

UFCW Local 832 Access Live Event
May 17, 2022

Jeff Traeger:

Good evening everyone. And I apologize for the slight delay in getting started. My name is Jeff Traeger and I am the president of your union, UFCW Local 832. I want to welcome you all to the May 2022 Telephone Town Hall General Membership Meeting for members of UFCW Local 832, which is now called to order. As long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the river flows, UFCW Local 832 acknowledges that we are gathered in work each day on ancestral lands, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

Our offices are located on Treaty 1 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 a spirit of truth and reconciliation.

Before we get to tonight's meeting rolling, I want to say thank you to the members of our Safeway Bargaining Committee for all of their hard work this spring, and congratulations to all Safeway workers on their new contract. It's difficult to bargain in a COVID environment, but we were able to utilize technology in ways we haven't before and ended up conducting a very successful strike vote 98% and a very successful ratification vote 92% all online and by phone.

Our communications departments stepped up to take the lead on those votes and the member response we received was extremely positive. The ability to conduct votes online gives us another technological tool that allows us to reach more of our members in ways they prefer. I also want to say a wider thank you to all 832 members for the work they have done and continue to do as we move through some of the most difficult times in our history with COVID still hanging on, the war in Ukraine and the rocketing cost of living caused by both of those events.

The 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. So thank you. I also want 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. We have your back. Tonight is our 2022 spring meeting, although it sure doesn't feel like it yet. And after tonight we will break for the summer if we get one this year and conduct another GMM in September.

So with me in the studio tonight is our secretary treasurer, Marie Buchan, and four staff members. Our director of IT and Facilities and our office manager, Max Paches will introduce our newest employee Ericson Ortega who has been hired to work as a dedicated assistant to Max providing support for both our information services and our properties. We also have a special presentation tonight on our Security Guard Project from our full-time union representative for security, Sandy Forcier, and also from our negotiator in the industry Blake Crothers.

They'll give you a background on the project, telling you what you can expect to see in the months ahead and also talk about organizing and the contracts for security companies. Also with us in studio and at the controls is our Communications Coordinator Chris Noto along with our second Communications Coordinator, Crystal Klippenstein. As we normally do, we'll take breaks in between to answer any questions you may have for any of tonight's panelists or about anything relevant to 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 @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, which was held on February 8th, 2022. The secretary treasurer's report on the 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 @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 will 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 a grievance that 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 February 8th, 2022.

Speaker 2: So moved.

Speaker 3: Seconded.

Jeff Traeger: 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, press the star key, followed by the number three, and you will be put in line. So with the introductory business done, I'd like to welcome our first guest, Max Paches, who is here to interview our newest employee Ericson Ortega. Good evening, Max.

Speaker 4: Good evening, Jeff. Good evening, everybody. My name is Max Paches, and I'm a director of Information Technology Facilities and Privacy at UFCW Local 832.

And tonight I would like to introduce to you our new IT Facilities coordinator, my colleague Ericson Ortega. Ericson joined the locals team in the beginning of March of this year. Right from the first days Ericson began building a reputation of a pleasant, reliable professional with exceptional analytical and interpersonal skills. I've personally met Ericson about six years ago when he worked for Psycho Security Company that provided services to our organization.

I remember constantly being impressed by the level of service Ericson was providing when he was sent to our sites. Every time there was a difficult issue with Psycho Systems and when other technicians were saying that it's impossible to resolve Ericson would come on site on my special request, figure things out and make them work. Even after he advanced on his career and moved on from Psycho the expert, still remembering him as their brightest effort. That is why the moment we've decided to hire another person for our ITM Facilities Department to support our ever growing infrastructure, Ericson's name instantly popped up in my mind.

It wasn't easy finding him to offer him to apply for the position, but once we did, and once he applied, he quickly became the strongest candidate that eventually got the job. On that positive note, welcome Ericson and thanks for joining us. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Speaker 5: Hi everyone. This is Ericson. I'm a father and a husband. Loves technology and cooking.

Speaker 4: Thank you. And how did you get involved in information technology?

Speaker 5: When my cousin bought a computer and I get to use it when I was 12 years old, is where the passion all started. From there onwards, I'm always fascinated with computers and technology. Fortunately, my father supported me with my passion.

Speaker 4: And what excites you most about your role at UFCW Local 832?

Speaker 5: The diversity of the role and the never ending challenge and problem solving as everyone said, no dull moment.

Speaker 4: Excellent. And what do you find the most challenging on your role as ITM Facilities Coordinator?

Speaker 5: The most challenging is implementation and it does not matter how good the plan is, something else will and can go wrong. There's just too many combinations. We always say that there's a lot of ways to skin a cat. I guess the real challenge is trying to find the most efficient way to solve the issue. Sometimes the easiest looking problem can be the most time consuming problem to solve.

Speaker 4: Thank you. And what is something that members of UFCW Local 832 would be surprised to know about you?

Speaker 5: I like to draw arts and my school used to send me to competitions and they thought that I will become an architect or a fine arts student, but my passion is computers and technology and I never get tired of it always something new to learn, lot of things to discover.

Speaker 4: Thank you, Ericson. Back to you, Jeff.

Jeff Traeger: All right. Thank you very much, Max. And welcome to 832, Ericson. I see it at the motion to approve the previous minutes has passed and that we have a single question on the line. So we're going to take that question now before we move on to our next guest. Go ahead Gushprit, I believe is how you pronounce your name.

Speaker 6: Hi, actually, I'm just curious to know about a question. I'm working as security, so I just need to confirm for maternity leave if somebody goes, how long the position is left for them, for the position to get it back.

Jeff Traeger: Okay. So that question we will send to your union representative, Sandy Forcier, who is here in the studio with us. Go ahead, Sandy.

Speaker 7: Hi, Gushprit and I hope I pronounced your name properly. There is no real guarantee that a position that you're holding right now is kept. What is guaranteed is that a position of similar hours and pay will be awarded to you upon your return.

Speaker 6: Okay. And is it like if somebody's already working full time at that position and if the person comes back, who's on maternity leave. So the person who is working currently is being removed from that side and one who's on maternity leave will be given more priority over that.

Speaker 7: Yeah. So what we want and what we try to negotiate in these contracts is that the position is kept for that person who goes on maternity leave. However, in this industry, the clients have care and control of who works at their sites. And what we find a lot of times is that when someone does return from maternity leave, or even if it's a WCB leave or a personal leave of absence for some period of time, clients want as little change as possible and they sometimes want to keep the individual that is there. And that's why I had said earlier, we guarantee a position and we tried to make sure that there's something of similar hours and pay for that person to return to.

Speaker 6: Okay. And how long-

Jeff Traeger: No hang. Can I... Sorry, Gushprit I just need to interrupt you for a second. But as I said-

Speaker 6: No worry.

Jeff Traeger: ... as I said in my opening remarks, these are very specific questions to you and your circumstance. The question about maternity leave was one that really does impact a wider group of people, but we've got your number and we're going to have Sandy call you back tomorrow and he can answer all the questions that you have about your leave. But thank you very much for your call. So just before we move on to our next guest, I will need a motion to approve the secretary treasurer's report.

Speaker 2: So moved.

Jeff Traeger: 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. If you have a question about the secretary treasure's report or anything else at all, press the star key followed by the number three and we'll take your question. Now, I'm going to turn it over to Marie to introduce our next guests. Marie.

Marie Buchan: Thanks, Jeff. Being a part of these GMM Telephone Town Halls for the last few years, we get a lot of questions from our members, especially in the security industry. These questions are almost always very specific to a member's personal concerns. As a Local, we did recognize the need to better connect with our members in the security industry. So let's begun the security project. Instead of listening to me about what this is all about, let's hear it from the two full-time staff members at the Local that are leading this very important initiative, Blake Crothers and Sandy Forcier.

Blake is one of our three full-time negotiators with Local 832 and he has the security companies we represent in his territory. Sandy Forcier is your full-time servicing representative who works with all of our security members at the Local as part of his current territory. Let's get started by hearing from Blake.

Speaker 9: Thanks Marie. So during the last round of renewals for the security contracts, as the negotiators Marie mentioned, I've worked with Sandy to introduce a contract language that is consistent across from all of our contracts. Our goal for this is to ensure that we have correct contact information for all of our members. We're doing this to improve our engagement with the members. This investment pays dividends during our next round of bargaining. Also with growing participation with all of our security companies, strengthens our ability to push for better wages and improvements to the collective agreements.

We know how security companies operate, making sure that we have consistent language across all of our collective agreements, protects workers when a security company that is already represented by UFCW takes over. The problem we are finding that since the Manitoba conservatives canceled the security guard minimum wage a few years ago, it has brought back the fly by night companies that strip away the protections that we have fought hard for over

the years and creates a race to the bottom industry that continually drives the wages and benefits down.

The security project that we have, we've been working with have seen a lot of progress with our organizing campaigns and we've introduced in the fall of 2021 with the assistance of Loreto Gutierrez and her team of organizers, we have welcomed guards at Neptune Security to the Local. This initiative has also started to connect us with other security guards in the province who are not represented by UFCW on how to join.

There was another purpose for this campaign as it allowed us to connect with our current members and show them the benefits that they were receiving with their collective agreements and how to access them. Membership engagement will continue to be a focal point for this industry as educating members and the industry as to what a union can not only do for you, but when you get involved, we'll start to steer the industry and the right direction of obtaining higher wages, benefits, and protections for all workers in this industry.

So now I'll pass the microphone over to Sandy to speak about your role with this.

Speaker 7:

Sure. Thanks Blake. And before I continue, I just wanted to thank you for doing a fantastic job of negotiating the territory and helping making my job service the members a little bit easier. So I just wanted to start off by giving you folks a little bit of a background on the project. As Marie stated, we knew that there was little engagement in the security territory. We started the project back in 2009. What I realized are find is that a lot of the members in the territory do not understand what it is being a union member or being a part of this union, UFCW832 in particular.

It's also very different to service in the security territory as guards are scattered at client sites all over the city and the province, some of the sites we can't visit due to safety, sensitivity, or not being able to visit during... Oh, sorry. We can only visit during public hours and some clients do not give us access. A lot of our security guards are newer immigrants and Canadians to the province in the country, international students and folks working for their permanent residency here in Manitoba.

The folks speak many, many different languages and many of them have professional degrees from their home countries who are looking to upgrade their certificates to work in their chosen field. As a result, there is a high volume of turnover in the security industry. And the project is about engaging members and hearing from them how to address these issues and their concerns in their workplace. We want members to be forefront and center when addressing these concerns and working on projects to improve their working conditions, which improves their working lives... sorry, their living conditions.

It's really about listening to our members on how best to address these issues and their workplace concerns. So I'll talk a little bit about what we have done and what we're doing with the project. I'll let you know that COVID-19, obviously put a little damper on the last couple of years. We began gathering security guards who were interested coming out to meetings and telling us what their thoughts were on their jobs and the industry in general. And from those meetings, we developed a group of what we called Security Guard Leaders, who are security guards, who are able to speak various languages and communicate with our members in their first language and explain what the union is and how they play a part in their union to achieve improvements in conditions and wages.

We had done a couple of phone banks in the fall of 2019 to update member addresses and advised members of a survey we were sending out to security members to get their feedback on a variety of topics. That included number of jobs they have, transportation issues, work issues, safety issues, improvement through the security guard training, just to name a few. Things really changed in early 2000, when COVID-19 came upon us here, we certainly didn't stop our project. We couldn't have any more in person meetings or phone banks.

So what we started to do was Zoom meetings to keep the security guards in tune with their union and the union in tune with them. We couldn't do those drop in servicing meetings that we were doing at the training center anymore. So at that point in time, a light bulb went off and we thought, "Hey, maybe these digital meetings are going to be our new norm." And I reached out to our education director, Erin Selby, who put me in contact with our national office and the folks who operate the UFCWM caps for online training.

We developed an introduction to UFCW832 course, which provides union and labor history. It's our history touches on importance of politics and challenges past, present, and future. The course has been a success and those who attended have enjoyed it. Some have become stewards as well as health and safety members in the workplace as a result. We will continue to offer this course once or twice a year. And that will depend on finding those who are interested and having the right number of members to put the course on.

We are also paying members to participate in the project and activities, so there is no loss of pay. In some cases, it may be even extra earnings. Last year, around this time, we had done a Facebook live event to update on bargaining member engagement and organizing as well as sector updates with Negotiator, Blake Crothers, Organizer and Member Engagement Specialist, Loreto Gutierrez, and myself.

We did one a few months prior to update guards, working in the security field on developments in the sector during COVID-19. I believe these types of events are important as we are able to engage, not only our members in the industry, but others who are unorganized and make connections with them. Last year, we were able to help one non-member find employment by offering who was hiring

and where to send his resume. He has been doing a great job since and has been given a recognition award for going above and beyond the call of duty recently.

This member is also eager to attend a next intro to UFCW832 course. There may be more of these to come, and we have some ideas of topics for future Facebook live events. These events can be viewed at leisure as well as they are put on our webpage.

So what are things to look for and expect from the project? One thing that was really put on hold, and I hope that we get to start very soon is site servicing with some of our guard leaders and activists. I am hoping that we are on track and that public health orders will continue in their current direction to allow for this to happen. We haven't started it yet, as we want to see how things play out. The last thing we want to do is put our members at risk. We also want to get to the table with the Manitoba Department of Justice to review the mandatory 40 hour training for security guards to make improvements.

This has been over two years in the making, and it's very frustrating. I've reached out to the registrar of the PI and Security Guard Program again today to get this going again, now that we are hopefully out of the public health restrictions for the long term. We will continue to meet with government and the opposition to address issues in the sector. This is very, very important, so important that we have had the opposition contact us recently about safety measures that should be in place for those working alone at beer vendors.

We will continue to champion the re-implementation of the security guard minimum wage. And I know we hear about this every meeting, but we are going to continue to champion that cause. And we will continue to champion for proper PPE for guards to perform their daily duties. And we will be engaging with members at different events. Again, this is very important. One of my favorite things was attending the Indian Pavilion at Forecolor Rama in 2019 with members, Camless Sharma and her family and Samara Sudo, who also attended our youth internship program.

So if members have events in their various communities, we want to hear from them and hopefully we can make arrangements to attend or advertise it for members to attend. These types of things I believe are essential to engage members on a different level that is important to them and learn more about and participate in their culture. Our diversity makes us a stronger union, especially when we are engaged in it. So anyone that's interested in getting involved just need to contact me and we can get the project in greater detail and any upcoming events or projects. And that's my report.

Jeff Traeger:

Excellent. Thank you very much, Sandy. And thank you very much, Blake. Thanks for your hard work on this project. It's a very important project. As we know, we have thousands and thousands of guards that we represent in this province, and it's important that they get engaged with their union, especially if we're going to

help Blake out to get some improvements at the bargaining table. So I see that the vote to approve the secretary treasurer's report has passed. So it's time to make a motion to approve the president's report, which is the final document. We have to approve it tonight's meeting.

Speaker 2: So moved.

Speaker 3: Seconded.

Jeff Traeger: So it has been moved and seconded. So please press the number one on your keypad to vote yes and the number two on your keypad to vote no. And remember if you have a question about the president's report or anything else at all, please press the star key followed by the number three and we will be glad to take your question. Now, we don't currently have any questions. So while I'm waiting for people, we have more than 200 people on the line and it would be the time to ask your questions as we're drawing to the close in our program.

Just a couple of things that I wanted to remind you about. One, come September this year after the announcement that was made in Saskatchewan, Manitoba will now have the lowest minimum wage in Canada, thanks to our provincial government. Coming out of COVID-19, the message, I guess, that Heather Stephenson and her gang on Broadway is sending to low wage working Manitobans is that they're just not worth a living wage, even though many of them were called heroes for their work on the front lines during the pandemic. If we want a fair minimum wage in Manitoba, we're going to have to elect a new government next year. It seems to be the only way.

Also wanted to let you know that Marie and I are secretary treasurer. Myself are touring a group of units each month in 2022 and in April I toured the highlight foods and the Safeway store in Neepawa and the McCains Plant and Distribution Center in carb area. And I will be touring the Maple Leaf Plant in Brandon on June 8th. So folks from Brandon Maple Leaf look forward to hopefully running into you when I'm touring the plant that day. Also wanted to let you know that after having to cancel our adult high school graduation for two years in a row, we will be having a graduation ceremony for all the graduates from 2020, 2021 and 2022 at the Fairmont Hotel on June the 28th at 6:00 PM.

Normally we have that at our training center about such a significant number of people that we needed to find a larger venue and it also provides support to our members working at the Fairmont. And then I guess the last thing I'd report on is that our executive board approved a donation to the people of Ukraine in March and our staff and board members also took up a collection to send along with our donation. Our hearts go out to the people of Ukraine and we will continue to denounce the Russian aggression and support the people of Ukraine for as long as this illegal war lasts.

So I still see that there's no questions. I guess it's a quiet Tuesday night for people in Winnipeg. So I want to thank all of you for joining us on our May Telephone Town Hall GMM. We will be conducting our next general membership meeting and our third meeting of 2022 on Tuesday, September the 20th by Telephone Town Hall beginning at 7:00 PM. So stay safe out there everyone, stay well. And thank you for everything you do. We are now adjourned.