bit better. Loreto, why don't you start by telling us a little bit about how you got started with the labor movement?

Loreto Gutierrez:

I think that we would have to blame my parents a bit for this one. My parents were always active in labor movements, be it in Chile or here in Winnipeg. My father was a health care worker at HFC and he was a very active member in his union. He would take me to his union meetings and participate in all the Mayday and Labor Day marches. He would find strikes and make it a point to show his solidarity on picket lines and take me along with him. Both my parents were always active in peace, gender equality, and social justice movements. I maintain that spirit throughout my teenage years and into adulthood. Eventually when I began my employment in Saint Boniface Hospital, I too was a unionized worker under UFCW and began participating with the youth internship program and shop stewarding since then.

Marie Buchan:

Excellent. What would you say you're most excited about for your new role?

Loreto Gutierrez:

Meeting members and learning from them. I think that there is so much to learn from every single person that you encounter. Everyone carries so much experience that you learn from. I love hearing experiences from jobs, the good, the bad, and the ugly, because you can take different experiences and apply them to so many situations.

Marie Buchan:

Loreto, what do you think will be your biggest challenge in your new role at the Local?

Loreto Gutierrez:

PIF 5691 UFCW 832
February 16, 2021

Right now, needless to say, the pandemic, but in general, I feel that we as a society have become accepting of many situations that we can change and improve if we just become involved. Becoming involved is such an important aspect when it comes to your union. Unions are strong, but they are stronger with a very active membership.

Marie Buchan:

Very well said. What do you see as the union's biggest strengths and challenges currently?

Loreto Gutierrez:

The strengths that I see unions have is passion. I am so impressed with all my colleagues with all the passion they have and the motivation they carry to make every person job situation better. I have always followed UFCW on social media and was always able to relate with what they stand for and thought UFCW as a strong organization to take stands when it comes to social justice issues. UFCW's involvement in the community was also something that I admired, like the campaigns at the United Way, to the education that it provided in the training center.

As for challenges for the union, I think it is the fact that we have embraced a culture that does not celebrate each other. A victory for one worker should be received as a victory for all. If we see someone gain a favorable collective agreement, we should be happy for them, as that could be a sign for better days ahead for all eventually. We really need to start building each other up.

Marie Buchan:

Excellent. Finally, Loreto, what can the members of UFCW Local 832 do to help you in your role?

Loreto Gutierrez:

Get involved. Approaching me with ideas of how they want to see their unions in their work lives and community lives. If their family or friends are struggling in their jobs and their employers, direct them to me and we will look into their situation and see if unionizing is appropriate for their workplaces.

Marie Buchan:

Perfect. Thank you very much. I really appreciate you taking the time to answer those questions. If anyone is interested in getting hold of Loreto, they can definitely head to our website, and her information is on there, or you can give us a call at the union office.

Jeff Traeger:

Thank you very much, Marie. Thank you, Loreto. That was wonderful. I do see that the motion to approve the previous minutes has passed and that we have one question on the line. Let's take that question from Alex. Go ahead, Alex.

Alex:

Actually, I don't have really a question. I'm just a new member, a very, very new member, but just hoping that I can get involved too. That's it. I don't have really a particular question right now.

Jeff Traeger:

PIF 5691 UFCW 832
February 16, 2021

You know what? Alex, thank you for taking the time to join us on our membership meeting, especially for a brand new member. We're always looking to get our members involved. I see that you work at General Mills, correct?

Alex:

Yes, sir.

Jeff Traeger:

What we're going to do is we're going to have your ... We've got your name and information down. We're going to have your rep reach out to you and contact you and have a discussion about how you can get more involved with our Local. Thank you again for calling in. That's great. No other questions on the line. Just maybe a reminder to people that if you want to ask a question, you can press the star key followed by the number three and we'll gladly take it. Before moving on to our next guest, I will need a motion to approve the Secretary-Treasurer's report.

Marie Buchan:

So moved.

Speaker 3:

Seconded.

Jeff Traeger:

Has been moved and seconded here in the studio, so please vote yes by pressing the number one on your keypad or no by pressing the number two on your keypad. Do you have a question about the Secretary-Treasurer's report or anything else at all? Star three and we'll gladly take your question. Now let's go back to Marie to introduce our next guest.

Marie Buchan:

Perfect. Phil Kraychuk is our next guest. Phil joined UFCW Local 832 in 2010. Phil began his career as a local as a full-time servicing representative, and in 2013 he moved into his role of health and safety rep, and then in 2018 Phil became a full-time union negotiator with the Local. In Phil's current negotiations territory, Phil represents our members in the assisted living sector. This is a rapidly expanding portion of our membership, as well as an industry that is growing just as quickly. Yet it's a career path that not a lot of people know a lot about, nor are they really aware of what these jobs entail. Welcome, Phil. Maybe we'll have you start by walking us through a little bit about this campaign and how it got started.

Phil Kraychuk:

Thanks, Marie. Thanks for having me on tonight. Welcome, Loreto, your first Town Hall as a staff member. Thanks for joining us here. I guess where did this start? We've been bargaining in this sector for a very, very long time. We've heard the same things for a very, very long time. It essentially is government negligence towards people with intellectual disabilities, where a lot of our membership is working.

Just to give a little bit of context, you got about 15 collective agreements in this area that range from anywhere from one-year contracts to four-year contracts. More recently they've been getting a lot shorter, due to the funding issues. It equals about 1,500 members of our roughly 19,000. It's a very large

contingent of UFCW 832 members here. Where the campaign really started was years and years and years of seeing issues at the bargaining table and watching members give everything that they have and work and work and work and really not get rewarded in the way that they should be, for the work that they're doing.

When you look at comparables in other sectors, the work that people are doing in assisted living, that members are doing in assisted living, is helping other people live. To put it bluntly, providing a better quality of life for a lot of people that really count on it. Over the last while, we've had a lot of discussions about this. COVID took us to a place where we were forced to think outside the box with a lot of different things we do. Many people on the line know that, with the way that we've done proposal meetings and ratifications and stuff. That didn't stop with bargaining contracts or how reps service your units and do all that stuff. That actually got us starting to think about some of the overall issues that we're seeing with particular sectors or industries or employers and whatnot.

We took the summertime to actually dive deep into the issue with assisted living. Being a union, we're a large player in this game. We have the ability to say a lot of things that a lot of employers are thinking but can't quite say. We spent the summer talking to every employer where we have a collective agreement. We spent the summer talking to members, some key members, shop stewards, bargaining committee members, about what's going on in this sector. I bargain in it, so I hear from a lot of the leadership in the assisted living sector on a regular basis of the issues that you're seeing. We took some time and we met with different allies and created this core group to educate ourselves. We spent all summer meeting with employers and listening to people and talking to educate ourselves as a union, to have a better understanding of what the funding model looks like, where it comes from, what the issues are and what the problems are.

I think it goes without saying, the number one issue in this sector is the wages. In a lot of ways, assisted living members are doing work that a health care aide would do, administering medication, restraining somebody who may have violent tendencies. There's a lot of unknowns. It's stuff that I can relate to a lot, because in a lot of ways, working for a union and being a labor activist is something you do because you have it in your heart. I see a lot of that in the assisted living sector where you don't necessarily get that huge paycheck but you really care. A lot of times at the bargaining table I have to bring members back and say, "This collective agreement is about you. It's not about the clients at this point. I know how much everybody cares about them, but it's your time to be selfish."

Wages are a huge issue. When we met with Abilities Manitoba they finally had what we view as assaulted us. It's still not enough, but minimum wage plus 50% is a good standard, because it continues to move that wage forward. That made a lot of sense to us.

We see a lot of issues with training. That's something that came out in reviewing all this retention and profession-wise in the field. We've got health care professionals out there, but we don't have professionals for the assisted living sector. The campaign came to life by a lot of people thinking outside of the box and finally recognizing a problem that's been in front of us for a long time. That's my long-winded answer to that one, Marie.

It also allowed us to look at other areas too and partner up with Energy U, another large union in the province, and start getting the ball rolling on this so that we could launch a campaign, and as labor we could be vocal and we could start getting our voice out there and having our membership and having working Manitobans heard about the complete lack of funding and supports in this sector. I think going forward, that's something that we all know, but there's special times, there's the right times to bring this up.

The government, in December, spent time recognizing all the hard work in this sector, or so they say. They gave a premium. We'll say we'll call it a COVID premium, is what they wanted it to look like, but inadvertently they were just recognizing the issues that you're all seeing every single day you go to work that front line. They're acknowledging the fact that there wasn't enough people to do that. What COVID did is it just heightened it. There wasn't enough people to do the job. They threw more money out there saying that it's because of the frontline work you're doing, but in reality it was because employers were barking so loud, they didn't have people to give that lifesaving support that all of you give.

We now have got an opportunity of government actually acknowledging some of the faults that they forced on this sector for years and years and years. Along with MGU pairing together with them and now communications, we're getting really close to actually launching our campaigns and getting some ads around there and focusing on different times throughout the year. It's been a really interesting process. It's been fantastic to work with MGU.

Right now, planning stages, that includes membership. We want to get people involved. We want the membership and clients and hopefully families and people to come tell us their stories. Let's be vocal. Let's hear what's going on. Let's let the public start talking about this and get them angry about the negligence that's going on right now.

I think that's in a nutshell, Marie, the campaign, is to focus on properly funding the assisted living sector once and for all. We're hopeful in that the louder we are, we'll be able to get people to listen. We know the government we're up against here, but that doesn't mean that it can't be done. It doesn't mean that it's not something that we can continue for a long time.

That's the plan for this is fight and fight and fight like unions do, until we're able to accomplish our mission. When we're able to accomplish that, we got to keep pushing too. We got to keep pushing. The end game is to get better wages and to get better training and to do all that, but it doesn't mean that it ends right there. Your input, membership input, hearing from people in the sector, hearing from the public is all going to be good things. Thanks, Marie.

Marie Buchan:

Perfect. That's great. That really helps. It was great for you to explain how it got started and what your plans are for the future and why we wanted to look at bringing some well-deserved information forward to the public on the assisted living sector. Maybe just finally for you to wrap up, Phil, can you let members know who are listening, who maybe want to get learning more about this or help out or who work in the assisted living sector, how they can get involved and who they should contact?

Phil Kraychuk:

Yeah. We've had discussions with all your employers. If you're not familiar with who your union rep is, you could just ask your employer. At the end of the day, Curt Martel, Morag Stewart, J.P. Petit, I think those are the primary three reps. If I'm missing any, I'm sorry. Those are the primary three reps in this sector that most of you are familiar with. Myself, Phil Kraychuk, I'm negotiating a lot of these contracts, so you'd see my name on a lot of the paperwork that comes out around negotiations time. You could contact either myself or the union reps to put your name forward and have a discussion with us. It may not be something that you might want to get involved with, but we'd like to hear from you. We want your input. We want to know what's going on.

You could email us through our website. That works completely fine. You can call us, 786-5055, and reach the reps that way, or myself. Again, talk to your employer. Your employers all know that we

are doing this. They're all on board with us doing this. If you don't know how to get a hold of the union, your employer, they definitely will. The biggest thing is, if you got a question about it, anything, anything with it, just make sure you contact us or talk to your shop stewards in your workplace. They'll put you in contact. At least if we could answer your questions and have some of that discussion, it's going to lead to a lot of positive things. That's pretty much it, Marie.

Just in closing I did want to say that over the last year I've recognized a lot of hard work and a lot of stress and anxiety coming out of this sector, with bargaining going on, and us still pushing forward, I have had the opportunity to talk with a lot of this membership. Much like all the other frontline workers out there, as the negotiator for this sector, thank you for all your frontline work. I know that sometimes it's frustrating when government doesn't recognize that, but I'll tell you 832 recognizes that. Our entire membership is front line. Thanks for all your hard work. I appreciate it. Keep it up.

Jeff Traeger:

All right.

Phil Kraychuk:

Thank you.

Jeff Traeger:

Thank you very much, Phil. Thanks. Appreciate that. Thanks, Marie. I got to say, Phil, back when I was the negotiator in this sector quite a while ago, we were doing the same thing. At that time we were fighting a friendly government even to try to make sure that the funding in that sector was improved. It's been a battle that this local has been fighting for 20 years. If it takes 20 more, we'll be there doing it. Hopefully it doesn't. Hopefully we can make a dent in it sooner than that. I see that the vote to approve the Secretary-Treasurer's Report has been passed, so it's time to make a motion to approve the President's Report, which is the final document we have to approve at tonight's meeting.

Marie Buchan:

So moved.

Speaker 3:

Seconded.

Jeff Traeger:

It has been moved and seconded here in the studio, so please press number one on your keypad to vote yes and number two on your keypad to vote no. If you have a question about the President's Report or anything else at all, press star three and we'll gladly take it. Speaking of that, we've got quite a few folks in the queue. We're going to open up the phone lines and take a few more of your questions. We're going to start with my good friend Russell Schumacher from out in Brandon, Manitoba. Seems like we get to speak at least once every three months, eh, Russell?

Russell Schumacher:

Yes, Jeff, it seems that we do.

Jeff Traeger:

That's good. That's good. I look forward to it.

Russell Schumacher:

Good. My question tonight is about finally now I see that PBAS is now accepting email claims. There are designated email addresses for different employers. I am finding that emailing the claims isn't really any faster than sending them in manually by mail. Yes, it's a step in the right direction to getting the RX card, which is what I'm really hoping for one day, but the emailing of the claims doesn't seem to be any better than sending them in just our regular snail mail as I thought that it would be. I get the automated response. Then I'm like, I got tons of prescription receipts here waiting to get paid. I was just wondering what's going on there.

Jeff Traeger:

Marie's been dealing with trying to improve some of the services that we get from PBAS for our members, so I'm going to turn over that, and then I've got another comment after Marie's done.

Marie Buchan:

I would tell you to first of all speak to your rep directly. They can get the information and then they can pass it on to me, or you can also send me an email directly with some specifics about your personal claims. We won't do it over the GMM, but you can definitely give me a call or you can send me an email. All my information's on the website. I'd be more than happy to look into that specific situation with you. We do have some commitment from PBAS. I do follow up with them monthly. I have meetings with them to be ensuring that they are speeding up the process. I know we had a lot of problems over the November, December, beginning of January. We've been told that it's getting fixed and they've caught up, so if it hasn't, we definitely want to hear from members. I'll tell you just give me a call directly or send me an email and I will look into your situation for you specifically.

Russell Schumacher:

Will do. Thanks, Marie.

Marie Buchan:

No problem.

Jeff Traeger:

Russell, I wanted to just let you know something, but you can't tell anybody. No, we are seriously looking at making a move towards direct deposit with the Safeway fund.

Russell Schumacher:

Awesome.

Jeff Traeger:

We have a meeting coming up. We're at least going to explore those costs that we've talked about, you and I, many times before, with the getting the prescription card. We're at least going to explore what those are so that we can try to make a pathway to getting there. Obviously you know that's been our goal as trustees on the labor side of the table, and there seems to be a flavor for it on the management side of the table these days, just because let's face it, we're falling behind, by not offering things like

prescription drug cards and direct deposit for members and having portals where people can file claims and those type of things. We're aware that this is not just a need of one of our members out in Brandon. We're aware this is a need of many of our members across Manitoba. We're going to take as many steps as we can to get us there as quickly as we can.

Russell Schumacher:

That sounds great, because that's one thing, because the benefit I think outweighs the cost of the other way.

Jeff Traeger:

I just got to get back to the bargaining table next year with Safeway and get them to contribute more money into the benefit plan, right?

Russell Schumacher:

Yeah, but it can't really cost that much, does it?

Jeff Traeger:

Like I said, it's a setup cost, and then you always get a run on claims when you have a prescription card, because folks that otherwise wouldn't use it will use it. That's a good thing, because people should always be following their doctor's orders when it comes to prescription, as I'm sure you're aware and I'm aware. There is a setup cost. The plan is not in a position to make that many new expenses, but I think if we focus all of our efforts on modernizing the plan, because I think that's more important than let's say expanding coverage in a particular area, having better vision care coverage or something like that. I think it's more important that we look at modernizing the plan. I think we're moving in that direction.

Russell Schumacher:

That's great to hear. I look forward to hearing the progress.

Jeff Traeger:

All right. All right. Take care of yourself, Russell. We're going to move on to Hyacinth now from Life's Journey. Go ahead.

Hyacinth:

Good evening. My question is [inaudible 00:27:29] if there is way that union can bring this realization to the management. There's folks who work every weekend. Making one weekend on, one weekend off, at least balancing [inaudible 00:27:54] lives and the work, that would be very good, even if union can bring that to the management and [inaudible 00:28:04]. My second question is [crosstalk 00:28:12].

Jeff Traeger:

Sorry.

Hyacinth:

Go ahead.

Jeff Traeger:

No, I'm just wondering if your unit is one of the ones that Phil Kraychuk was talking about that was potentially up for bargaining, because those type of things that you're talking about, Hyacinth, are proposals that we would bring to the table to try to change the collective agreement to allow for something like a weekend off and a weekend on. Is Phil still on the line? Phil, are you there?

Hyacinth:

[crosstalk 00:28:43].

Phil Kraychuk:

Yeah, I'm here, Jeff. Thanks.

Hyacinth:

[inaudible 00:28:44].

Phil Kraychuk:

Hello?

Jeff Traeger:

Hello, Phil.

Phil Kraychuk:

Hi.

Jeff Traeger:

We got you now. Do you have any comment? Is Life's Journey one of the units that's up for bargaining right now?

Phil Kraychuk:

Yeah, they are actually, Jeff. Thank you for bringing that up. We did have our proposal meeting. We did about a four-week open period for proposals to either email or mail in. We also had town hall proposal meetings that we did on Wednesday, February 3rd. We had four actually on that day, two for the front line and two for the office. Those proposals did come up. They come up every round of negotiations. Benefits for part-timers, casual employees, time away from the workplace. With your bargaining committee, we're actually meeting at the beginning of March to look at all of our proposals and everything that was brought forward and put together our package. We do have bargaining dates set with your employer towards the end of March. I don't know exactly what the package looks like right now, because I haven't met with the committee to go over that aspect of it, but I do know that those proposals did come forward and they're something that we're seriously going to look at. Thanks. Thanks, Jeff.

Jeff Traeger:

No problem, Phil. That answer your question, Hyacinth?

Hyacinth:

Yeah. Thank you. [inaudible 00:30:06].

Jeff Traeger:

We've also got your contact information here, so I'm going to have your rep reach out to you at some point within the next day or so to have a discussion with you about the proposals that you're interested in. We're going to move on to [Umar 00:30:22] now from G4S Security. Go ahead, Umar.

Umar Farooq:

Hi. Good night. My name is Umar Farooq, and I'm working with G4S Security. According to agreement between G4S and United [inaudible 00:30:43] arrived October 23rd, 2020. According to this agreement, Section C2 [inaudible 00:30:59] the company will offer employees three different shoes selections, including a lower-cut shoe to selected. They may only select one type of shoe [inaudible 00:31:16] per year. According to this agreement [inaudible 00:31:21] security guard. My question is this. Me and other guards are working with Manitoba Hydro. That is a 24 multi-story building. We are doing internal, external patrol. We are choosing of our own boots. Before that we were working with the [inaudible 00:31:59] did give us one pair of shoes in one year. My question is this. I'd be grateful to you, especially Mr. Sandy Forcier [inaudible 00:32:14] because we are also using those boot and we are take near about 10,000 step per every day. Near 10,000 step every day we are doing interior patrol. Companies should provide us one pair of shoes per year. That is my question.

Marie Buchan:

Sorry. Thank you very much, Umar. That's one of those questions that we're going to have to have your union rep, Sandy, get back to you, because it is specific to your collective agreement. I don't want to make any commitments or answer anything here that is not accurate. I'm going to have Sandy Forcier get back to you and you guys will be able to discuss further. Then depending on what's in your collective agreement, you can look into other options, etc.

Jeff Traeger:

All right. I think we're going to move on now. I see that the vote to approve President's Report has been passed. That means it's time for our last guest of the evening. Marie.

Marie Buchan:

Thank you. Sandy Forcier is a full-time servicing representative whose majority of his servicing territory is our members in the security sector. Sandy represents more than 2,000 members in security. He's been working with UFCW Local 832 as a full-time servicing representative since early 2004. We asked Sandy today to speak with us tonight about the security guard project that UFCW Local 832 has been working on. Welcome, Sandy, and let's start off by you telling us a little bit about this project and how it got started.

Sandy Forcier:

Good evening, everyone. Thank you for this opportunity to provide and share some information with you regarding our Security Guard Empowerment Project. The security guard project started in late spring of 2019. It really began out of a few issues. One is educating our security members on their rights under their collective bargaining agreements and legislation in Manitoba, through their current shop

stewards, health and safety community activists, and security guard project leaders who are participating in the project. It's about engaging our members who are spread out all over the city and surrounding areas. In the North it's listening and learning from our security members on how to address their concerns and having them participate in the developments of communication strategies with and for the members in the sector. Really who is better to do this than those experts in the field who are doing the work?

The project is also about building a better understanding between those working as frontline security workers and the communities and property that they protect. The project leaders guide the project. It really started with us contracting Maryann [Sereli 00:35:31] to assist in building our project leader team and making connections with community partners.

Marie Buchan:

Perfect. Sandy, do you want to maybe want to let us know a little bit about why the union felt it was necessary to start a project to engage our members who work in the security sector?

Sandy Forcier:

Sure. As I said earlier, the members are spread out over hundreds of sites throughout Winnipeg and the province, so it's been very difficult to engage our security members due to that. Also the current government has also brought forth new challenges in this sector with freezing legislation that was lobbied for many years by this union. I'm referring to the security guard minimum wage, which was established by the former NDP government and was to be \$2.25 higher than the regular provincial minimum wage. The Pallister governments in all their wisdom or lack of, froze that legislation in 2017 and the minimum wage gap has decreased for security guards as a result. Where the current minimum wage in the province is \$11.90, the security guard minimum wage should now be \$14.15, and our guards currently sit at \$12.50 as a result of Mr. Pallister's decision. We really needed to strategize on how to advance the needs and goals of this sector of workers, and really to hear from them what their challenges were and how they believe we can address issues and concerns like this on a larger scale.

The project did a phone bank back in October and November to encourage our members to sign a letter to their MOA requesting that the security guard minimum wage should be reinstated and requesting proper PPE be readily available for security guards. This generated over 400 letters in a short period going out to the various MOAs, which some of the opposition MOAs have responded with their support.

There is also a large number of new immigrants who work in this sector. We're trying to engage and be much more diverse with the security project. The project is very representative of the membership in our security sector. This helps us with communication to and from the membership. I still do my regular servicing role, obviously, but this project addresses the issues on a grander scale with the membership input while educating and engaging the membership.

From the project we've recently announced nine new shop stewards actually, and health and safety activists. We also developed an intro to UFCW 832 web campus-based course that 16 of our project leaders attended in December 2020. From then, from there, they indicated their interest in becoming active in the union.

Also, it's my view that the general public do not understand the role of security guards, so there is a public education component that is being done through the meeting with community partners and the NDP to support and bring to light the issues that security guards are faced with on a daily basis in this sector.

Marie Buchan:

Great. It sounds like there's a lot of really great work that has been done and is currently being done. Can you maybe speak a little bit about what the future plans are for this project if you guys have any?

Sandy Forcier:

Sure. I'll try to be brief, because there's going to be a lot of work going forward. One of the major projects that's upcoming in the very near future is the mandatory 40-hour training improvements, which we have begun the discussion process with the Manitoba Department of Justice already. We've also developed a survey, which we will be sending out to our members in the next seven to 10 days or so, for their feedback on which improvements they believe are important and necessary for the mandatory training. Viewpoints is the organization that we brought on to gather the responses and break down the information. All the information will be confidential, but we want to have this information ready when we do begin the discussions with the government and the group that will be put together to discuss the improvements to the mandatory training going forward. The government will also be sending out a similar survey as well, but we just wanted to have our information ready to go when we do start that process with them.

We are also running the intro to UFCW 832 course again in June for project leaders and members in the security sector who are interested and want to become more involved. We are hoping to fill all of our shop steward and health and safety positions under the collective agreement. I also want to add that members do not have to become shop stewards or health and safety committee members to be active in this project. There is always going to be things for them to do and things that they can participate in. We're going to continue to build our team of activists and advance the issues and goals of the members in this sector.

I would like to say that the project is working. As I said, we're going to be offering the course again in June, but I'm already receiving requests from members that the shop stewards and the project leaders have spoken to already about the course and indicating that they want to attend and go through the course as well. That's good news.

Also in the near future, when the public health orders permit, we will be doing vigorous site servicing with project leaders and stewards, with myself. They will also do it on their own, but we will be seeing the members in their workplaces and the sites that they work at. I also wanted to add that we're trying new ways to reach and engage our members as part of this project. COVID has changed things obviously with how we service. It's also, in my view, prevented some things I think that maybe we wouldn't have considered before, that are going to be of great service to us in the future. That is using technology to our advantage. We've tried some new things. I tried a Facebook Live event in January and did a review of COVID and the impact on the industry and what we have done since March when the first shutdown took effect. It was well received. I foresee us doing more of those things in the future. We'll do presentations on hot-button topics and maybe some interviews and stuff like that. That's a tool for us in the future.

We're also starting servicing meetings via Zoom for this sector. We're going to have Zoom meetings on Tuesday, February 23rd from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Any member that we have a current and active email address before would've received the email notice on that already. I'm looking forward to meeting and seeing as many folks as I can next Tuesday.

Marie Buchan:

PIF 5691 UFCW 832
February 16, 2021

Perfect. That's a lot of great information, Sandy, and a lot of great points that you provided for us. If there's members that are listening right now who would like to get involved that work in the security sector, how can they get in contact with you?

Sandy Forcier:

They can contact me via email at sandy.forcier@ufcw832.com. They can reach me in the office at 204-786-5055, my extent is 211, or via Facebook on the UFCW Security Facebook page at facebook.com/pg/ufcw832/groups or ufcw832.com/security, and they'll be able to find all that information there. I would say the easiest way to do it is probably just go on our website at ufcw832.com and you'll find out all that information under the security tab.

Jeff Traeger:

All right. Thank you very much for that, Sandy. Very much appreciated. Normally that's the end of our formal presentation for this GMM tonight. Normally we'd have a lineup of questions. We only have one caller on. Now is your opportunity to press star three if you'd like to get on and ask a question. Our one caller is just showing as an inbound caller. Please go ahead with your question. Are you on the line there? All right. We did just get one more. I guess my little plug there helped. We've got Tina from Superstore. Go ahead, Tina.

Tina:

Hi. I don't know if this is relevant to all Superstores, but for some reason the company is cutting hours for multiple departments, and I'm not sure why, when the influx of people hasn't changed.

Jeff Traeger:

I am not sure. You're at what, 1506?

Tina:

Yes.

Jeff Traeger:

All right. I'm going to have to have your rep look into that. I know that we had a lot of hours early on in COVID and then again throughout the second wave. I think things have been normalizing a little bit. I did hear when I was speaking to our two Loblaw representatives on our executive board that hours are beginning to get cut across. I'm not sure what the reason for that is, but I'm going to speak to ... I think it's across all the stores, so I'm going to speak to your rep, which is probably either Roberta or Geoff Bergen and get one of them to reach out to you once they can find out from the company why the company's saying they're cutting their hours. How's that?

Tina:

That sounds perfect. What information I do know is they're saying the profits aren't quite what they should be. At least in my department that's what I saw.

Jeff Traeger:

You're going to make me crazy, Tina, because-

Tina:

I'm sorry.

Jeff Traeger:

No no, it's not that. If there's one company that through this pandemic that has been making money hand over fist, it's got to be Loblaw. Their sales are just up tremendously. You'd think the least they could do was share some of it by providing you guys with a premium or that they would join us in our fight to try to get you guys first on the vaccine list if you want to get vaccinated. For the to say that their profits aren't enough, how much is enough for this company? I don't know.

Tina:

I don't think enough is ever enough for them, but here nor there. I do have one other question, if I could.

Jeff Traeger:

Sure, go ahead.

Tina:

Masks. If a customer's not wearing a mask or they wear it coming in and take it off, are we allowed to say anything? Because I've gotten mixed messages across the board.

Jeff Traeger:

You're going to probably hear what we're being told anyways from Marie.

Tina:

Probably.

Marie Buchan:

I think what's really important to remember is that with COVID there's always new rules and regulations, and even when you listen to Dr. Roussin speak on his press releases and at his meetings and everything, he never really gives a specific answer, because what usually happens, it's the responsibility of the employer to enforce that rule. Then what ends up happening is it then starts to become we'll say that the manager needs to be enforcing it with the customers. We absolutely do not feel that it's the employees' responsibility to do that.

You do have the right to refuse to serve a customer who isn't wearing a mask. What you need to do if a customer approaches who that's not wearing a mask and you politely say, "Can you please put on your mask?" and they get abusive or start to raise their voice or anything, you simply call a manager and allow the manager to deal with it, because it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that the public health orders are being followed. As an employee you can actually go on the COVID website, on the Manitoba government website, and you can actually report that your employer is not properly following the rules, if they're saying we're not going to do anything. We always ask that you first speak to your employer, get your employer involved, your manager involved in it. For the most part, any time we've had any types of issues that have been brought up that's been dealt with, there have been cases where

we've had to deal with it in other ways, but there are always options. I would ask if you are having any struggles to make sure that you call your union representative and they can help you out.

Jeff Traeger:

All right. We're going to move on to our next. We got about six people in line for questions now. We're going to move on to Darlene. Go ahead, Darlene. How are you doing?

Darlene:

I'm not too bad, Jeff. How's everyone? I hope everyone's well and staying safe.

Jeff Traeger:

We're doing our best. Yeah. You too, I hope.

Darlene:

Thank you. Yes, absolutely. I just wanted to ask you what, if any, preparations are being made going into contract talks for Safeway for 2022, especially given that Empire just announced another announcement of seven new Go Fresh stores being converted out West. What kind of impact does that have on bargaining? Because I'm assuming that about 37 out of their 65 locations in Western Canada have been converted, and once they're finished out West, how many more closures will happen in Manitoba and what kind of impact will that have on our bargaining?

Jeff Traeger:

Obviously it's going to have an impact on bargaining, as you see the company is really genuinely moving to the discount banner, not just here, but all the way across the West. Bargaining preparations, the contract is up in about a year and a month from now. Normally we would try to get bargaining really rolling three to four months ahead of time, as you know, Darlene, from being on the committee in the past. Preparations are going to be starting this spring. It's going to be a little difficult for us to do what we normally did by having all the member forums where we brought all those people to the training center. We're going to have to do a lot more virtual stuff around that. Just how far Safeway's going to go with conversions is really an unknown right now. I sense from talking to the local people, the human resources and the labor relations people, the senior ones anyways, at Sobeys, that that direction comes out of Stellarton, Nova Scotia, and they're not even kept apprised necessarily of just how much the company is going to move.

If you remember the original announcement, it was going to be they wanted to do 55 FreshCo stores across the West. They're closing in on that with the new ones that are opening now. We did ask when these last ones were announced, and I asked again recently, if there were any more slated for Manitoba. The answer I got was no, not now. Each time they convert those stores, it weakens our bargaining power a little bit for the Safeway stores, just because they become a smaller and smaller part of Sobeys business here in Manitoba. That doesn't prevent us from taking them on the way we always have. The good news about bargaining this time is their finance is significantly better, their sales are significantly better than they were at the Safeway locations when we were bargaining last time. Last time it felt to some of us like we were bargaining with a bit of a gun to our head. I think this time we're in a much better position of power dealing with this employer. We're going to move on to [Rajvir 00:54:12] from Superstore 1511. Go ahead. Hello, Rajvir, are you there? All right. We will move on to Leann, Leann from [Salker 00:54:32]. How you doing, Leann?

Leann:

I am well. Thank you. I think you alluded to the question I had when you were answering Tina's call. I'm wondering, with the designation that they gave so many members across UFCW sectors, as essential workers at the beginning of the pandemic had to do with any indication of how that slots us into vaccine availability?

Jeff Traeger:

[crosstalk 00:54:56].

Leann:

The other thing is now that ... No? I just wondered if there was anything [crosstalk 00:55:01].

Jeff Traeger:

Maybe before you ask your second question, Leann, I said not at all so quickly because it makes me angry. It makes me angry that federal government put money into people that they deemed to be essential workers during the pandemic, that the expectation was that you folks go out there every single day, even when cases were coming in 400 and 500 at a time, and go to work, and they're not even enforcing mask policies, but when it comes to providing the vaccine, they say, "No, we're going to deal with just the people that are most vulnerable, and that's based on age." We've been lobbying to have that changed. I know that there are folks on our executive board that have been talking to us about it as well. I'm not just talking about retail grocery workers. I'm talking about security guards who have to be out there facing the public every day. I'm talking about people that work in our food production facilities like Maple Leaf and HyLife and Exceldor poultry, where once the virus gets in, it seems to hang on pretty regularly. I'm talking about people who work in assisted living. I'm talking about people who work in warehousing, food production, and distribution.

I think that there's a place, and I'm not saying that we have to move to the top of the line. That would be wrong. The people that are working in health care, the people that are working in seniors care homes, the people that are living in seniors care homes, absolutely are the highest risk and should go first, but we shouldn't necessarily just be at the bottom. The problem with doing it by age, UFCW's one of the youngest unions, except for the president of course, but one of the youngest unions that we have in Manitoba by average age. Our members who are out there on the front lines every day are going to have to wait until everybody older than them gets vaccinated first. I just fundamentally think that's wrong. Sorry to cut you off, Leann. I know you have another question, but that one gets under my skin.

Leann:

Actually, where the comment came from, and you know I'm retail grocery sector, it was actually the vulnerability of the people in the poultry processing. They got hit extremely hard early on. My concern was we're deemed essential. It seems like we went from hero to zero very quickly in the government's eyes. I didn't know if this designation, how can I put it, if it had any legality behind it. You're essential workers, so outside of essential health care, where do we stand when it comes to vaccine availability? It seems that information is pretty vague.

Jeff Traeger:

It absolutely is. You did go from hero to zero real quickly, even not just with government, but with the employer. I think the difference is, and I said this off the top, that's not the view in most of the public's

eyes. When I talk to people now, they have a completely different view of the people that do jobs like the one that you do, like the other ones that I mentioned, because they know how critical they are to keeping our society running. It's time to really look at living wages for those people, making sure that they have access to benefits for their families and good pension plans that they can rely on to have some dignity in their retirement. These are the type of things that our society needs to focus on. I'm hoping that we come out of this pandemic looking for a different world than the one we went into with it. Thank you for-

Leann:

Here's hoping.

Jeff Traeger:

Here's to hoping.

Leann:

The other thing is, with that designation, does that have any type of bearing on the ability to strike during contract negotiations?

Jeff Traeger:

Sorry, what was that question again? I missed it.

Leann:

I'm sorry. I said with that designation of essential workers-

Jeff Traeger:

Oh, no no.

Leann:

... does that have any bearing on our ... No?

Jeff Traeger:

No. There is the Essential Services Act. The folks that I've just listed are not currently anyways, currently, listed as essential service workers, so it'll be health care people primarily.

Leann:

They've given us the designation of essential workers but we are not an essential service, because there's other places people can go.

Jeff Traeger:

Exactly.

Leann:

Excellent. Thank you. Everybody take care.

PIF 5691 UFCW 832
February 16, 2021

Jeff Traeger:
You too.

Leann:
Bye.

Jeff Traeger:

What time is it? It is 8:00. I'm afraid that we have to call the meeting now. There's two people that are still in the queue. We're going to take your information down. We've got your names and phone numbers already taken down. We're going to have your union representative reach out to you over the next day or two. I want to thank all of you for joining us on our February Telephone Town Hall. We'll be conducting our next GMM on Tuesday, May the 11th, 2021. Hopefully it will be significantly warmer by then. I want everyone to stay safe and stay well. Thank all the frontline workers one more time. We are now adjourned.