

UFCW 832  
February 08<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Jeff Traeger:

Good evening, everyone. My name is Jeff Traeger and I'm the president of your Union, UFCW Local 832. I want to welcome you all to the February 2023 telephone town hall general membership meeting for members of the local, 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 and 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 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 a spirit of truth and reconciliation.

Before we get tonight's meeting going, I want to wish a belated Happy New Year to all UFCW members and their families, and I hope that 2023 is a much better year for all of you bringing peace and prosperity to your lives. 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 the Ukraine and the rocketing cost of living caused by both of those events. The value that all of you bring to our society 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 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. More than ever before, your union has your back. Tonight is our 2023 winter meeting and we have a lineup of guests to hear from this evening. Our spring meeting has been scheduled for May the 16th, and at that time will feature the leader of the opposition, Wab Kinew, who will join us to talk about the upcoming provincial elections slated to take place in early October of this year.

With me in the studio tonight and on the line for tonight's meeting are Marie Buchanan, our secretary treasurer, my executive advisor, Ron Allard, our director of IT and facilities and our office manager, Max Patches, and our communications coordinator, Chris Nodo, who is at the controls for tonight's meeting. We also have three very special guests with us in the studio that we will be interviewing this evening, and they are three new full-time servicing representatives that were all hired in the fall of 2022. This will give you a chance to get to know some of our next generation of UFCW Local 832 staff members like Dustin Rogers, who works out of our Brandon office, Hillary Prociw, who's currently representing our members in the assisted living sector, and Tyler Ladew, who is currently representing our members in Neepawa and Carberry.

As we normally do, we'll take breaks between our conversation to answer any questions you may have for any of tonight's panelists or about anything relevant to all UFCW members. 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 are available on the UFCW bulletin board in your workplace or online at [UFCW832.com](http://UFCW832.com). So, let's get started.

The 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 11th, 2022, 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 more time for you to ask any questions you may have. All three of these documents have been previously posted on our website at [UCW832.com](http://UCW832.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'd 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 now I will need a motion to approve the minutes of our last meeting, which took place at 10:00 AM and 7:00 PM on October the 11th, 2022.

Hillary Prociw:

So moved.

Dustin Rogers:

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, simply press the star key followed by the number three key and you'll be placed in the queue. So, with the introductory business done, I'd like to officially welcome our first guest for tonight's meeting, and that is Dustin Rogers. Good evening, Dustin, how are you tonight?

Dustin Rogers:

I'm doing well. Yourself, Jeff? Thank you very much for having me.

Jeff Traeger:

Hi. You're very welcome, and I am doing fine, thanks for asking. So maybe you could start off just by telling us a little bit about yourself, where you're from and what brought you to Brandon.

Dustin Rogers:

Sure. So, I'm from a lot of northern communities up here in Manitoba, so places like Leaf Rapids, Thompson, Snow Lake, all northern communities that I've lived in. So, I spend a lot of my childhood up till I was 18 up in northern Manitoba. It's a beautiful place up there. I love it up there, but when you hit that age of 18, you become an adult, you got to start thinking about yourself.

So, a lot of people up north kind of have two options for [inaudible 00:06:32] Manitoba, either Winnipeg or Brandon. And being from small communities, the big city Winnipeg just wasn't quite for me. So, I chose the slightly smaller of Brandon and came down for university and schooling and stuff and I love Brandon. I love it out there. I still make it quite often up north to northern Manitoba. It's a lovely spot up there. Best fishing in Manitoba's up there for sure. Nothing down here like it, but I do love being in Brandon. I love the south and stuff, but it's still nice to get to go back home every now and then for sure.

Jeff Traeger:

Oh, absolutely. And nice plug on the fishing there because you know I love my fishing. So, you mentioned three or four communities out of the north there. Which one were you actually born in?

Dustin Rogers:

I was born in Thompson, but I spent the first eight or nine years of my life in Leaf Rapids, Manitoba, and just in a lot of mining communities. My father works in the mining, a lot of my families from the mining location, so all places up there were mines that family was a part of or worked in. And then the last spot I lived in was Thompson. So, a lot of family still up in Thompson right now.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay. So, I know that you came to us when you were originally active with the union. You were working at the Safeway gas bar in Brandon, but where else have you worked before coming to UFCW?

Dustin Rogers:

Before UFCW, yes, it was the Safeway gas bar, and I used to work at the co-op gas station up in Thompson. I love the fuel station, I love being outside, I love interacting with people, talking with customers, and just, you get a bit of both worlds if you're doing some outside stuff or you're doing some inside. So, I had a little bit of fuel station experience before the Safeway fuel station and also, we were unionized up there with United Steelworker. So, a little bit of experience with the union as well, but it was nice that I was able to come down south and continue on with what I was doing up there.

Jeff Traeger:

Interesting. You're a steelworker member again working from us. For those of you on the line that don't know, our union reps and specialists are covered by United Steelworker Collective agreement. So, when you were working at the gas bar, what were you doing there? Just was straight gas jockey?

Dustin Rogers:

Yeah, so I started off as a gas jockey, fuel technician, service technician, pumping gas, ringing customers through, but every workplace has issues and I noticed there was some issues right off the bat. So, I wanted to step up and take a role that could allow me to fix some things and work with my fellow members. So, I quickly became a team coordinator, which is exactly like it sounds, just coordinating the team and helping people out. Making sure that schedules are good, making sure any issues people were having and just talking with everybody. And the best part about that was just helping my other coworkers and working as a team. Hence the name.

Jeff Traeger:

Yeah, interesting. Were you involved with the union when you were at the-

Dustin Rogers:

Yeah, so as a team coordinator you can help and so on and so forth, but there's always lots of other ways to help your fellow coworkers. So, things like becoming a shop steward was definitely something I was interested in, joining the Health and Safety Committee, and also one of my favorite things was joining the negotiations, the bargaining committee when we did two rounds of negotiations. That was when I really pushed hard and fought for things and tried to get some change. And probably one of my favorite moments of when I was involved with UFCW was negotiating committee and proposals and all that. So, every aspect, the training and coming for courses and learning stuff is all appreciated. But it's nice when you get into negotiations, and you really put all that training to use for sure is probably one of my favorite times.

Jeff Traeger:

Yeah, well we share that in common because I've done a lot of different roles over my time at UFCW, but negotiating contracts is definitely my favorite role to play. So, you went from working at a gas bar at Safeway and you were involved in bargaining and doing some steward activities, I assume that type of thing. What was it like going from there to working full-time at the union office?

Dustin Rogers:

Absolutely crazy. You can take all the courses and you can learn all this stuff and you can talk to your rep a million times, but it never quite prepares you for that job. Even you think, oh, you deal with tough customers and you're good talking, you're good interacting with people and as a team coordinator you're helping people and you have all those skills and this job working in the union is to help people and talk to people and deal with issues. But even with all that, it's still a very tough learning curve. I think I've done a pretty good job so far in helping people out and stuff, but it's definitely something you can never really be prepared for. But yeah, that's why you go for those trainings, and you keep on learning to try and prepare yourself for whatever comes your way because you never know what's up next.

Jeff Traeger:

Well, that's very true and you had more than one learning curve because not just going from working at Safeway to working at a union office, but you went from working in a retail environment, a job that you knew very well, to the biggest Maple Leaf plant in Canada. So, what was that transition like?

Dustin Rogers:

With retail, a lot of people kind of have a familiar idea with retail. Everybody's been to a grocery store, everybody knows what a bakery department is or the florist department or things like that. We all have ideas. We all know what a cashier does. We all interact with cashiers in our lives every day, but I've never interacted with somebody who's worked at a pork plant before. It's not something you do on a weekly basis. And we've all been in a grocery store in our time, but I've never been into a pork plant. I'm sure a lot of people can say that.

So, we have those conceptions about grocery stores and retail, and you can kind of use that and you have a fair idea, but pork plants and Maple Leaf is just a ballgame that I've never even been to or looked at or whatever. So, learning about this department or that department was ... It's very clear what a bakery department is. They bake things. But they talk about the Maple Leaf departments, what is that even? I don't even know what part of the pig that is or whatever. [inaudible 00:12:57].

So just learning that and learning about what the members do and the hard work that they do and the efforts that they put into those places because it is hard work and they do work very hard at Maple Leaf and the stuff that they do. It's a bit behind the scenes, I guess. It's not, as I said, retail, which we all see and interact with every day, but the work that they do is still very important and just learning that was ... and getting in there and walking through it was the most important part. But it definitely was a challenge for sure.

Jeff Traeger:

Since you started working at the union office, I'll put you on the spot a little bit here, what was your best day on the job?

Dustin Rogers:

It's a tough question. The work that I feel like that I do, it doesn't really affect me. It affects the people that come to me with their concerns. As union representative, we help our members out and what I think is good or might be a win or a loss or this or that, the member could have a completely different conception about it. They may think it's the best thing in the world or it's not good enough.

So, to me it's not about my best days or my favorite days or a good day for me, as long as at the end of the day, I can think, did I do everything in my power to help the member out and get the member the best possible outcome? And even if it was a tough day or a long day or a good day or a bad day, if the answer to that question is yes, then I drive home happy and content. So, it's not about my best days. Our job is with the union is to help our members out and it's trying to get them the best day. So, it's one of those questions which is, as long as I do what I can, I go home happy.

Jeff Traeger:

Well, I probably am not going to bother asking you the next one based on that answer because the next one was going to be, what's your worst day on the job? And I guess that would just be when the member says no instead of saying yes. Right?

Dustin Rogers:

Exactly right. It answers both questions in one, but as I said, it's helping the members. It's the members that come first and foremost for me. As a team coordinator, as a shop steward, as a health and safety and as a union representative that's what it boils down to for sure.

Jeff Traeger:

So, on the whole then, would you say you're enjoying this new career that you've chosen?

Dustin Rogers:

Absolutely. I'm loving it. As you can maybe tell, I love interacting with people. I love talking with people, I love helping people. All the roles that I've been a part of, and as I said in the beginning, even just as a fuel station, talking to the people that come into the pump every day about the weather, it's just nice to hear from people. And everybody's got a story to say and as union representative, you hear lots and lots of stories, some good, some bad, but every story is worth hearing and helping everybody out for sure.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay. Well, on a more personal note, I understand that Ron approved some time off later this year for you to get married. That's very exciting. Are you planning anything special? A wedding is special enough, but destination wedding maybe or a honeymoon or something like that?

Dustin Rogers:

My sister did a destination wedding, and it was a very crazy time, and it was lots of work and all the stuff that went on, and I was just there along for the ride and it was still a lot of work. So, I'm more of a just kind of, everybody come have a good time. It's not going to be anything crazy, just more relaxed, have a good time with friends. So, no destination wedding, nothing crazy, just something local here in Brandon. No major things going on. We all have a good time and go home at the end of the day. The honeymoon will be where the planning and the effort goes into, but I'm hoping for a good time and a chill time. But weddings usually aren't like that, so we'll see, but my fingers are crossed.

Jeff Traeger:

Well good luck with that. So, we're just about out of time here, so is there anything else that you'd like to tell the members on the line about yourself?

Dustin Rogers:

I want to thank all the workers and friends that I've had throughout the years at the Safeway gas station. It's a small little crew that we had out there, but all the members out there on the line right now, just always remember we're here to help you. Talk to your shop stewards, come talk to your union representative on anything. It's definitely been a humbling experience of going from that little fuel station of nine people to representing lots and lots of members, especially the ones at Maple Leaf, Brandon right now. So, thank you everybody and thanks to all of our hardworking members out there. And as you said, wish everybody a happy 2023.

Jeff Traeger:

Great. Well thank you, Dustin. And I got to tell you, there's a lot of us, including myself, that are looking forward to working with you in the years ahead. So, we're just going to take a quick break before we move to our second interview. As I see that the motion to approve the previous minutes has passed and that we have a few questions on the line. So, let's start off by going to Cal Rempel. Go ahead, Cal.

Speaker 4:

It's Kelly.

Jeff Traeger:

Kelly, I'm sorry.

Speaker 4:

I'm just wondering why I got the email and phone call today for this meeting? I have not been working for superstore for over a month now.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay. I'm sorry that we called you. We will make sure that we remove your number from our database. Our apologies, we just probably had not been properly notified by Loblaw yet. So, we'll move on to Daniel next on the line from Securitas. Go ahead, Daniel.

Daniel:

Yeah, good evening, everyone. I'm sorry, but I have to keep my voice down a little bit. I am at work. I'm in a jail.

Jeff Traeger:

Are you on a break?

Daniel:

I'm in jail. I'm in an RCMP holding cell right now, but anyways. Yeah, you probably haven't had someone say they're calling from jail before, but ...

Jeff Traeger:

This is your one call, right? You chose to call us. Very good.

Daniel:

Yeah. Anyways, the question I had, and I know you had said to contact your shop steward. I had emailed, and I work nights so it is very difficult for me to talk to anyone during the day, but I never got a response, so I was hoping maybe you guys could help me. What happened was about a week and a half ago, I called in sick and I could hear the groans already, but yes, and it's the first time in two and a half years that I had called in sick. So, it was kind of an eye-opening experience for me because when I called in sick, the dispatcher said, "Why? What's wrong with you?"

Now, my understanding from my previous experience with unions, I was with the MGEU for almost 20 years as a shop steward and chief steward, but this is something that we had dealt with I think more than 20 years ago in that they're not supposed to ask what's wrong with you when you call in sick. That that's confidential medical information.

Jeff Traeger:

That's correct, yeah. The best that they can do is ask you for a note confirming from your doctor.

Daniel:

Exactly. They did continue on to state that, well, they have to determine whether or not it's COVID related. And I'm okay with that. If they had asked me if I had any COVID symptoms, I would've said no. But no, it was "Why, what's the matter with you?" And I said, "Hey, you can't ask that. That's illegal." From my days previously, they're not supposed to ask that. But anyways, I kind of got into a bit of hot water at work or whatever for it, and it doesn't really matter too much to me because at the end of this month I'm going to be semi retiring anyways. But for the general membership, I would think that perhaps maybe that has to be addressed in that they can't ask what's wrong with you.

Jeff Traeger:

Yeah, no, absolutely. Absolutely. We will make sure that that does get addressed. And what we're going to do, Daniel, is we're going to get take your number down here and we're going to have your rep, Sandy Fourier, give you a call and he'll be sensitive to the fact that you're working a night shift and we will make sure that he lets you know what action that we're going to take with Securitas to address them asking that type of a question. We're going to move on to the next caller, which is Harjit from Impact Security. Go ahead, Harjit.

Speaker 6:

Hi, my question is that union is directing \$20 from every payroll. Is it eligible from full-time employees or also from part-time employees?

Jeff Traeger:

Dues question, I think. So, I'm just going to let the treasurer respond.

Marie:

Yeah, so I don't have every single unit's due structure here, but what I can do is I'll take down your name and number and I can give you a call. Each of our units do have a set amount of dues that are deducted

and that's deducted on a weekly basis. Some are based on the hours that you work, some are based on the income that you're ... how much money you're making each hour. So, what I'll do is take down your information and then I can give you a call back and we can walk through your specific information exactly. And I can explain to you how the dues work.

Speaker 6:

But last time when I called for any question, I received this message, "We will call you," but I did not receive any call that time also.

Jeff Traeger:

Well, we will make sure that you get a call back from Marie within the next couple of days to answer your questions, certainly by Friday at the latest. Okay?

Speaker 6:

Okay. Thank you.

Jeff Traeger:

Very welcome. All right. Going to get back to the regular business. There's still a couple people on the line, but we've got a couple more interviews to do. But before talking to our next guest, I'll need a motion to approve the secretary treasurer's report.

Hillary Prociw:

So moved.

Dustin Rogers:

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. If you have a question about the secretary treasurer's report or anything else at all, please press star three and we will gladly take your question. I'm now going to turn it over to our secretary treasurer, Marie Buchanan, to introduce our next guest. Marie.

Marie:

Thank you, Jeff. Good evening, everyone. And I have the pleasure of interviewing Hillary Prociw who has worked with UFCW since November of 2012. Hillary actually started as a member of the union's administration staff and spent the majority of her years supporting the negotiating team. And I can tell you anyone who's been on a large negotiating committee with us or has worked with Hillary knows that she helped run the department, made sure everyone was fed and did all those little extras that we needed her to take care of. Hillary then moved to work as a relief representative for several months before she was actually hired full-time in November of 2022. So welcome, Hillary, and do you want to start off by telling us a little bit about how you got started at UFCW?

Hillary Prociw:



Hi Marie. So, I got started with UFCW in the file room actually, just over 10 years ago. It was just a temporary position after I quit my previous job. I'd never been in a union environment before, and this was a total change for me.

Marie:

So, Hillary, maybe you talked about it was a change. Tell me a little bit more about why it was such a change from the last place that you worked. Coming to a union.

Hillary Prociw:

Well, you really don't realize how dysfunctional a place can be until you leave it, but that can be said about a lot of workplaces. After I started here, I didn't dread going into work. I didn't have to ask for raises because I knew I was getting them. If I worked overtime, I was paid for it. There was a lot of comfort in knowing that if you had a work problem, you could ask for help. There was always a union backing you and you could ask questions or have a constructive conversation that even if you didn't agree on it, you could still have that conversation without any repercussions.

Marie:

So, let's be honest, Hillary, there's very few children that grow up and say, "Oh, when I get older I want to work for a union." So, what was it about coming to work for a union that really piqued your interest?

Hillary Prociw:

I'll be honest, again, this was not something I went out and looked for. It was just kind of a stop on the path while I was between jobs, but I had no idea I would make this a career and be here for over 10 years and plan to be here for the next 20 years. But the more I attended the union events, the more I wanted to get involved. And the more you learn about a union and what it does, you can't help it. It gets a little bit contagious and you just kind of want to get involved a bit more. It was just a better environment and a better fit and just seemed right. So, I stayed for a long time.

Marie:

I did enjoy how you stopped after 20 years to kind of do quick calculation to see, how old am I going to be in 20 years? But that's great. So, you started the local in an administrative role as we talked about, and now you've moved into the role as union representative. So, I want you to be truthful when we ask you this. Before you became a union rep, what was one of the biggest misconceptions you had about the work you do now and the role of a union rep?

Hillary Prociw:

I did not have an appreciation for the amount of work that a rep does. So, here's the shout out to all the reps listening. It's a lot of work and you don't really understand it till you're right in there. The paperwork, the emails, the phone calls, the meetings, servicing, any additional projects we take on, it's just a day-to-day routine. And then out of nowhere is you're thrown a curveball, which keeps things exciting and on your toes, but it can get stressful because you never really know what to expect. You can't go into every day thinking it's going to be the same. You can't plan it out. You can't schedule every little thing that's going to come up because everything's just kind of a surprise. So, it's a lot of responsibility and you can't even list the day-to-day duties that we do. It's a lot of work. So, shout out to all the reps who are on the phone because I definitely do have a much better understanding and appreciation for what we do.

Marie:

A lot of times I think reps before they get started, they don't realize about how much negativity we deal with on a day-to-day basis or that we're always dealing with problems, issues, concerns. How have you been dealing with that?

Hillary Prociw:

It is a lot of negativity. Often people are only coming to you when they're struggling because they've been reprimanded, or terminated, or they have a problem. They don't always come to you with the good stuff. So, you're dealing with a lot of people's emotions. You're dealing with a lot of emotional issues going on with this, and you have to be calm. You have to look at the facts, you have to be able to help people. You can't take all that weight onto your shoulders. It is constantly dealing with problems, and the minute you solve one problem, you're happy and you're proud, but then there's five more problems lined up that you need to fix.

Marie:

Absolutely. And what excites you would you say the most about the new role that you're in?

Hillary Prociw:

I actually really enjoy being busy. I like dealing with all the issues and the concerns and you really do appreciate it when you get a win. Life is very dull if you don't have a challenge, and I'm usually always up for a challenge. It's that competitive nature in me. I like working with people too. Knowing that you make a difference and that you can help somebody solve a problem is a great feeling. Helping people is great. You can't help everybody and not everything is the outcome you want, but at the end of the day, you're making a difference and you're helping people out. So, you feel good when you leave.

Marie:

Absolutely. So, you talked a lot about what excites you and that you are helping people out and it's always a new opportunity around every corner, but what would you say has been your biggest challenge that you've dealt with in this job?

Hillary Prociw:

Well, I used to really enjoy being very planned out. So, the day-to-day surprises can be very challenging. This is not a job that you can be trained for every situation. You can know your collective agreement and you can know the basics, but then you get a call or an email and they throw you a curveball and you just got to go with it. These situations, they're not as black and white as the language is in a collective agreement. So, you take what you know, you have to learn your employment standards and everything else and what's been done in the past. You have to talk to the members, and it takes time. We try to do the best we can as quick as we can to get results, but at the end of the day, the reality is your to-do list is always just growing. So, the minute you cross one thing off, two more things are on that list.

Marie:

Absolutely. I think I've been doing this now for 20 years and my to-do list still grows. I'm very proud of when I get to rewrite it every week and cross off all the stuff that I did. Everyone who works with me knows what I'm talking about, but it's absolutely ... it's never ending and it's one day at a time and lots

more surprises every single day. So, from a servicing standpoint, Hillary, what do you see as UFCW's biggest strengths and our biggest challenges?

Hillary Prociw:

I think one of our biggest challenges is being in contact with the members, finding out what the best way is to reach them and how to reach out, how to get the member engagement, how to get people to talk to us, which is also one of the things I really feel we're excelling at. We're trying different things. We're willing to adapt and to change. We're looking at each workplace differently. We're listening to the feedback we're getting, and we just got to keep growing, adapting, changing, and go with it. The more you're learning about a group, the more you can change things to make it work for them, not just for you, because we want to do what works for you guys.

Marie:

Excellent. And the last question that I'm going to ask you is, and it's for all our members that are listening, what can the members of UFCW Local 832 do to help you in your role?

Hillary Prociw:

Just talk to me. Reach out, give me the good, give me the bad, ask me all the questions. It helps me learn. It helps me grow. It helps me connect with you guys. It doesn't even have to be a big issue. You can just call and ask me questions, talk to me. When you see me servicing, come say hi. Sometimes it's just nice to have a friendly face when you go into a workplace and you're servicing. Having a few people who just sit and chat, even if it's not about work, is always really nice.

Marie:

Absolutely. I think that echoes our motto that we had our slogan during COVID, which is choose kindness. And I think if everyone can remember that we're all human beings on the earth trying to do the absolute best we can each and every day, that I think we'd have a little bit more kindness and a little bit more happiness throughout the world. So, I'm going to turn it back to Jeff and thanks very much, Hillary.

Hillary Prociw:

Thank you, Marie.

Jeff Traeger:

And thank you both. Hillary, I have enjoyed working with you for the last 10 years, but I am looking forward to working with you in your new role in the future. It is time for one more short break as I see that the vote to approve the secretary treasurer's report has been passed. So, I will make the motion now to approve the president's report or I'll look for a motion to approve the president's report, which is the final document we have to approve at tonight's meeting.

Hillary Prociw:

So moved.

Dustin Rogers:

Seconded.

Jeff Traeger:

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. If you have a question about the president's report or anything else at all, please press star three and we will gladly take your question. And speaking of that, we're going to open up the phone lines to take a few more questions here and we'll start with a very regular visitor to this program. And that is Mr. Russell Schumacher. How are you, sir?

Russell:

Good evening, Jeff. How are you guys out there doing?

Jeff Traeger:

We're doing just fine. How about you?

Russell:

Not too bad, thank you. I just wanted to ask my question on behalf of all the Safeway members out there. This question basically has two parts. Number one, I just wanted to follow up on your meeting that you had on October the 5th that you had with different companies to help provide a more streamlined process for the plants. And also too, just wanted to find out if there's been any progress about an RX card for Safeway members.

Jeff Traeger:

So, we are on the verge of making a pretty significant announcement, Russell, so I've got to be a little bit cautious about what I exactly say here today. But I can tell you that there has been significant progress on both fronts and that the October meeting was followed up with meetings that we had both in November and again in December and continued into January. And I actually have a call with the ... I think you know who Sean Aldred is, labor relations at Safeway. I've got a call with him Thursday morning, and if it's okay with you, I'd like to take your number down and maybe reach out to you after that and maybe do that about the same time as we make an announcement to all Safeway members. But all I'm going to say here tonight on the call is that I believe you'll be very happy with what I will be telling you by the end of this week.

Russell:

Okay. Yes. And you have my permission to take my number down.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay. We just did. So, it's a good thing you gave me permission, Russell.

Russell:

Okay. Very well. Very well. Good. Look forward to hearing from you.

Jeff Traeger:

Yes, and Dustin wanted to say hello too. If you managed to get on the line tonight, he remembers you back from his days at Safeway.

Russell:

All right. Hi, Dustin.

Jeff Traeger:

Got a thumbs up is what you got there. All right, thank you, Russell. Appreciate it. We're going to move on now to-

Russell:

Thank you.

Jeff Traeger:

Yeah, well, you're welcome. We're going to move on now to Fernando from the Sobey's Retail Support Centre. Go ahead, Fernando.

Fernando:

Okay, first of all, I'd like to say good evening to everybody.

Jeff Traeger:

Good evening.

Fernando:

I have a cluster of questions that I'm going to ask you. First question is, you just mentioned about the upcoming election coming up. My question is, is there any political party the union would like to endorse? Because I have so many Filipino friends that I can relate with, and perhaps I can get an honest opinion. Perhaps I cannot tell it to them though.

Jeff Traeger:

Sure. So, there is a provincial election coming up. It's a bit of a giveaway that we're having Wab Kinew on this town hall in May that we are currently affiliated to the New Democratic Party. I will say the same thing that I've always said, and that is that we're involved in politics because politics is directly involved in the lives of our members. Whether we like it or not, they set a lot of the rules around employment standards and the Labor Relations Act in the province. They set minimum wage and a whole bunch of other things that impact working people.

So we choose to be politically active and we choose to support the party that supports working people and their families and puts those issues ahead of profits and returns for corporations that you see across Canada with these huge corporations that are making money while the rest of us are trying to count our nickels and quarters at the till so that we can pay for our groceries or put gas in our car. If there was another party, let's say it was the Jeff Party, that was more favorable to workers. Was probably a bad name for a party, Fernando, but ...

Fernando:

Can you be more specific about that?

Jeff Traeger:

What's that?

Fernando:

Can you be specific? What party is it?

Jeff Traeger:

It's the New Democratic Party is the party that we support, but what I'm telling you is we support them because they support working people. If there was another party out there whose platform supported working people better than the ones that the NDP puts forward, that is the party we would support. Today when we look at all the parties who will be seriously running in the next provincial election, and that would be the New Democratic Party, the liberal party, and the conservative party. There's no doubt in my mind that the party that is most interested in helping out working people and their families is the New Democratic Party, and that's why we support them.

Fernando:

I see. Okay, I got that. My second question is about members being injured. Why is it that it is very hard for them to have compensation claim? Is it a part per union or it depends on the management that we're having?

Jeff Traeger:

Well, really, it's up to workers' compensation. When a worker is injured in the course of their job, they have to file a claim with workers' compensation. And some of the issues that we've had with workers' compensation in the past is denying claims for reasons that aren't appropriate, like preexisting condition or something like that when it's very clear that the worker was able to do the job before the accident or injury and was not able to do it afterwards.

So it really has very little to do with management except that they write reports, and if they believe that a worker is not as injured as they say there are or are able to work despite being injured, they will put in a report to WCB that will impact the decision of the adjudicator on that claim. So yes, management can play a negative role, but you have to remember that for a lot of employers out there, the almighty dollar is all they're concerned about. And the more workers' compensation claims they have coming out of their workplace, the more premiums they pay to the workers' compensation board.

So, there's a financial reason why sometimes employers will interfere in a WCB claim, but you always have the ability to contact the worker's advisory office, which is an office of the WCB that can fight an appeal over a denial of a claim. And if you have any issues with how that process works or need some assistance, just contact your full-time union rep.

Fernando:

Okay. My next question is that early next year, Sobey's warehouse is going through contract negotiations. And the reason why I called you today is that I hope our union will help us because as far as I am concerned, the contract that we're having right now is not really good. That's why, when it expires next year, I hope our union will help us on this matter.

Jeff Traeger:

I can guarantee you that your union will help you out in this matter. There's a couple of people here trying to say the important thing is that you and your coworkers stand together, because don't forget that the union is you, you and your coworkers. We, people in this room anyways, and many of the folks that work in this building or our Brandon office or in Neepawa, we are paid to represent you, but you

are truly the union. I've been doing this job almost 25 years, and the best contracts we've ever got have been achieved when workers in a workplace stand together for what's fair and what's right. And when they do that, they're a force to be reckoned with. We're going to take one more caller and then we're going to get to our last interview. Our next caller is Adriana from Epic Opportunities. Go ahead, Adriana.

Adriana:

Hey everyone. Thanks for taking my call. So, first of all, thank you guys for all the work that you do. I know you guys a lot of times see a lot of the negativity and don't get a chance to really hear our appreciation. So, thank you, Hillary. I really appreciate that you come by and you're always so approachable and always so willing to hear every single story. At least I talk a lot, but anyway, thank you.

Jeff Traeger:

Yeah, no, that's very nice.

Adriana:

The question that I have is, I sent an incredibly long email about certain issues that I face hoping that they will be helpful towards negotiations for the new contract.

Jeff Traeger:

Did you send your email to Hillary?

Adriana:

I sent it to Phil, and I copied Hillary.

Jeff Traeger:

Oh, perfect. That's perfect. I was just going to say we need to make sure it gets to the right hands.

Adriana:

Yeah, I was going to say I haven't heard back, so I wanted to just maybe just bring it to your attention or ... I know Hillary responded already, but I didn't hear back from Phil, and I asked [inaudible 00:44:00] negotiations to see if there was any discussion about what I had written. But the one thing that I was really hoping that would make it into this round, hopefully, maybe not appropriate, I'm not sure [inaudible 00:44:13]. If Epic does not have the budget for raises or they're not considering that, maybe there's some other ways that they can bring some benefits to the table.

Jeff Traeger:

Yeah, I agree completely. I know that folks in assisted living depend on family services funding, and if the government doesn't provide the funding, an employer can't provide wage increases even if they want to. Quite often when Phil is getting feedback from members, he's a negotiator just like I am. He'll be compiling everything before he reaches out to people for clarification or anything like that. So just give him a bit of time. I'll let him know. He's probably on the call tonight, so he's probably heard, and I will make sure that we take down your contact information and get Phil to contact you when it's appropriate, if that's okay.

Adriana:

Perfect. Thank you. No problem. Thank you so much.

Jeff Traeger:

All right, thank you. You have a great night, Adriana. All right, so at this time I'm going to turn over the mic to my executive advisor, Ron Allard, who will introduce our next guest. Ron.

Ron:

Thanks, Jeff. Good evening, everyone. Tonight, I would like to introduce Tyler Ladew, who is one of our newest staff representatives with UFCW. I first met Tyler when the member certified UFCW to represent them at Viterra, and quickly noticed that the members there looked up to him and valued his opinion on issues in the workplace. Welcome to our team, Tyler. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Tyler:

Hi, Ron. Good evening, everybody. My name is Tyler Ladew. I was born in Flin Flon, Manitoba. I'm married to my wife, and we just had our first daughter this past year in September. Before UFCW, I was a journeyman electrician. I had experience in residential, commercial, industrial construction and industrial maintenance at Viterra. I got my red seal going through Red River College, and I come from Métis family also. That's very important to me.

Ron:

Very good, thank you. Can you tell me a little bit about organizing your workplace? Why did you and your coworkers vote yes to joining UFCW?

Tyler:

Yeah, so we reached out to UFCW. We were looking around for representation because we felt, while we knew we were being treated unfairly, there was certain practices going on, like averaging of hours and modified work schedules that were never agreed upon and they weren't following the proper procedures. We didn't really know how to fight for our rights by ourselves. So, we reached out to UFCW, and it was an overwhelming majority. I think we had a 99% vote to bring UFCW into the workplace.

Ron:

One of the qualities about you that stood out to me was that you were not in it for yourself and that you really cared about your coworkers and their rights in the workplace. Once your workplace was unionized, what made you want to get involved with UFCW as an activist?

Tyler:

So, I hadn't had an opportunity to be a part of a union up until that point. I knew what unions were, I knew what they stood for as well as a little bit of background of the labor movement. So, I made the choice to get involved as much as I could, and I felt comfortable in my role, in my position at that plant, at that workplace, that I could stand up for others. And I had the confidence to stand up to management and be represented by UFCW.

Ron:



Well before you were hired with the local, what stood out most to me was your hard work ethic. I saw that when I was your rep at Viterra and have continued to see it as you settle into your position of a union rep. What excites you most about taking on the role of a union representative?

Tyler:

What excites me most? It's a couple different things. I'm excited about the opportunity to meet all the members from all walks of life. I'm excited to build on my existing skillset as a professional, and I'm excited to get more involved with UFCW and the laboring movement in general.

Ron:

What is one thing that members would be surprised to know about you?

Tyler:

One thing that members would be surprised to know about me is my first name is not Tyler. It's actually Felix. I'm Felix Ladew IV. Tyler is my middle name.

Ron:

Well, currently you are temporarily covering for John Anderson who is off on a medical leave. And I have to say that you've been doing a great job in that territory. So, your last question is, what can members in Carberry and Neepawa do to help you better represent them?

Tyler:

Communicate with me and update their contact information so I can communicate with them.

Ron:

Thank you. That's awesome. Thanks, Tyler. I'll hand it back to Jeff.

Jeff Traeger:

All right, thank you very much, Ron, and thank you, Tyler IV I guess we call you now. You're doing a fine job out there in Neepawa and Carberry and have been ever since November when you started with us.

I would really like to thank all three of our guests tonight, Dustin, Hillary, and Tyler for joining us and for helping our members to get to know you a little better. I am looking forward to working with this fine group of activists in the years ahead, and I know that the future of our local is bright. I see we have a couple more questions on the line and a little bit more time to take them. So, we're going to go to, we have an unidentified inbound caller, so Chris, if you can get them on the line.

Speaker 13:

Hello.

Jeff Traeger:

Hello there. How are you?

Speaker 13:

Hello. I'm good, I'm good. Hi, my name is Cadre. I'm calling not actually to ask a question; I'm calling to show appreciation to Hillary. She has been doing a very good job. I have a coworker currently facing an indiscriminate action in our workplace and she has been well represented by the union. Well, it's hard to do the job that she does. She deals with a lot of negative situations, and being the kind of person that she is, the way she handles things and the way ... I am not the person in trouble, but the person in trouble feels safe being a member of the union. And I can tell that I'm proud to be a member of the union and I appreciate Hillary and every other union rep out there. Kudos to you guys. We see you. We appreciate you. We thank you and we keep praying for you for strength. Thank you very much.

Jeff Traeger:

Well, thank you, Cadre. I've been doing these membership meetings for a lot of years now. That's one of the nicest calls that we've ever had. I'm glad to hear that Hillary's doing a bang-up job representing your folks. I am glad to hear that your members feel safe being members of UFCW and I certainly am glad to hear that you're proud to be a part of what we're doing. So, thank you so much for your call.

Cadre:

Thank you.

Jeff Traeger:

You're very welcome. We will move on to Yitzhak from Life's Journey, who I think is our last caller of the night.

Yitzhak:

Hello there everyone. How are you guys all?

Jeff Traeger:

Doing well. Yourself?

Yitzhak:

I'm doing fantastic. I actually had a couple of things. One, I would like to second that person who did call in with Hillary. She is doing a bang out job representing us. Been part of the union before and I've had weak representation. So, in this matter I would definitely second that she's doing a great job at helping at all our needs.

Jeff Traeger:

Great to hear.

Yitzhak:

But I did have a question in regards to our contracts. What is going on with them? And I understand it's all related to politics. I know union always has something to do with politics, depending on who's in power can also affect our wages. But truthfully, we've been getting kind of stuck in a little bind here with low income and high inflation rates and definitely no increases for quite some time now. I think last time Life's Journey had an increase was back in 2014.

So, I was wondering what the union has in mind or is planning to do on whether they're planning on getting extra funding from government or how we can go about doing certain things to get income

essentially to our company, which would go towards the employees. Because a lot of employees are currently suffering or living paycheck to paycheck or being broke at the end of the day. And it causes a lot of problems financially and physically, emotionally, and at this point a lot of us are starting to get frustrated. So wanted to know what your thoughts are and if you have anything in mind that we can do as employees to find out what we can do to get more money.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay. So that's a whole lot to unpack, but I'm going to wind the clock back 21 years to when I was in Hillary's role. I was a union representative representing our members in assisted living. And then when I became a negotiator, because I had had that experience in assisted living, that was part of my territory as a negotiator. So, I was in Phil's role. And it's incredibly frustrating for us because in many cases in the assisted living sector, members are exactly as you say, underpaid, undercompensated for working each and every day with some of the most vulnerable citizens in our society. And fundamentally, to me, as someone who believes in workers' rights and believes in fairness and equality, it just seemed incredibly wrong that we wouldn't value the people that care for those vulnerable citizens even as much as somebody who did something significantly less important.

So, we determined a long time ago that employers were actually, in some cases, on our side. They wanted to pay their employees better too, but were limited to the funding they received from the provincial government through family services. So what our plan would be, would be to put a government in place in October that is going to seriously increase the funding to assisted living facilities so that they can provide much better wages, benefits if they don't already have benefits or improved benefits if they ... because I know that a lot of the benefit packages or even pension packages or things like RSPs or spending accounts, they're not really benefits that people can rely on for themselves or their family and they're not really a benefit that's going to pay them a wage in retirement that's going to allow them to live in with respect and dignity.

But employers aren't in control of that. Union's not in control of that. And I really think that government is the culprit and the one that needs to be in control of that. So, when you ask what can the workers do, they can get a government in place that's going to make a difference. They can actually speak to the people that come knocking on their door in October to ask them what their position is on compensation and funding support for organizations like Life's Journey and others. And I think that that's step one, the most important thing that we can do.

And then if that's the case, same thing that I told the worker from the retail support center. Then stand together and demand that this happens. Once we get a government in place that's going to actually be listening, then we need to stand together. We need to have a clear and decisive message to the employer, and we need to make sure that we're going after what we deserve. Maybe it's not exactly everything we want, but you know that the people working in your industry deserve a lot better than what the government of the day is giving them.

Speaker 14:

Especially-

Jeff Traeger:

All right. Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead. Go ahead. Yeah, I wasn't sure if we had lost you there.

Speaker 14:

No, I was just about to say, I know a lot of people are getting frustrated just because, for example, I'm one of those people that work outside the city. Now the company's planning to cut us off from mileage because there's no funding available from the provincial government anymore. There was a grant. And we are kind of stuck in a bind here when most of us can't even afford living. We ourselves are turning into vulnerable people at one point or another soon because just some of us can't afford it.

So, I understand your position. I get it. I understand that it's all government related at the end of the day, and I know elections is in October, but what do we do in the meantime? When most of us are struggling working a day-to-day job that supports people that are vulnerable. We are supposed to be supporting them, are we supposed to come to work? And most of our people's attitudes are changing just because they're so stressed out, they're not even having a great time at work, they can't function properly because their thoughts are all mingled all over the place.

Jeff Traeger:

No, I agree with you completely and I think it might be helpful for you to contact Phil Krachek, the negotiator. Actually, what I'm going to do, Yitzhak, is we've got your information on the screen here. I'm going to have Phil reach out to you and give you a call. Because as much as I am talking to you about what efforts were being made by myself 20 years ago when I was doing it, Phil's our lead negotiator on assisted living and I think it would be helpful for you to speak to him and also to speak to him about the issue that you just raised.

Because I guess if you simply can't afford to be driving out of town, well then maybe it is time to start thinking about working in a different industry. And maybe if enough people did that, it would send a message to government. I know that most of the people that work in assisted living love the work they do and care deeply for the people that they represent or that they care for. So, I know that's a difficult thing, but if it comes down to that, then that's unfortunately what it comes down to.

So, we are out of time. Our town hall is scheduled for one hour and we're at the one-hour mark. I know we have one caller on the line, which we will reach out to tomorrow. But I want to thank all of you for joining us on our February telephone town hall general membership meeting. We will be conducting our next general membership meeting on Tuesday, May the 16th, 2023 by telephone town hall beginning at 7:00 PM with our special guest Wab Kinew. So, stay safe, stay well everyone, and thank you for everything you do. We are now adjourned.