

**General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, May 16th, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.**

TELEPHONE TOWN HALL

The General Membership meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Jeff Traeger, President, who chaired the meeting.

1. **Roll Call of Officers Present:** Jeff Traeger, **President**; Marie Buchan, **Secretary Treasurer**; Sandy Barylski, **Vice President**; Alex Ciumac, **Vice President**; Wes Connell, **Vice President**; Charlene Desjarlais, **Vice President**; Dianne Gibson-Pierce, **Vice President**; Dave Hamalainen, **Vice President**; Lisa Larosa, **Vice President**; Cosmo Paton, **Vice President**; Dean Rodwell, **Vice President**; Roger Siemens, **Vice President**; Deb Stewart, **Vice President**; John Sulyma, **Vice President**; Malcolm Welch, **Vice President**; Tim Whitford, **Vice President**

Regrets: Kathy Brnjas, Vice President; Frank Manaigre, Vice-President; Colin Marnoch, Vice President

2. **2023 Town Hall Meetings:** President Traeger started the May 16, 2023 GMM by reading the UFCW Local 832 Land Acknowledgement.

Before starting the meeting President Traeger thanked all 832 members for the work they have done and continue to do as each and every day to keep our communities safe, fed, entertained, transported and cared for. Together you are pillars of our Province and you should know how important you are to our society and how honored we are at UFCW to be able to represent you.

President Traeger advised this meeting is the 2023 Spring meeting. The fall meeting has been scheduled for September 19th and at that meeting UFCW Elder Eric Flett will join us to talk about September 30th, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

Sitting with President Traeger for the meeting tonight are Executive Advisor to the President Ron Allard; Director of Training and Education Erin Selby along with Communications Coordinator Chris Noto. Secretary Treasurer Marie Buchan is joining the meeting by phone.

President Traeger then reviewed the format for the Telephone Town Hall meetings where the President and Secretary-Treasurer's reports as well as the minutes from the previous Town Hall meeting are available on the UFCW Local 832 website for members to read and will be asked to vote and approve as posted.

3. **Special Guest: Leader of the Official Opposition for the Province of Manitoba, Wab Kinew.**

President Jeff Traeger explained that Wab Kinew was not able to attend in the studio, but he was good enough to record his answers to the list of questions that President Traeger had planned to ask. Also discussed were the reasons Local 832 supports the NDP. Local 832 will always support the party that is most closely aligned with the perspectives and values of workers and their families. We will always support the party that keeps working people and all Manitobans front of mind when passing legislation, and that party is consistently the NDP. Wab Kinew was able meet the Local's executive Board and they endorsed the Manitoba NDP candidates for this election.

Questions and Responses are listed below:

Q: The first topic I wanted to talk to Wab about was Truth and Reconciliation Day. Frankly, I'm blown away that our government hasn't proclaimed this day as a statutory holiday in Manitoba. It was both a significant milestone in our country's history and an important step forward when the federal government introduced September 30th as a federal statutory holiday in 2021. We, among others, pushed our provincial government to proclaim this day, but unfortunately, they are still stalling. Representatives of both workers and employers on the Labor Management Review Committee jointly recommended to government that the day be proclaimed and treated similar to Remembrance Day, but they ignored that recommendation and continue to move forward without reconciliation in any meaningful way. I asked Wab if you form government this October, what will the NDP do in regards to Truth and Reconciliation Day?

A: Well, thank you so much Jeff for the invitation to participate, and hello to all the UFCW members out there. I'm super proud that UFCW endorsed us and very, very committed to being the party for working people in Manitoba as the Manitoba NDP. All of our candidates right across the province are going to be working hard. Work hard, whether that's on fixing healthcare, making life more affordable or on the subject of Truth and Reconciliation Day, on making things fair for the workers out there. And I think what we got to do here is we have to make it a stat holiday in Manitoba. So right now, schools are closed, so educators and students, rightfully so, get the chance to observe Orange Shirt Day, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30th. But there's a lot of parents out there who still have to go into work.

And I think in order to make the situation fair and also to recognize the significance and to honor residential school survivors and the children who never came home, we should make it a stat holiday that way if you work in construction or if you're a UFCW member who works in manufacturing, you're a security guard, you work at

a grocery store or people who work in other aspects of the private sector in Manitoba, you'll either get that day off to spend with your kids, to spend with your family or you'll be properly compensated in keeping with the way that other stat holidays are paid out for workers in the province. And so for us, it's really just about fairness.

I think that everyone from every walk of life, from every line of work should be able to spend some time on September 30th honoring residential school survivors and the children who never came home, learning a bit about their experiences, finding a way to observe and memorialize, and then also spending some time with your family so that you can renew those bonds that unfortunately many children in the past in Manitoba and across Canada did not have the chance to do so.

We should be able to make this a day for learning and reflection and respect and also a day that all families can participate.

Q: The second question that I had for Wab was around card check, which is just a fancy term for how workplaces can be organized. And one of the very first things that Pallister introduced in October of 2016 was Bill 7, the Labor Relations Amendment Act. This is the act that removed card check. Card check was a law that stated if 65% of workers signed union cards indicating that they wanted to join a union, they were automatically certified and no vote was required. Today, even if a hundred percent of workers in a workplace sign a union card, a vote must still be conducted, which is costly and needless and only gives employers a window of opportunity to try and influence their employees. Even worse than this attack on workers' rights, employers can delay the process further trying to prove the minimum amount of workers didn't sign a card, giving them even more time to force workers into meetings and feed the misinformation about the benefits of having a union. When a worker signs a card, they've already voted yes to join a union and we don't need to effectively ask workers to vote twice.

I know that Kevin Rebeck, the president of the MFL, has been in discussions with Wab about this being a significant priority for labor. So I asked Wab, what are your party's thoughts on re-implementing card check so that worker's rights to unionize in their workplace are protected?

A: Yeah, I think so. I think we are going to bring back card check, and I think you've laid out the rationale. It makes a lot of sense. When people decide to join a union and they sign their name to that, we should respect that. And unfortunately, with the PCs, with Brian Pallister, with Premier Stefanson, they've created a situation where not only are there additional hoops to jump through for people when they want to unionize and they express

that desire, but there's also a window where they could be potentially influenced or where pressure can be put on them. And that's not right. That's not in keeping with existing labor law or the spirit of what we want for people who want to be able to organize and bargain collectively, and I think very importantly stand up for their rights as working people. So this is something that we'd like to look at.

We've been fighting back against the anti-labor legislation under Pallister and Premier Stefanson. Things like Bill 16 that would've taken away arbitration during strikes, mandatory arbitration, things that would've made it more difficult to organize in the province, and should we get a chance to form government, I think we've got to repair that damage, and this is one of the changes that was made that we need to revisit. So very much I would like to work with UFCW and the other unions in Manitoba so that we can figure out what's the best path forward here because there's going to be questions around the details of this, thresholds, implementation questions, things like that. So I think the case here is clear and we just need to work together on how do we get it done.

Q: The most destabilizing thing that happens on the picket line is when the employer hires replacement workers or what I like to call scabs. Similar to what other provinces have already done and what the federal government is currently doing, we'd also like to see anti-scab legislation in Manitoba, meaning some form of ban on replacement workers during strikes or lockouts. Employers have already made a deal with their workers through collective bargaining. They shouldn't be allowed to hire outside workers when they can't get their way at the bargaining table. Bringing in outside workers goes against the spirit of a contract and removes worker leverage during a dispute. A strike is, in a weird way, meant to punish both sides. Workers withdraw their labor and take home less pay, and the employer's production shuts down because nobody's working. If the employer gets a free pass to keep working, it devalues the work of the people on strike. So I asked what would the NDP do in regards to replacement workers?

A: Well, yes, Jeff, you're right. I have been talking to Kevin Rebeck about this one, and we kind of have a bit of a back and forth because I think I'm familiar with talking about the issue using some of the language that you're using there, but Kevin is always very keen to remind me that "let's talk about this in terms of replacement workers, banning replacement workers and the conversation proceeding along those lines as well". So I think that this is something that we actually debated at our party's convention recently, and what I said then is what I would say to you tonight, which is that when you look at the idea just straight up and down, should somebody be able to come in and take your

job when you go on strike asking for better working conditions? I think the answer is pretty clear. I think most people understand on the face of it, the answer to that question should be no.

From there though, I think we got to do some work. We got to do some work exploring how is this going to impact people in Manitoba. We got to do some work educating Manitobans about this. And so I think this is a topic where the idea makes sense to me on the face of it, but I'd like to see some consultation happen with how this thing could potentially shake out in the broader economy. I'd like to see some public education and awareness work going on, and I'd like to be able to collaborate with people from all walks of life in Manitoba on moving things forward here in a good way.

Q: Okay. Now maybe let's talk minimum wage. After dismal minimum wage increases for years under Pallister and Stefanson, PCs finally caved last year and announced a few boosts that will put us up to \$15.30 for minimum wage this October. Now, this would've been a great minimum wage three or four years ago before the pandemic, but today this increase leaves us \$3 an hour short of the living wage in Manitoba, which is estimated at \$18.34 an hour. So I told Wab that UFCW understands that the NDP can't fix this problem overnight, but asked if they have a plan to catch up to the living wage so all working Manitobans can have some work-life balance and stay out of poverty.

A: Well, I'm a firm believer that if you work hard, you should get ahead. And I think that's something that everyone in Manitoba believes. If you work hard, you should get ahead. And yet when we see a minimum wage that isn't a living wage, unfortunately we have a situation where people can work full-time and still live in poverty. And so that's a situation where we got people who are working very hard and they're still not getting ahead. So we need to take action in this area. And for seven years, first with Brian Pallister and then with Heather Stefanson, you saw that situation of people working very hard and not getting ahead. And then now just in an election year, you see the PCs trying to make up for lost time as it were.

For us, we know that the cost of living has really skyrocketed, and I'm sure the folks on the call know that, when they're at the grocery store, when they're at the gas station, when you're paying your hydro bill, you've seen that increase multiple times over the past few years under the PCs. And so we need to take a lot of steps to make life more affordable, and we also need to ensure that people earn a decent wage. And so I think what our team wants to do is to ensure that not only are we going to create an economy where folks who are earning the minimum wage are able to get by, but I also think a lot about the people who earn

maybe a few steps above the minimum wage and folks who've worked hard, bargained hard, and fought for those wages that are maybe \$1, \$2, \$3, \$4 above the minimum wage. And I want them to be able to maintain those things that they've earned and that they've had to stand up for and bargain for.

And so for us, we're going to be on the side of the workers and we're going to push things forward in a direction where, once again, if you work hard that you're able to get ahead because right now it feels like too many people are just treading water and we need to improve that.

Q: Okay, well since we're talking about minimum wage, let's jump into the security guard minimum wage. We represent over 2,000 private sector security guards in Manitoba. And for those who don't have a background on this, I'll give a brief explanation. We fought long and hard to implement a security guard minimum wage in this province, which was set up to recognize the risk to workers in the industry, and through a period of four years would raise wages in that sector to be \$2.25 greater than the general minimum wage. In 2014, Manitoba NDP enacted that plan, but for all the guards on the phone right now wondering why they don't make that much above minimum wage, the answer is the PC government.

In 2017, Premier Pallister canceled the final increase and froze guards' wages at \$12.50. As provincial minimum wage increased, guards' premiums did not.

We know how hard our members in security work and how tough the pandemic was on them and how the decision to freeze their pay showed that their government didn't respect the important work guards do in our community. Not only would we like to see a dedicated minimum wage for security guards put back in place, we'd also like to see better training provided to guards in specific areas like de-escalation training, non-violent crisis intervention, cultural sensitivity, mental health awareness, mental health first aid, harm reduction training. Along with retail grocery workers and healthcare professionals, private sector security guards were the heroes of the pandemic helping to make our community safe. Will the NDP consider bringing back the security guard minimum wage?

A: Yeah, this is an important issue and I want to give a shout-out to our CLC President Bea Bruske, also very familiar to UFCW members because she's somebody who, when I was first elected and first getting up to speed on the provincial issues, Bea really spent a lot of time helping me understand the background here and why it was so important to have this unique minimum wage for security guards in Manitoba. And she really let me know how hard-earned that was and how much effort people put into making

the case and standing up for these really important workers. And part of the reason this issue is so important in Manitoba is because public safety is important. I think a lot of people are wondering, "What can we do to make things safer out there?" Whether you're in Winnipeg or you're in rural Manitoba, you're in the north, safety's always really important and a lot of people are talking about it these days.

And so the reality is we are asking security guards to be part of our society's overall solution when it comes to safety. And so we need to ensure that not only are these folks properly compensated, that they're getting a wage that recognizes the important work they do, that it allows us to be able to recruit and retain security guards, but we also know that there's other dynamics at work here. And in particular, I'm thinking about training. Do we have the necessary de-escalation and other forms of training in place for security guards? And I think the answer there is it's pretty clear we need to expand this training and we need to offer more supports to people who are working on the front lines because they're seeing so many things at work every day.

As a security guard, not only are you going to be looking at the straight-up security issues and loss prevention and things like that, but you're also going to be interacting with people who might potentially have mental health crises. It could be an addictions crisis that you see somebody experiencing. You're going to have to communicate across different cultures and languages and different walks of life. And so we are really asking a lot of security guards and I think it's very important that we support them in the proper way.

.... Cont'd below

4. **m/s/c TO accept the minutes of the previous meetings of Tuesday, February 7, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. as read on-line.**

Wab Kinew Interview cont'd:

Q: The Federal Government just introduced 10 paid sick days for federally regulated workers. However, that only covers about 6% of workers across all of Canada. Here in Manitoba, that turns into a very small number of workers that get sick days unless they have a good employer or a union contract. We negotiate sick days as a priority at the bargaining table every chance we get but it's a big challenge as many employers don't want to pay employees who are too sick to work. Less than 50% of Manitoba workers have paid sick time at their jobs, and for those that do, the majority don't have full wage replacement and only get a portion of their pay when they're off sick.

Throughout the pandemic, we have been calling for sick days so that workers don't have to face the choice of going to work sick or staying home unpaid to recover. I asked Wab if workers in Manitoba can look forward to our provincial government matching the federal plan for sick days.

A: Well, Jeff, I was very proud to stand with Bea Bruske during the pandemic to make that call. And I know that you were right there advocating for this as well when we pushed for paid sick leave. And I think we saw the real-life importance of this, basically that people shouldn't have to choose between earning a living and going into work sick because not only is it about their wellbeing, but it's also about the wellbeing of everyone else in the workplace, the health and safety of them, and for the broader society as well. The PCs have clearly not supported workers in this way, and we saw that situation crop up many times over the past few years and it's continued. So for us, we want to take a different approach. We want to stop picking fights with other levels of government and we just want to get things done for Manitobans. And so we're looking at paid leave, including I want to shout-out of my colleagues here, paid leave around other situations as well.

Our MLA for The Pas, Amanda Lathlin, brought in a bill recommending paid leave for those families that experience a miscarriage or stillbirth. And so this is a very challenging situation. My heart goes out to families in this sort of very tough time and we want to be there to support the workers when they experience that sort of thing.

Q: Last week, Manitoba NDP announced the plan to stop cutting education property tax rebates for out-of-province billionaires. And I think this is something of interest to some of our members, many of whom were quite surprised to hear that Loblaw, one of the largest employers in Canada and the largest employer 832 deals with, received more than \$300,000 in rebates from the Manitoba government in 2022. I think a lot of us can find a better place to invest that money instead of putting it into the already padded wallet of Galen Weston Jr. I asked Wab to expand a bit on his party's plans to target the rich with refunds while trying to make life more affordable for workers.

A: Well, I think this is a really important question in particular because there's probably a lot of workers on the call tonight who work at a Superstore or may be interested to find out what Galen Weston and other folks at Loblaws are looking at. The PCs under Heather Stefanson have cut a check for at least \$325,000 to the company that owns No Frills and Superstore. They're cutting this check to Galen Weston, and that's money that they're actually taking from schools. They're not taking this from general government coffers. This is money that should be going to education, and they're cutting

these big checks every year to these corporations. And to me, that's just not right. We should be investing in our schools.

The company that owns Loblaw is hugely profitable. They had a profit of more than \$400 million in just the first three months of this year alone. And they're doing that not only by raising the price of food for everybody in the province, but you will know very well folks who've had to bargain for wages in these places, just how challenging that's been. And so not only should we stop giving checks to billionaires and instead use that money to support our local schools, the schools that your kids and grandkids are going to be going to, to make sure that they can have smaller class sizes and more one-on-one time with the teachers. But I would really encourage people to remember the next time you're in a round of bargaining with some of these big corporations with their headquarters outside of Manitoba, just remember that they've been getting free checks. And our view is always to stand up for the working person. We want to stand up for the schools that you need in your communities, but we also want to stand up for you and make sure that you can get a fair deal.

Q: Last topic I had was healthcare, and I don't even know where to start with that topic. PC government has absolutely decimated healthcare in this province. Every single one of us knows someone that has had a struggle with healthcare. The nurses, doctors, healthcare aides, porters and the many, many other types of workers in healthcare are doing their best. But we just went through a pandemic and the response from our government was to call our healthcare workers heroes while refusing to bargain with them on fair wages. Absolutely boggles the mind.

In rural communities like Brandon, the north and elsewhere, UFCW has many members, and I'm sure they'd love to hear the NDP's plans to deal with the healthcare crisis outside of the big cities. In Winnipeg, Pallister closed three of our ERs so abruptly that healthcare here still hasn't recovered. That set us up for one of the worst healthcare responses to the pandemic across the entire country. What would an NDP government do to start fixing the damage done to healthcare?

A: Well, healthcare is something that I'm really passionate about and I know is a top concern for people right across the province, including in rural Manitoba. And so just over a week ago, we were inverted in the Westman and we rolled out our rural healthcare platform. And basically, the overall idea is to do what everyone in rural Manitoba knows we need to do, which is to hire more people to work at the bedside and to pay them to work in rural Manitoba. Too often we see that there are facilities, whether they're in larger communities or smaller communities, but we don't have the staffing to keep them open and we really need to bring the staff in.

So our five point plan on rural healthcare is about hiring more doctors, reducing ambulance wait times, hiring more nurses and allied health professionals, the people who do the tests and blood

work and lab work, X-rays for you. It's also about improving care for seniors and access to specialists. So that's what we want to do in rural Manitoba. And of course there's a ton that needs to take place in Winnipeg, in the capital city as well. And I think the approach here is the same that we need, whether we're talking healthcare in Winnipeg, rural, northern Manitoba, we've got to reduce the bureaucracy. There's too much bureaucracy in healthcare and we've got to invest instead in the front lines, in particular doctors, the nurses and the healthcare aides and the allied healthcare professionals who take care of us. It's time for us to take care of the people who take care of us.

PCs have been doing way too many cuts and closures of emergency rooms. We need to stop the cuts and we need to start investing. And when you ask that question, "How are we going to pay for it?" Well, let's reduce the bureaucracy and use those savings to invest in the front lines because that's where healthcare is actually delivered. And by the way, we need to empower those frontline workers too. So it's about investing in them, but it's also about giving more decision-making power to that nurse who's there with you at the bedside or that healthcare provider who's right there with you in your local clinic. Thank you so much.

Jeff Traeger: All right. Well, I want to say a big thank you to both Wab and the NDP for making it possible to hear where the party stands on issues that matter to our members. If any of you have questions related to the interview, I'll gladly answer those that I can and commit to taking those questions to Wab directly

5. **Secretary Treasurers Report:**
m/s/c TO accept the Financial Report for the 2 month period ending February 28, 2023.

6. **Presidents Report:**
m/s/c TO accept the President's report as posted.

7. **Special Guest: Erin Selby, Director of Education and Training**
President Jeff Traeger introduced Erin Selby, Director of Education and Training to discuss all the Scholarships, Programs and Classes and updates that are available at the UFCW Local 832 Training Centre.

Erin Selby reported this is probably the busiest time of year for the training center and it's also time for scholarships. We have a lot of scholarships, over \$44,000 a year that we give out in scholarships just out of UFCW Local 832, and this is available for anybody who works for an employer who contributes to the education fund because the training center is completely run on money from the employers and not from our members actually.

If you're not sure, if you are working for an employer who contributes to the education fund, you can always go to our website at ufcw832.com and you can find it under the training center and you just have to look for the Education Fund page and you'll be able to look up whether or not your employer pays into it, and if they do, you can apply for yourself or for a dependent who's going to be attending a post-secondary institution, either college or university this fall.

Now that deadline is coming up pretty quickly, so if you do want to apply for it, you only have until the end of this month on May 31st to get those applications in and we decide on the winners in August and those people who win will be notified.

I also want to draw your attention to the Indigenous Scholarship. This is a new one that we just started last year, and it is for members who can prove that they are indigenous, Inuit or have their Metis status in order to apply. And again, you can apply for yourself or for your dependent and your dependent does not need proof of status, just the member themselves. There are also other labor groups that we're affiliated with who do give away scholarships to members who are not part of our Education Trust fund, and you can find those links on our website as well.

You can go to... ufcw832.com/scholarships and you can find out everything you need to know. Reminder the deadline is May 31st.

While you're there and you're clicking around on our website, you might want to check out the Training Center website because we've updated it this year to make it a little easier to navigate, and we are hoping that you like that new format and that it makes all of our training opportunities available to you in a much easier way for you to figure it out.

High School grad is coming up not just for high schools around the province, but also for us at the Training Center. It is our favorite day of the year when we have our Winnipeg High School grad, and this year it is on June 27th at 6:00 PM and it's going to be held at the Fairmont, which of course is our UFCW workers who are going to be helping us put on that grad.

In Winnipeg, we run an adult high school program right out of the training center, and that is free for members and almost anybody who wants to come down. Or if you know someone who's looking to update some courses, maybe they want to finish high school, they can call the training center about the fall session because of course, we're just wrapping up the school year now. If you want to call to know more about our high school program in Winnipeg, you can call (204) 775-8329, and there's no charge for our members to come to that school.

If you live outside of Winnipeg, we still can help you with high school. We only run the program in our Winnipeg office, but we can help you

find something near your community and we are happy to reimburse you for your tuition fees. And in that case, if you're outside of Winnipeg and interested in getting your adult high school, then you can call that same number, (204) 775-8329.

We have moved to online registration for our activist courses. Our activists are folks who've signed up to be shop stewards or health and safety committee members. This past semester we started just with our new stewards and had them register for their courses online. And this fall, all of our shop stewards are going to be registering online. It's our goal to have all of our activists, our health and safety committee members and all our shop stewards registering for their courses online by 2024, and at some point we'd like to see all the classes that we offer being registered the same way. We do offer some ones for general members as well.

Now to be clear, the classes are still going to be in person. It's just going to give our members more control over which class that they want to take because they'll be able to sign up for them themselves.

That takes us to some of our other very exciting news. We have a contest because one of the things you'll have to do in order to sign on for classes and register yourself is to create a learner account. In order to register for those, health and safety members, our shop stewards are going to have to set up that learner account. If you're an activist, you should check your email because we sent you some instructions on how to do that earlier today. And to try to encourage you to sign up for your learner account, every activist, every shop steward or health and safety committee member who registers and makes their learner account by June 30th will be entered in a draw for a \$75 gift card. We've got five that we're giving away, and if you've already signed up, because I know some of our folks have, don't worry, you're going to be automatically entered into the contest.

If you don't have a learner account and you're not sure what to do, that's going to be all in that email. You can follow the video and remember, do that before June 30th.

8. Open Questions

Throughout the meeting there was 7 questions asked and answered. All questions asked and responses provided are recorded and kept on file.

m/s/c to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Recorded by Lauren Henkel

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A full transcription and a list of members taking part in the telephone town hall are kept on file in a binder and stored with these minutes.