

GMM PRESIDENTS REPORT

MAY 11, 2021

Covid-19

Over the past several months we have been working with other Unions and even employers to lobby government and Provincial Health to put essential workers on the vaccine priority list. We continue lobbying the provincial government here in Manitoba as well as participating in a National Office initiative across Canada.

Our number of members with COVID-19 have steadily increased since February with daily notifications of positive cases coming in from a wide range of employers. The 3rd wave has also affected UFCW members in every geographical location of Manitoba.

Our staff continue to provide the exemplary service our members expect and deserve and we continue to do it while primarily working away from our offices.

Winnipeg School Division #1 Award

We received the award from the Manitoba Labour Board following the Winnipeg Scholl Division #1 Bus Driver strike and it was very strongly in favour of our members. The Drivers received wage increases well over what the employer was looking for and proves that the government's Public Services Sustainability Act is unconstitutional.

Because of the timing of the strike and the award, the contract expires again in August of this year so we expect to be at the table again soon.

Maple Leaf Expansion

Maple Leaf has long been committed to growing their business in Manitoba since they originally came here in 1997. That growth has accelerated in the last 12 months and by this summer, the Winnipeg Lagimodiere Plant will open their new bacon plant and expand the number of UFCW members there from the current 1,550 to over 2,000.

The company will also be opening a new plant later this year on Paquin Road in Winnipeg – the former sight of Vantage Foods. The plant will support the Brandon facility and is expected to have between 200 and 300 members working their once opened.

At the Brandon Plant, plans are in place to ramp up the number of hogs processed to 18,000 per day by this summer. This will require an additional 400 workers and orientations for these new hires are currently taking place at the UFCW Training Centre in Brandon.

In all, we expect our membership at Maple Leaf to grow by over 1,000 this year which will go a long way to help us recover from the loss of healthcare members we suffered through the rationalization votes in 2019.

CLC Convention

The CLC Convention will be held in a virtual format from June 16th to the 18th this year and Local 832 will be having over 40 delegates attend.

Bea Bruske, our Secretary Treasurer, will be running for President and her slate called 'Team Unite' will also be running for Secretary Treasurer and First Vice President of the CLC.

Bea has been on the campaign trail since April 12th and our Director of Operations, Marie Buchan, has been filling in for her. All of our staff wish Bea the best of luck and we know that she will make a great President of the CLC.

Sobeys/FreshCo Negotiations

The next major contract to be negotiated at the local will be with Sobeys Capitol Inc. which includes our members working at Safeway and FreshCo locations. The contract doesn't expire until late March of 2022, but we will be starting the process of selecting a bargaining committee and collecting member proposals in the fall. We hope to secure bargaining dates before the end of the year so we can exchange proposals and start the new year off by getting to work on bringing our Sobeys members a new contract.

Nasty Government Bills

You would think that during a pandemic wouldn't be the time for a government to table anti-worker legislation that will hurt families. Someone forgot to tell the Manitoba government that as they have tabled a slew of bills that will do just that. Haven't workers been through enough already?

Bill 16 – Labour Relations Act

This bill will make labour disputes last longer, remove worker protections from technological change, make it harder to organize a Union and easier to get rid of one. It tips the scales of power in the workplace heavily on the side of employers and leaves worker's rights behind.

Bill 34 – The Advanced Education Administration Act

Among other things, this bill allows government to tell student unions who they can and can't deduct dues or membership fees from.

Bill 64 – The Education Modernization Act

Similar to the bill that forced rationalization votes in healthcare, this bill will pit union's who represent education workers against each other so that all workers in a region would be represented by one union – regardless if those workers made that choice previously or not.

Bill 57 – The Critical Infrastructure Protection Act

In short, this bill will make protesting, assembling and even picketing illegal if the courts deem that those actions interfere with an organization or operation that is deemed to be critical

Staffing Changes at Local 832

Perhaps the biggest change to our staff complement at the local in the past 25 years has taken place this spring. In all, we have seen three staff retire and have hired four as replacements and to grow our communications department by adding an additional staff member.

Loreto Gutierrez has been hired as our Organizing and Member Engagement Coordinator.

Cynthia Woods has been hired to replace our receptionist who retired late last year and we have added the duty of communications support to that position.

Crystal Klippenstein has been hired as our second communications coordinator. This department has been under significant pressure during the pandemic and we have greatly increased our electronic communications to our members so it was time to add an additional staff member.

Finally, John Anderson has been hired to replace Wendy Lundy who retired at the end of April this year. John was previously the Chief Steward at the McCain's Plant in Carberry and will be representing workers at various locations in Neepawa and Carberry.

Next Telephone Town Hall in July

Normally, our next telephone town hall would be held in September but we will be holding it in July this year to conduct nominations for our Recorder and our Executive Board Vice-Presidents. Watch the magazine, the website and the UFCW bulletin board in your workplace for the date and time of the meeting and call-in information.

As reported by
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