

Jeff Draeger:

Good evening everyone. My name is Jeff Draeger. I'm president of your union, UFCW Local 832. I want to welcome you all to the February 2022 telephone town hall general membership meeting for members of UFCW Local 832, which is now called to order. I'm going to start by reading our land acknowledge. As long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the river flows, UFCW Local 832 acknowledges that we are gathered and work each day on ancestral lands. The traditional territory of [inaudible 00:00:40] Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the Homeland land of the Metis nation. Our offices are located on treaty one and two territory and our work extends into treaties three, four, and five. We recognize the injustices done to the indigenous peoples of this land and are committed to supporting and collaborating with indigenous communities in the spirit of truth and reconciliation.

Before we get tonight's meeting rolling, I want to again say a huge thank you to the tens of thousands of UFCW Local 832 members that have been working to help all Manitobans get through the fourth wave, and hopefully, the last wave of this pandemic. Value that all of you bring to us continues to make me proud that I get to work with and for such an amazing and dedicated group of people. Some members of that amazing group are now with me at the bargaining table actually today, right now, with the Safeway and FreshCo, and we're fighting Sobeys to give those folks the recognition they deserve, and we're doing the same for so many of you that have contract negotiations this year. I also wanted to let you know that all of us here at UFCW are working hard to do everything we can to ensure our members are safe at work.

And 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 our union reps, specialists, admin staff, and leadership will continue to work on behalf of all of our members as we have throughout the pandemic because each of you deserve no less. Tonight is our winter meeting and we'll be back to our usual cycle of four meetings this year. That cycle was interrupted by our executive board elections in 2021. So with me in the studio tonight is our secretary treasurer, Marie Buchan, who will be sharing the MC duties with me this evening, my executive advisor, Ron Allard, and two staff members who've been doing some work both here and at our national office to help communicate the benefits of belonging to UFCW for young workers and to address issues specific to women and gender equity in UFCW workplaces and in general.

Since it's been a few years, actually probably a few decades, probably several decades since I was a young worker, I've asked Jeff Bergen to join me tonight to about some exciting new initiatives. Besides being a full-time union representative here at the local, Jeff sits on the UFCW Canada young workers committee and is working hard to get the locals young workers committee active again. After that, Marie will interview Crystal Klippenstein, one of the communications coordinators for the local, who has recently sat in on a meeting of UFCW Canada's women and gender equity committee, and has been working closely with Roberta Hoogervorst to get the locals women and gender equity committee up and running in 2022. Also with us in studio and at the controls is our other communications coordinator, Chris Nodo.

As we normally do, we'll take breaks in between to answer any questions you may have for Marie or Ron, Jeff, Crystal, or myself, or about anything relevant to all UFCW members at all. Remember that if you have a specific question 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](http://UFCW832.com). 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 full membership

meeting held on October the 5th, 2021. The secretary treasurer's report on the current finances and my 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, and they will stay posted there in our archives so you can see all of the documents from all of our telephone town hall general membership meetings at any time you like. 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'll be placed in a queue to ask your question. I would once again 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, and that if you have a question specific to your workplace or grievance, you contact your full-time union representative. So we will now need a motion to approve the minutes of our last meeting, which took place on October the 5th, 2021.

Speaker 2:

Moved.

Speaker 3:

Seconded.

Jeff Draeger:

It has been moved and seconded. 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 will be placed in line. So with the introductory business done, I'd like to welcome our first guest, Jeff Bergen, who's here to talk to us about UFCW young worker initiatives. Good evening, Jeff.

Jeff Bergen:

Good evening, Jeff.

Jeff Draeger:

The two Jeffs are going at in here. All right. So Jeff, you've been involved in young worker initiatives right from the beginning of your time with UFCW when you participated in the UFCW Canada young workers internship program, affectionately called YIP. Can you tell our listeners what YIP is all about?

Jeff Bergen:

Certainly can, Jeff. Thank you for the time tonight. So the young worker internship program is put out by our national office, UFCW Canada, and it is held every year in different regions of the country. 832 members usually attend the Prairie program, joining young workers from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. When I attended many moons ago, I was lucky enough to attend with members from across Canada and we met in BC. I credit that time to what I call my labor awakening. This was an incredibly important program as UFCW has one of the youngest age demographics of unions in Canada. Participants spend a week with other UFCW young members learning about their union, the broader movement in Canada, North America, and around the globe. Exercises that we engaged in ranged from mock bargaining session that took all day where we divided the room into workers and management and tried to hammer out an agreement.

And that was quite interesting, even with no stakes on the table as mock bargaining, how seriously everyone took it. That was really, really good exercise. We would do media awareness, understanding the media and understanding our own biases in the world and in our workplaces. YIP is designed to get you thinking and fire you up for doing good in your union, your workplace, and your community. I met some really cool people along the way. Unfortunately, last year's YIP was online only due to the ongoing conditions we live in, but that was a far better alternative to just canceling it. YIP for me, it turned me from a happy union member interested in what's going on to a proud union member who's no longer just interested. I was fired up. I was now a labor activist.

Jeff Draeger:

All right. You can tell your passion really comes through when you talk about this stuff, Jeff. So currently, you sit as a representative on the young workers committee, which reports to the UFCW national council executive board. So what kind of work do you do on that committee?

Jeff Bergen:

The national committee meets to ensure that youth directives are being acknowledged and addressed by the national union, UFCW Canada, issues like mental health supports or access to free or affordable post-secondary education. In the before times, when we could gather in a large group, we also planned the national young workers conference. The last time we were able to gather for that, it was in Ottawa. It was fantastic time. At committee meetings, we hear reports from all the different locals and what they're doing to engage with the young members, and we share ideas and support each other. This has been instrumental for me as I try to build up our locals youth committee, hearing what the other locals are doing and learning from their successes.

Jeff Draeger:

Wow. Well, quite some time ago, we actually did have an active young workers committee here at the local. I remember being at a convention that we held in Gimley early in the last, I guess it's two decades ago now. I think it was about 2003, 2004, but we found it difficult to keep the momentum going. I know you've been working hard to get that group active again. So maybe you could tell us a little bit about those efforts.

Jeff Bergen:

Yeah. And it has been quite difficult. So I recruit great eager members to attend YIP and 832, our local consistently has the most youth attending. You'll know I'm always asking you for permission to descend the amount of people that I recruit, but I would always struggle with engagement once they return from their week in a labor focused bubble. I'm pleased to say they're making great progress now that I have the help of Loretta Gutierrez, who is on staff with us. She is focusing on organizing and member engagement. So she helps me out a lot. The committee, as it is now, would not exist without her work and support, and I also want to thank Erin Selby, director of the training center for her help and keeping me grounded.

If you hadn't notice, Jeff, I sometimes get some crazy ideas. So we held an in person follow up meeting with our young members who attended YIP in the summer of 2021 online, and we reflected with them on what they liked and what could have been better, and then we gave them an ask. If you were to become the 832 youth committee, what would be your short and long term goals? Instead of looking like a deer in the headlights, they bombarded us with ideas. I was doing the recording at the time. You know what terrible my printing is and it was very hard to keep up, but we got it done, and so

UFCW 832  
February 8

from that meeting, we hatched a hockey night at the local where we watched the Jets almost beat the Oilers, and then we planned for an event.

I am a Jet fan to everyone whose listening. It was a close game. We did plan for a larger event after that. Situations changed, we had to move back online for our most recent meeting. The surprising thing is they keep coming back and they bring new people. One of our short term goals is to be able to have more informal hangouts so people can get to know each other and invite their friends, and then one of our long term goals is to have some sort of youth conference for 832 members and their friends to come to and we'll focus on young workers. The key here is that we want this committee to be for young workers by young workers.

Jeff Draeger:

Excellent. Well, yes, you do have some crazy ideas from time to time, Jeff, but people who go too far are the only ones that show us how far we can go. So it's always nice to have somebody around who has some crazy ideas. Before you came to UFCW, you worked at an organization called safe workers of tomorrow, which does some really great work here in Manitoba high schools. They actually are housed right in our building at our training center at 880 Portage and we love having them. Several of our current staff, including yourself, also worked there., So they must be doing something right. What can you tell us about your time at safe workers?

Jeff Bergen:

Safe workers tomorrow quite simply was a fantastic experience. It was a job, but it was a job that was empowering. We did presentations to high school students all over Manitoba talking to them about entering the workforce, knowing their rights, knowing their risks, knowing what questions they can ask, knowing they can ask questions. It was started by a mother who lost her son to an unsafe workplace. So everybody who worked there had that goal, that fire that we wanted to get that information to students and make sure that the tragedies that occurred didn't occur again.

And then young people were going home at the end of the day because when you're in your first job, you don't know what you can ask, what to do. You just kind of do what your boss says and that can lead to some unsafe situations. So you know that you have the right to ask questions. That's something every rep tells their members when it comes to health and safety, but that's what we stress to members, sorry, students, the high school students all across Manitoba and I can't speak enough. It's a great organization doing great work. The staff that came out of there here are fantastic and I will always remember my time and the work I did with safe workers of tomorrow.

Jeff Draeger:

Yeah. It's pretty impressive and powerful stuff, and thank you. Thank you for that, Jeff. Your passion comes right through. When you talk about this. Can't help it. You should see him in the studio folks. The hands haven't stopped moving. Well, thank you for coming on the company.

Jeff Bergen:

Thanks, Jeff.

Jeff Draeger:

UFCW 832  
February 8

Really appreciated seeing our younger members getting more engaged with their union. Now I do see that the motion to approve the previous minutes has passed and that we have a few questions on the line. So we will start with Bangura. Bangura, go ahead.

Speaker 5:

Hi. Yeah.

Jeff Draeger:

Hello there.

Speaker 5:

Hello?

Jeff Draeger:

Hello. Did you have a question?

Speaker 5:

Hello?

Jeff Draeger:

You're live on the town hall. Do you have a question? Okay. We'll move on to Boca from the Winnipeg school division. Go ahead, Boca.

Speaker 6:

I don't have any questions now. I'm just listening.

Jeff Draeger:

Okay. So we have one more caller. Don't have an ID on the caller, but it looks like call's coming from Brandon. So go ahead.

Russell:

Hello, Jeff. It's Russell Schumacher calling from Brandon. How are you today?

Jeff Draeger:

Well hey Russ, it's been like three months since we talked. How you been?

Russell:

I've been doing good, and again, I'm just calling on behalf of all the Safeway members that are out there. Just wanted to follow up and see how your December meeting went with regarding the RX card that you were talking about last time you were going to be having.

Jeff Draeger:

Yeah, it went very well. We've actually got some issues that we're trying to deal with around benefits through collective bargaining. So I said off the top that we're at the bargaining table right now. I think we've had about, I want to say six or seven days so far since we started back on December 2nd and we haven't gotten to talk to benefits yet because as you may know, Russell, we try to deal with all the non-monetary issues that are in front of the parties before we start talking about money so that we can actually make some language and health and safety improvements, scheduling issues, things like that, and then we head into monetary bargaining after that and we'll be talking more about benefits then, but the December meeting was very positive. I do want to tell you that there will be improvements to your plan, modernization to your plan.

I can't talk to you yet about what that's going to look like, but I know that's going to happen in 2022 and I know that people like you that have been waiting a very long time to see your plan improved are going to be pleased with what you see. I don't think we're all ever going to get everything we want, but we are working hard. I've got both of the other trustees in the room here with me, with Marie and Ron, and the three of us are committed to modernizing your plan, getting a drug card, getting a member portal, all those things that we've talked about, direct deposit, et cetera. All of those, we're trying to modernize and we're not, it's been a long sled trying to get there, but I told you in the past as well, Russell, a part of the issue is funding it and we're at the perfect place to fund it now.

It's called the negotiations table. So that's what I can tell you now and our next call is in May. We won't have had our other meeting yet. It's later in May. I believe it's around the end of May that our Safeway meeting is so probably have to wait until the summer call before we, that would be... When do we do the other one, September? Just ask in the next meeting after this one. Okay. Our fall meeting. Yeah. Yeah. But if there's an update, Russell, that before then it's not going to wait for a general membership meeting to be announced, we will communicate that out to all Safeway members, including yourself across the province the second that becomes effective.

Russell:

All right. Sounds great.

Jeff Draeger:

All right. You take care of yourself, Russell. All right, we'll take one more caller, Dolly from G4S.

Speaker 8:

Hello. Hi.

Jeff Draeger:

How are you?

Speaker 8:

Hello sir. I'm good. How are you doing?

Jeff Draeger:

I'm doing well. I'm doing very well. Thank you for being on the call when there's a Jets game on.

Speaker 8:

Yeah, so hi. So my question is there have been a lot of talk going on the security industry, that minimum wage is going to be \$15 and it's been floating around for quite a long time. Is there any update on that or what do you guys know about it? How are we proceeding with that, sir?

Jeff Draeger:

Well, what we're proceeding in doing is we're proceeding in demanding from the government that they do get to a \$15 minimum wage or perhaps potentially even more. The problem is Heather Stephenson and the problem is the Manitoba provincial party. They're absolutely not willing to take the risk of increasing wages for working people, the impact that's going to have on their base. They're worried about losing support. We already have the least popular premier in the province. We have the second lowest minimum wage in the country.

And I really think to me to be really honest with you, Dolly, I think that under this current government, you will see nothing more than cost of living increases to minimum wage and they will not restore the security guard minimum wage that they took away after the final increase was or before the final increase was made. So I'm not very confident that there's much that anybody could do Manitobans at the polls, and so the next time you go to vote, and I'm not telling you a party to vote for. I'm telling you to look at the issues and if minimum wage and a decent living minimum wage is important to you, research the parties that are running in your writing and vote for the party that's committed to making significant improvements to the minimum wage in this province.

Speaker 8:

Yes, sir. And the main problem is I've worked at different places and I've got [inaudible 00:20:23] working in loss prevention, guys punching me because I'm simply putting my life at risk every day in and every night, and it's not fair. The government treats people like security guards as if they are nothing. We are really preventing to help going the stuff out the door, people stealing and we are preventing to help the companies to maintain their bottom line.

And that's very unfair on part of government, I would say. It should be fair. We are also having some human rights. I don't know how to proceed on this, why the government is not listening to our demands and it's a fair demand. It's not too much, \$15 just by putting your life at risk. There are a lot of bad guys out there ready to punch you or even stab you just because they want to take the cart full of groceries out the door without paying a dollar. I mean, it's just disgusting on part of government, I would say.

Jeff Draeger:

Yeah, I agree. It's absolutely disgusting and I do want to thank you for everything that you are doing out there and recognize the risks that you're taking. A lot of UFCW members are in similar situations as far as the wages they're earning, but with COVID 19 and the pandemic, pretty much every frontline essential worker that we have, whether they're working in retail, grocery, or security like yourself or food production, or whether they're working in assisted living or warehousing, transportation, what it may be, those folks are all putting themselves at risk and I think coming out of the pandemic, we have to get to a better place where society is more balanced and the people that provide the services like you do, sir, are paid properly, compensated properly and provided with workplace protection so that they can go home safe from their jobs every night. All right. Before we move on to our next guest, I will need a motion to approve the secretary treasurer's report.

Speaker 2:

UFCW 832  
February 8

So moved.

Speaker 5:  
Seconded.

Jeff Draeger:

Moved and seconded. So please vote yes by pressing the number one on your keypad or no by pressing number two on your keypad, and if you have a question at all about the secretary treasure's report or anything else, please press the star key followed by the number three and we'll be glad to take your question. So now I'm going to turn it over to Marie Buchan to introduce and interview our next guest. Marie.

Marie Buchan:

Thank you very much, Jeff, and good evening, everyone. I am going to try to be as enthusiastic as Jeff was doing his interview and I can assure you from sitting across from him in the studio that no one received his enthusiasm more than I did. So thank you again, Jeff, for that. UFCW local 832 women's and gender equity committee is dedicated to connecting with female identifying union members and advancing the goals of the labor movement and of Manitoba organizations and support women. The committee was reinvigorated in 2021 with the hard work and dedication of three of our staff members, Loretta Gutierrez, Roberta Hoogervorst, and Crystal Klippenstein. We are pleased to have Crystal here with us this evening to share all of the exciting work they have been doing and what we have to look forward to from this committee in the future. So welcome, Crystal, and thank you for joining us.

Crystal Klippenstein:  
Thanks for having me.

Marie Buchan:

To start, could you please tell me about some of the work the women and gender equity committee has been doing?

Crystal Klippenstein:

Absolutely. As you mentioned, we are starting fresh with this committee. Our local has had a women's committee in the past, but it wasn't active in recent years so we've had this opportunity to check in with our members and get their feedback on their level of interest in the committee and the direction they want to take it. In fall, we surveyed our female identifying members to ask about priorities and the three topics of most interest to them were health and wellness, workplace health and safety, and bullying and workplace violence. This survey was a huge help to the three of us on staff working to get this committee up and running again, as it also allowed us to ask about interest in joining the committee and participating in its projects, and from there, we've been able to connect with our members who want to be a part of this.

Marie Buchan:

That's excellent, Crystal. Could you tell us about the members involved in the committee?

Crystal Klippenstein:

UFCW 832  
February 8

You bet. So alongside myself, Roberta Hoogervorst, and Loretta Gutierrez, we have about 10 members who are able to join us for some kickoff meetings a few weeks ago. It's a really enthusiastic and sincere group and it was really interesting to hear them talk about their work. As you know, we represent a wide variety of workplaces so although we're all UFCW members, our day to day work environments can be very different. This committee is a diverse group of women and I think that what we're building here is a team that's going to do incredible work of supporting each other, the labor movement, and all Manitoban women.

Marie Buchan:

So now that you've had a kickoff meeting with our members on the committee, what is it we can expect in the year ahead from this committee?

Crystal Klippenstein:

Now that we've connected with the committee, our next steps are to identify our focus for the year ahead. We've talked about identifying a charity of choice that supports women and finding ways to support their efforts in the year ahead. We've also talked about building a community that can meet up and attend events and rallies together. We have so many passionate members, but it can be hard to get out the door to a rally if you aren't sure of who else is going. Overall, our members indicated that they see value in this committee as an internal support to each other, as well as a support to external groups and organizations with like-minded goals.

Marie Buchan:

That sounds excellent, Crystal, and just like the youth committee, it's great to see that these committees are being reinvigorated and that our staff and members, it's something that they're really looking forward to and their passion, and if we have members on the call who are interested in learning more about the committee or joining it, what should they do?

Crystal Klippenstein:

We would love to welcome more committee members. Anyone who's interested can go to our websites and the page for the women and gender equity committee is [UFCW832.com/wge](https://www.ufcw832.com/wge). There's some information there on our committee and contact info for any member who'd like to join. That's also where we'll be posting more information about our plans and events once they're finalized.

Marie Buchan:

Excellent. Thank you very much, Crystal, for taking the time tonight to meet with us and to share this information with the membership, and also a big thank you to Roberta and Loretta for their help as well. [inaudible 00:27:32]. So moved.

Speaker 2:

Seconded. [inaudible 00:27:56].

Marie Buchan:

We can't hear Jeff.

Jeff Draeger:

UFCW 832  
February 8

Now's your chance. Can you hear me? Okay. Do I have to go back and start over again? Yep. Okay. All right.

Marie Buchan:

I'm seeing multiple texts telling me we can't hear Jeff. We can't hear Jeff.

Jeff Draeger:

All right. Now you can hear me. I am back. I am back. All right. So I was saying that thank you to Marie and Crystal and noted that the secretary treasurer's report has passed. So we had it moved and seconded here in the studio. So please press the number one on your keypad to vote yes for the president's report or the number two on your keypad to vote no. If you have a question about the president's report or anything else at all, please press star three and we'll gladly take your question. I was just saying speaking of that, we have one question on the line and our guests have both concluded, so if you were waiting to ask a question, now is the time to get in line, and in the meantime, we will go to Batti from Securitas.

Speaker 11:

Hey, Jeff.

Jeff Draeger:

Hey. How are you?

Speaker 11:

That's actually, and according to the question the guy asked before regarding the wages of the government, the government is not increasing the wages. I haven't seen any movement started by UFCW in support of security guards to pressurize government to increase the wages. From last six years, I'm just seeing every year is just 2%, a 25 cents increase in any negotiation. Most of the companies, they just increased 25 cents in the wages and our union is totally agreeing to that. Why is it so? I have talked to in my company to so many people. No one was agreeing with the negotiations, but it was passed. So we don't know how many people voted yes, how many people voted no. Can you explain?

Jeff Draeger:

Sure, sure. I can explain in that basically, we go to the bargaining table with your employer and we bargain the best possible agreement that we can get them to agree to, and then whether it's accepted or not is in the hands of the members, and I know that Blake Cruthers and our negotiations department has been negotiating security contracts, and in my president's report, you'll see that we've just organized a new security company, but those contracts, if we are going to do better for security guards than what raises that you've seen, we're going to need to have security guards be a little bit more willing, I think, to take on their employer. One of the things we haven't had since the nineties is a strike in the security guard industry and maybe that's what it's going to take in order to improve the wages.

What we had, the focus we'd taken in the last 10 years was to try to get a dedicated minimum wage for security guards. One of the issues that we have is when we have been successful in raising wages for security guards, what happens is they have to raise the contracts for their clients in order to pay for those increases. They lose the clients, the clients go to a non-union company, and then we're running around trying to organize that non-union company and start the entire game over from day one.

The idea of having a dedicated security guard minimum wage was to set a level playing field for everybody at \$2.25 ahead of the general minimum wage. So your minimum wage, if the legislation had stayed just where it was, would be \$13.20 an hour right now would be the minimum wage for a security guard and the start rate at all security guard companies.

So our tact wasn't to take on the employers as much as it was to force government to deal with a fundamental inequity in how security guard companies get their contracts and undercut employers who treat their workers well. Now this government stepped in and just chopped that off completely. So obviously, we're hoping to get a new government in place that will restore that minimum wage, which would mean as much as a \$2 to \$3 an hour wage increase for people probably phased in over time like the original one was, but the answer to your question, and I'm going to be really honest with you here, is that we don't see a lot of people getting involved in the negotiations process. That's the process where you can put pressure on your employer to do what's right and pay people the wages they deserve, but yes, Marie wants to speak to this and she's just going to wait one minute. That people get the wages that they deserve.

And so we need to have guards more involved and active in the process. I hate seeing it where you've got a security guard company where there's 5, 6, 700 workers and 25 or 30 of them come out to vote on the collective agreement, or none of them want to sit on the bargaining committee, or none of them appear at an update meeting. We need the union is you. The strength of UFCW is you. It's not people that work at the union office. It's the people that are the union members out there in the workplace and the only way your employer's going to pay more than the absolute minimum that they have to is if you join us, forcing them to that. Now I'm going to let Marie go next.

Marie Buchan:

Yeah. And just to echo Jeff's comments as well, that Sandy Forcia has been doing, our full-time union representative for security has also been doing a lot of work with member engagement and has been working with a group of security stewards to be going around and trying to get more of our members involved and that if you are interested or you know other people that are interested, as Jeff said, we need our members to get interested to show that passion. So definitely make sure you're connecting with Sandy. All the information on negotiations are sent out to all the members. So as Jeff said, when you have a group of 7, 8, 900 potential people to come out and vote and there's seven or eight people that come out to vote, those are the seven or eight people that are going to make the decision for all of those 800 people. So you want to make sure that if that's something that you're interested in it or you have questions, reach out to Sandy, reach out to Blake and don't be afraid to get involved, and thank you very much for calling tonight.

Jeff Draeger:

All right. Looking at the call then, I do not see any other callers on the line. So I want to thank all of you for joining us on our telephone town hall meeting. We will be conducting our next general membership meeting and our second meeting of 2022 on Tuesday, May the 17th by telephone town hall as we well, beginning at 7:00 PM. So stay safe and well, everyone. Thank you again for everything you do and we are now adjourned.