

PIF6767- UFCW 832 Access Live Full Event Transcription
February 6, 2024

Jeff Traeger:

Good evening, everyone. My name is Jeff Traeger and I am the president of your Union, UFCW Local 832. I want to welcome you all to the February 2024 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 and work each day on ancestral lands. The traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Métis Nation.

Our offices are located on Treaty 1 and 2 territory, and our work extends into Treaties 3, 4, and 5. 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.

Now, before we get rolling tonight, I want to say a big thank you to all of the Local 832 members in Manitoba for the important work they do 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.

Tonight is our 2024 winter meeting, and we have a very special guest to hear from this evening who's going to speak to us about the rampant theft in Manitoba grocery stores and the violent incidents that are related to that, and what we as union activists can do to keep our members safe.

So with me in the studio tonight for tonight's meeting are my executive advisor, Ron Allard, our director of IT and facilities, and our office manager Max Paches, our special guest, Jack Slessor, who is a former workplace safety and health officer and an expert in the field of safety in the workplace. And our communications coordinator, Chris Noto, who is at the controls for tonight's meeting. Our Secretary-Treasurer, Marie Buchanan and her bargaining committee for No-Frills in Manitoba recently achieved a tentative agreement with the employer.

So Marie cannot be with us here tonight as she is in the process of ratifying the agreement with in-person meetings at the No-Frills stores. And speaking of No-Frills, late last fall, one of our members at the Notre Dame store was stabbed by a shoplifter and suffered serious injuries as a result.

Unfortunately, this is only one of many recent examples of our members who work at grocery stores are facing on a daily basis.

This is one of the reasons why we're going to focus on this issue for tonight's meeting. And Ron Allard will be interviewing Jack, who is also providing training to our reps and stewards who work in retail grocery. As we normally do, we'll take breaks in between our conversation to answer any questions you may have for tonight's guest or about anything relevant to all USCW 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 USCW Bulletin board in your workplace or online at uscw832.com.

So let's get started. First order of business required by our bylaws is that we vote to approve the three reports at this meeting. And they are the minutes of the previous full membership meeting, which was held on November 14th, 2023, 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 for you to ask any questions you may have.

All three of these documents have previously been posted on our website at uscw832.com for you to review. And they will stay posted there in our archives so you can see all of the documents from all of our telephone town hall general membership meetings at any time you like. Just a reminder, if any of you would like to ask a question, please press the star key followed by the number three, and you'll be placed in a queue to ask your question.

I would once again ask that you please remember that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss issues or ask questions about matters that affect all Local 832 members, and that if you have a question specific to your workplace or a grievance, that you contact your full-time union rep. So we now will need a motion to approve the minutes of our last meeting, which took place at 7:00 P.M. on November the 14th, 2023.

Ron Allard:

Motion.

Speaker 3:

Second.

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 a 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 now I will turn the meeting over to Ron Allard to introduce tonight's guest and get the interview started. Ron.

Ron Allard:

Good evening, everyone. So as Jeff has stated, we have Jack Slessor with us tonight, who is a certified safety health consultant with over 16 years of experience as a workplace safety and health professional. Jack began his career in 2007 as a workplace safety and health officer with the Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Branch. As the committee specialist, he provided training and guidance to workplace safety and health committees in all industries in Manitoba. Shared best practices and provided on-site support to them in their efforts to make their workplace a safer place for everyone.

In 2014, he joined several of his WSH colleagues who were asked to move over and partner with the WCB Safe Work Services staff to create the new prevention-focused SAFE Work Manitoba. Jack continued to provide wide-ranging training and consultation support, such as guidance to workplace committees about their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation.

These presentations include SAFE committee basics, hazard identification and risk control, supervisors and SAFE work, harassment and violence prevention, and investigating workplace incidents, workshops, as well as special presentations customized for the needs of conferences, organizations and workplaces.

Jack retired from Safe Work Manitoba in September 2022, but continues to bring his passion for people and their safety to every presentation he provides as an independent trainer and consultant. Jack, while your short bio that I read list your experiences with workplace safety and health in many sectors, including retail, I understand that you also worked in various retail roles in your varied career. Can you share a little bit more of your retail experience with our members?

Jack Slessor:

I sure can, Ron. I actually spent several years in various retail positions before I joined the government in 2000 with retailers both big and small. In the '70s, if you remember the fallback in the '70s, I had Wilco, if anybody still remembers that on Regent Avenue. That was when I was in high school. It was menswear, and as they say, Ron, if the walls could talk, better they can't.

In the '80s, I went to really my retail experience shrunk down to a family-owned business that many people probably still remember. Winnipeg Fur Exchange, where a little guy here from Transcona learned all about raw furs, dress furs, traps, you name it. And then the '90s I dove into the big picture, the big show, marketing director of Garden City Shopping Center. So many of my fellow West Kildonaners will remember all the fun stuff we did.

Many Shrine Circus and hamster races, included the Fabulous '50s Ford Car Show Flashback Weekend. It's still going today after 30 years. Hosting the world's strongest man Magnus Ver Magnusson to pull a semi in our lot. I even brought in James Bond, 007 himself. Yeah, Roger Moore was part of the UNICEF's 50th anniversary in 1996. So yes, I think it's fair to say that my retail experience has been quite varied. Yes.

Ron Allard:

Wow, that's quite a varied background in retail for sure. Can you tell our members a little bit more about the upcoming training for our store activists and what exactly will the training include and how was it developed?

Jack Slessor:

Absolutely, Ron. The training sessions I'll be delivering to the activists is very similar to the two days of training that I provided to the area representatives. The first day actually will be called the Roles and Responsibilities for Workplace Safety Health Committees and Supervisors in retail. And the second one will be Effective Incident Investigations in retail as well.

So you may recall around during our meetings with both yourself and Marie, it was agreed that the training would be built around reinforcing UFCW-832 central message to its members, which is don't put yourself in harm's way. Perform your duties to the best of your abilities to deliver service for customers, but do it in a way that helps ensure you stay safe and go home at the end of the shift in one piece.

So feedback from the area representatives training, what was then used to customize the two days of training that I'll be providing to the store activists. The information will be shared through the lens of workplace safety and health legislation, and reinforce that the principle of the law sits at the top of the tools which are in place to help ensure employers provide a safe workplace for everyone. And in the case of retail, that includes both staff and customers.

So the collective bargaining agreements reinforce these responsibilities both for those of the employer and the workers. And then finally at the bottom of that, we have the employers policies and procedures which not only must be compliant with the collective bargaining agreements, but also with the workplace safety and health legislation.

So in more detail, day one will include the Roles and Responsibilities of Workplace Safety and Health Committees. So it's to help the activists that are involved, and even if they're not directly on the committee, it's important for people that are supporting them, even for staff, all staff should have a clear understanding of what exactly those people do on their behalf.

One of the biggest ones for me is Hazard Identification and Risk Control because it's one of the foundation pieces of, for me, both committee members, shop stewards, activists and supervisors that are supposed to be helping to ensure that the members are safe. Supervisor duties are key in that as well. And I like to remind people that when I do this, and I just finished two days as a matter of fact over MFL again as they do every year, and same thing, it was investigations and the first question the members had was well, we're not supervised. Why would we want to learn about that?

My response is the only way that you're going to be able to ensure that the people that are representing the employers are toeing the line in terms of what they're supposed to be doing and not supposed to be doing according to the law and collective bargaining agreement is to know what that is. So that's a huge piece for me. And what I do is I ask them at the beginning, tell me at the end of day two if you think that this was relevant.

And Friday afternoon, that's the message I got back. Okay, we get it now. Absolutely. So that's a big part of it. We touch on workers at higher risk. Again, I think it's important for the activists to know and to recognize that if they themselves are not a member of one of those four categories, they should have an understanding of what that means and how they can help keep them safer.

And the second day is a deep dive into effective incident investigations. We have a case study. I put them through the seven steps. I go through in detail about exactly what does the legislation say it is. And we'll also of course be touching on harassment part 10 and violence part 11. In terms of investigations and violence in particular, it's important for people to know exactly what type of violent incidents need to be called into workplace safety health.

What type can the employer's, quote, "supervisors" investigate on their own, under part 11. And which ones have now been escalated to 2.91 and 2, in which case the supervisor cannot investigate those on their own. They have to get the committee member, the activists involved. So that's kind of the detail that I would be focusing on.

Jeff Traeger:

All right, we're just going to take a quick break before we move to the second part of our interview with Jack Slessor. As I see that the motion to approve the previous minutes has passed and that we also have a few questions on the line. So we're going to go out to Brandon, where we have Parav Kumar on the line. Go ahead, Parav Kumar.

Purav Kumar:

Hi, my name is Purav.

Jeff Traeger:

Yeah. Okay.

Purav Kumar:

And I have three questions. First is we work in a mainline AM shift in general-2, and we are ready for work for semi-1. And the [inaudible 00:13:50] people, the PM shift. And she put the people ask for semi-1 for overtime, but we are ready for the semi-1 work. First she asked us like you are ready for semi 1 work or not. Then after she asked for overtime, but she direct put the overtime people and take the PM shift the semi-1 people.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay, well you know something, Purav, that is a question that's very specific to the overtime on the mainline shift out in Brandon. So we're going to take your information down. We have your name, we have your phone number, and I'm going to get your union rep, Dustin, to give you a call back on that very soon. We're going to move on to our next caller now, and that is Rahim from Life's Journey. Go ahead, Rahim. Do you have a question, Rahim? All right, we're going to try one more caller. We've got Luilin from HyLife Foods in Neepawa. Go ahead, Luilin.

Luilin:

Hello?

Jeff Traeger:

Hello there. Do you have a question?

Luilin:

Yeah. Hi. Yeah, I just have a question regarding cross-training that is going around in HyLife for I think for the longest time. I know even before I joined. But when I somehow asked my union representative about the changes that is happening in the cross-training now, he said that it's not specified in the collective bargaining agreement. So it's about for the cross-training, they circulate, for example, a certain bracket is available for you to cross-train.

And the cross-training for you to get the job, you should be one of the seniors. So meaning for example, you got the job and you are allowed to train for two to three weeks for you to get the job. And you can create, if you feel that you cannot, you're having hard time like that, or if you reach the two weeks or three weeks training, then you will be assessed.

But nowadays what's going on now is since we are short of people, you will be called for your cross-training and then not even for first two hours, you will be pulled out and transferred to totally different job category. Meaning for example, I signed up and got qualified for Wizard and then they will transfer me to, for example, other department. Or some other guys also they trained for deboning. And then after that they will be transferred to shipping, which is totally different from what they've signed.

And somehow it opens up to injury because for example, you are doing Wizard like that and then you will be transferred to a different job. And also for the equipment, I'm wearing mesh gloves and all for the Wizard and then they will transfer me. So I need to again remove everything because the equipment or the safety clothing that I'm wearing is not fit to the place that they're transferring me.

And that's the reason why others just quit. Because imagine for the deboners, like it's already hard for the risk, and they really want to pass the trainings because it's bracket 6, but then they'll be transferred to shipping, which will ask them to file certain numbers of boxes weighing 20 to 40 kilograms. So that is what I asked with my union representative, but it's not specified in the cross-training.

Jeff Traeger:

So one of the things, Luilin, that we will need to do, because you know that you have negotiations that are coming up right away. Your contract expires at the end of January, and I know that we're going to be trying to start bargaining early. But this is a perfect example of something that we should get to our negotiating committee through our chief steward or through our union rep to make sure that we put provisions in the contract that protect against being moved when you're cross-training. But I'm going to let Ron make a few comments on this one as well because Ron oversees our servicing department.

Ron Allard:

Hi Luilin.

Luilin:

All right. Okay.

Ron Allard:

So we heard your concerns and what we'll do is we'll have Tyler Ledoux who is currently the temporary rep in the absence of John Anderson, follow up for yourself and just go through the details with you, and follow up with your concerns and see what we can do.

Jeff Traeger:

And definitely when bargaining starts, I know Marie Buchanan, our secretary-treasurer, is going to be negotiating the contract with HyLife when bargaining starts. Make sure that you get involved in that process and make sure you bring that concern forward, because if the problem here is that the collective agreement doesn't support what you need, then we need to look at making a change to the agreement. And we're going to move on now. But before getting back to our interview, I'll need a motion to approve the secretary-treasurer's report.

Ron Allard:

Motion.

Speaker 3:

Second.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay, 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 take your question. All right, so back to you, Ron.

Ron Allard:

All right, so what you outlined earlier certainly sounds like a solid plan. How will the members actually be able to take the information you share and apply it to help raise the workplace safety and health culture in our stores for everyone?

Jack Slessor:

Well Ron, the short answer to that is they do it in bite-sized pieces and not by trying to make huge changes overnight. Members who will be attending my training sessions should know up front that while a lot of new information will be shared, there are no expectations that they will leave at the end of the second day as quote, "workplace safety and health experts." That just makes people nervous.

No expectation they will return to their store and immediately correct any gaps in their workplace safety health program. In order to ensure that participants don't begin to feel overwhelmed, as I review the training agenda on day one, I will quickly make it clear that the information is being provided to give them context or background to help them perform the very few tasks.

So what we've done is we've tried to distill down to very few tasks so that the activists that are on site in the stores, they'll be asked to take on, will be those that can help raise the safety culture. So we'll identify a handful of steps that we'll ask you as activists to take whenever they are needed in order to reach out to your area representatives for assistance to help ensure that the things that must be done according to the legislation to keep the store are indeed happening.

And that's why we talk about things like what are the different types of hazard categories? That's why the people, the activists need to know that. How do you do a risk assessment? You're going to walk

away from that knowing how to do a risk assessment. Most importantly for me is knowing what incidents need to be investigated, who should be investigating those, and when must workplace safety notes be notified and how?

So the law is very specific to that. And people the first time around, they kind of go, really? I go, absolutely. 2.6, 2.7. It's literally in the law. It says immediately by the fastest means possible. So when activists and people in the stores are talking about, for instance, the violent incidents that are happening, that are not getting investigated, to me that's a huge gap. Because you can't fix what you don't know is broken. And the first thing you have to do is be able to identify, well, let's get the word out.

And to me that word has to come from the stores by the activists. They have to get the word to the area representatives so that they can follow up on that. So that's why the training is going to be designed to give them the tools to do that so that they can help the area representatives, help them to help their fellow members. And these are just a few of the important questions that the actuals will leave knowing by the end of day two, Ron.

Jeff Traeger:

I give you more of a heads-up on that. All right, we're going to take one more short break because we do have three questions in the queue. And I also see that the vote to approve the secretary-treasurer's report has been passed. So it's time to make a motion to approve the president's report, which is the final document we have to approve at tonight's meeting.

Ron Allard:

Moved.

Jeff Traeger:

I thought you were going to say third there for a second. 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 the star key followed by the number three and we will gladly take your question. Speaking of that, we're now going to open up the phone lines to take a few more questions. And we're going to start with Janine from Maple Leaf on in Lagimodiere. Go ahead, Janine.

Janine:

Hello?

Jeff Traeger:

Hello, how are you?

Janine:

I'm doing great, and you?

Jeff Traeger:

I'm good, thank you. Do you have a question for us?

Janine:

It's not really a question, but it's a request I want to ask. I really appreciate to be part of this meeting.

Jeff Traeger:

Thank you.

Janine:

And I have a request. I need to go to work right now. I'm doing night shift. So I wanted to ask if I can go and if I can get a update about the meeting because I really want to be part of it and it's really important for us, for me, to know all the requirements and everything that we need to know about safety. But my time is not really giving me the way to have this part. That's why I wanted to ask if I can have an update about it so that I can know what to do. And if I have a question, I can ask those who are available for me to know about. So this is my request.

Jeff Traeger:

Yeah. Well first of all, thank you for those kind words about appreciating the work that your union does for you. And second of all, as far as updating you on the meeting, I believe on the website we have the actual full details of all of our town hall meetings including this one, and you can check those out. I understand because I worked a long time on night shift myself when I was in the workplace. And so I understand that sometimes these meetings aren't that convenient for people who are working off shifts.

So you can always do that. And if you want to get more involved in your union, then I would suggest you speak to your union representative, who is Sharon Foster, and she will be able to assist you. She's on a leave right now and hopefully returning to work soon. In the meantime, you could contact Malcolm Welsh who is her replacement.

But if you're interested in getting involved, we're always looking for shop stewards at Maple Leaf, especially on the night crew where we quite often have a hard time filling or keeping steward positions, as those people quite often, once they get some seniority, bid onto the afternoon or the day shift. So thank you for that call and we're going to have to move on to the next one. I've got Gerald from Red River Co-op in St. Norbert. Go ahead, Gerald.

Gerald:

Hi, how are you guys doing?

Jeff Traeger:

Not too bad. How are you?

Gerald:

Wonderful, wonderful. So I'm a butcher at the St. Norbert Co-op in Winnipeg. Things have been going fantastic. I was a chef for three out of the 13 years that I was in the industry. It brought me to Co-op via the dry age system that we have going on. I take a lot of pride in what it is that I do. Essentially what I'm getting at is during my training with the modules, when it comes to sales and going above and beyond, I understand that everyone has a duty to their department.

But when there is time, for example, if a customer is wondering where something is and you have a moment to step outside and show them exactly where that product is, whatnot, such forth, is that a problem? And also I've been notified that I'm in charge of a, what I see here, is a 30% sales increase. Because I've actually started a system with our dry age, which basically we lose a lot of money with that.

So what I've been doing with our strip loin half sales is I've been taking customers and I've been getting them to purchase these strip loin halves and I share this with all the butchers in the meat departments on this phone call. And I encourage these customers to purchase that item and we hang them up and we try to get them to understand what the process is and try to gauge their palate.

Now what I'm getting at is during my free time when everything is done in full, no spots left open. I do take a moment to check on customers. I stop by different departments in terms of let's talk, check on everyone, keep the morale up. And I fear that that may have threatened my superiors in a sense where now I'm being harassed behind closed doors and I have a hard eye on me. And I just want to know if maybe I'm doing anything wrong or if I can do anything to fix such.

Jeff Traeger:

Well, it sounds to me like you're taking good care of the customers and trying to keep morale up in the workplace and that type of thing. There's always two sides to every story, Gerald. And I don't know if you feel as though management is coming down on you. I would suggest that you speak to your union representative, who's Kim Ferris. I don't know if you have or not, and let her know what your concerns are. But certainly anything that you said doesn't trigger me to think that you're doing anything wrong. But obviously if you feel, is it management that is harassing you?

Gerald:

So it's been kind of an ongoing thing for a few months. And I've had my produce manager, who's on management, which is obviously a different union, approach me, and he just said, "Hey Gerald, I just want you to keep your head on a swivel because so-and-so really got their eyes on you and they're sick and tired of you leaving the department and helping other customers. They just want you to be a meat cutter. They don't want you going above and beyond."

And so this has kind of been in multiple occasions where cashiers and bakery managers or other people from other departments have notified me. In terms of what you said, I'm kind of scared of taking the route of calling the union because I don't want to stir up no trouble. And I'm really good at my job and I love what I do. And I go to work every day, and I keep that smile on my face, and I try to motivate everyone to keep doing such and such forth. But I fear that a lot of people feel the same way. When you contact the union, it's just kind of like, you know?

Jeff Traeger:

Okay, well you can always contact the union and ask to keep those conversations, at least at the initial point, confidential if you're worried about the union speaking directly to management. But in my view, anybody that feels as though they're being mistreated or harassed has a right to be represented. And if you choose to represent yourself, you have that right too. But you have a right to be represented in the workplace.

And certainly I think you should at least let Kim Ferris know what is going on at work so that she's aware of it. And if you specifically ask her not to speak to management about it, that's fine. But you could find yourself in a different situation. So if you're all right with it, I will have Kim reach out to you. We have your name and number and she'll just reach out to you for a confidential conversation that doesn't go anywhere.

Unfortunately, a lot of people are of the opinion that contacting the union immediately means that you're going to have a target on your back. That only happens if we're dealing with bad management. And I don't know the management at the co-op store that you work at, but I do know that Kim is very

good at keeping confidence when a member expects her to do so. And so I will have her give you a call. But we do have to move on. I've got Akhan Yel at Garda Security on the line. Go ahead.

Akhan Yel:

Hey, good evening everybody over there. Greetings to all of you.

Jeff Traeger:

Thank you. How are you?

Akhan Yel:

Happy New Year's 2024. I'm blessed that we are part today because my job is really not allowed me to attend the conference all time. I miss a lot, especially 2023, 2022. I'm not attending a lot. And I think I have a question, but my question is going to union. I need [inaudible 00:33:06] representative union to call me and talk with me because I got a problem in 2023. And I feel that I've been left behind. The union, they not fight what happened to me. Because I lost one mom in 16 days. El turned me down and I suffered a lot. So I feel like I want to talk with union because I have idea that I have decline from union.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay.

Akhan Yel:

Another thing-

Janine:

Go ahead.

Akhan Yel:

Another thing I not get a contract. Because Stanley told me 2022, 2023, that will bring to me at workplace and I not see agreement contract, which they give to every member of union and I not receive it. So I need someone to call me and I want to talk in person.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay. Well listen, I am going to have a discussion with Sandy just to find out. We've got your name, we've got your phone number. Sandy will give you a call, and/or Ron, will give you a call within the next couple of days. And you can tell us all about what it is you need to talk to your union about. But I do thank you for calling in. I'm going to take one more caller before we get back to our interview. And that's Robin from Superstore 1509. Go ahead, Robin.

Robin:

Hi, how are you?

Jeff Traeger:

I'm well. And yourself?

Robin:

I'm fine. So it's been more than one year working with the Superstore and I just have a question as I'm working with the produce department. So some of the old employees working for many years, more than 10 years or five years. So they don't much do their work on the shift. They do only 20% and rest of the other has to do the other. Part-timers just like me. So we have to do more than 80%, and still they don't appreciate us and we don't have much shifts, even if we have the availability of seven days.

Jeff Traeger:

Robin, this time of year is always in retail grocery a time of year where people, the hours are generally cut and reduced after the Christmas break. And typically January, February and even a little bit into March, there are reduced hours. We have heard that and we are aware of it, but sales usually start to pick up in March as we approach Easter. And I was going to say as the snow starts to melt, but that's been happening for the last two weeks already.

Robin:

I'm talking about the whole year as I worked more than one year. I have given my availability seven days a week, but still I just get 15 hours, 20 hours. And on top of that, some of the workers who are not good at work, I do my best. I give my 100% every time. And some of the workers don't do work, they spend more time on the breaks and everything. And they are getting more hours than me.

And on top of that, as I mentioned before, that some of the old employees, they're doing only 20% where they have to do more than that. Because when we compare on the salary, so they are getting more than, some of them are \$25 plus an hour, some are more than close to the \$30 per hour. And we are getting the basic one, just we have some more. We just get some bonus from the [inaudible 00:37:09]. So that's good. But still we are not getting that much pay but the work we are doing. So they're getting more done, more work done by the part-timers.

Jeff Traeger:

I'm just going to let Ron Allard take your question. Robin, what we'll do is we'll get your-

Robin:

I'm observing like this for more than one year. So even the manager-

Jeff Traeger:

Yes, you mentioned that.

Robin:

... and the supervisor said they know this situation, but still they are not doing anything. And mostly it happens on the weekends because the weekends or the more busy in the store.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay, well let's give Ron a chance to answer your question. Go ahead Ron.

Ron Allard:

So Robin, what we're going to do is we're going to get your union rep out 1509 I do believe is Jason Navasami. So we'll get him to follow up with your concerns, review the schedules, and we can go from there. Until he gets that to investigate what hours are being worked and make sure it's being properly followed. Okay?

Jeff Traeger:

Now I want to be mindful of the time, so I'm going to take us back to the interview now and we will have time for more of your questions before the end of tonight's meeting. But for now, back to you, Ron.

Ron Allard:

Okay, thank you Jeff. You've given the members a sense of the type of information that will be included in the training sessions and how they were developed with the feedback of the union representatives. So now the question that most members who will be attending the training are wondering is how will you be able to keep them engaged for two full days? After all, Jack, I think you'll agree that when you hear the term workplace safety and health training, they don't exactly picture an exciting fun time.

Jack Slessor:

You're absolutely right. On that last statement, Ron. A simple answer to that lies in the words from my mentor, Richard Kennett. He shared with me and that it's the singer, not the song. So here's the deal, all right, first off, it's not all of the skills that I use as a facilitator over the years, whether it's my radio background, my theater, drama, and all that stuff. Really it's my passion for safety and health and for people.

And what I've found is generally speaking is I look at training and as people are going to quickly find out, I've come to learn that over the years doing this almost 17 years now, that generally speaking, I look at a group of, let's say, I don't know, 30 people in the class, Ron. They'll go 75% or what I call neutral. They're vacationers. They're people that come in, and if you do your job right, you're going to win them on side. Okay?

You get about 15, 20% that are keeners. Man, they're running the doors, they're singing the song, they want a safe workplace. Those are the easy ones. Then you get the prisoners, I call them. One or two. And they're there kicking and screaming and they've been volatile and they don't want to be there. I can even picture some of the ones over the years. So I got to be honest, they're kind of my favorites because they make me up my game. They set the bar up there and it's like they throw down the glove and they say, I dare you, I dare you to turn me around. So I love it.

I don't want to give away, the risk of giving away too much, but my days include a lot of fun stuff. But I always say to people, people come into the class and you're right, they think that I'm going to do my impersonation of a Winnipeg Jets bobblehead doll and stand at the front and talk for two days. And that's not me. As a matter of fact, I don't do a lot of talking. A lot of it comes from the members.

All right, I just help facilitate and I set up strategies. And they're all designed people have fun. But the fun isn't there for the fun's sake. The fun is there to get them up physically to move, but it also builds community. It builds a safe place. Out of that, people talk, they share stories. And I always say that I actually wind up learning as much if not more from the members in a classroom than they do because they learn from each other.

And I've watched it work again, I had three different classes I taught last week and all of them was the same similar chemistry that happened. So that's part of it. People say, what is this karaoke rule? Or you give away a new car, what is all this stuff? Again, it's not shtick for shtick's sake. I've also had people that

when I can have people come to the forefront and they share their stories, Ron. Like you know that Jeff, you and I were talking about some of the real life instances that we've all seen and been a part of or heard about.

And I give people the opportunity to share those. I'm a pretty good story so I can retell a good story that'll make people cry. But nothing is as powerful as having somebody that's actually experienced it. And when I give them the opportunity, it makes it real. So that's the long answer instead of the short answer to what can they expect. They're going to walk away with a lot of knowledge, but it's going to come from their participation as well.

Jeff Traeger:

Question for you, Jack, if I may. We've got a lot of retail members on the line who have grown tired of seeing the theft in the stores, and customers coming in, pulling knives and in some cases guns, and in some cases just generally being violent. If you had one important message for those folks who are getting frustrated, seeing all this happening in the stores, and want to do something about it.

A lot of them are very dedicated to the stores where they work and they want to do something about it. And in some cases they get in trouble because they do something about it and what they do isn't right. Grabbing the shoplifter or tackling them or doing something like that. What message would you have for those folks?

Jack Slessor:

Well, first off, don't put your life on the line for a bag of oranges would be number one. And I'm a baby boomer. I come from the world where we would've clotheslined somebody trying to run out of the store just as a stand-by. Never mind a staff member. So I get it. It would be very frustrating. If I put myself in my previous retail experience, I can't imagine how frustrated I would be right now for that.

But the stakes are higher now as well. We talked about that. Unfortunately what's going on is in society is these people aren't there taking an orange there. A lot of people we know are, they're under the influence. And the flip side of that, if I knew I couldn't act on that, Jeff, then what could I do? Well, I guess I would look inward to see, to talk to my shop steward or my committee members say, so what can I do?

All right, well I understand how the process works as a first start because if we can keep the employer accountable... Because the biggest problem with violent incidents in all workplaces, and I've done a lot of training in schools, people don't understand. They don't know what's happening because it's not reported.

So that's a step one. You have to let the shop stewards, the people know, the area representatives know, so the executive can know, so that they can bring it forward to the employer and say, this isn't a one-off. This is chronic, this is happening. And then you can control it by forcing them under the law to investigate properly, to come up with control measures. Then you can hold them accountable. So my message would be, you know what? Help get the awareness out there please. Without putting yourself in harm's way.

Jeff Traeger:

Yeah, one of the things you said there kind of resonated with me and that's that it just feels like the moral fabric of our society is unraveling somehow. A quick story, when I was a kid, stole a double bubble gum from the store, got caught, was worth 2 cents at the time, got dragged home by the ear, by a person who knew my mom. And when my dad got home I got spanked. And that was the last time I stole

anything. And it just seems like people in society now seem to think this is okay to do this. Right? And then it grows into, well this is also okay to bring a knife into the store. It's also okay to be violent.

And it feels to me a little bit like we're heading down a really bad path here, but I do think that our role as a union is to try to do everything we can to keep those workers safe in the workplace. And I do appreciate that the work that you've done with our reps, and the work that you're going to be doing with our stewards, and the health and safety committee members. And I certainly hope that we can put a small dent if anything. Because in my view, if we can prevent one injury or save one life, then we've done the best thing we can do for a union member. Right? Ron, did you have any more questions that you wanted to ask?

Ron Allard:

I can just ask one more before we wrap up. You talked about the roles and responsibilities of supervisors that are also included in the training sessions. Can you explain why it's so important for activists to know these?

Jack Slessor:

Sure, Ron. Part of it is number one, do you want to make sure that none of your members out there who are technically not supervised because they haven't been trained are offloaded responsibilities? Because that often happens in workplaces. It's a matter of, okay, you know what, Max, you're on. Boom, I'm going to leave you. And what happened is the employer will offload responsibility for certain duties that make you a supervisor.

Because the definition of a supervisor is somebody who's charged of the workplace or authority of a worker. So suddenly those are offloaded. If I offload those to you, Ron, but I don't train you. Well, I haven't really offloaded the liabilities, but that doesn't make it any more real for you. So I want to make sure, first off, people understand that this is what a supervisor does. And then here's the difference between a competent supervisor, according to the law, and one that's not.

So they can task the employer at their store and say, wait a second, all right, you have the right to manage the store. But the law is pretty clear that part of the responsibilities of the deli manager goes beyond knowing how to use and change and train staff. They also have to be aware of the legislation for which their workers are affected by the law. In the legislation workplace, it says that.

So that's part of the education. So for me, that's part of what I want to make sure the activists understand. So they're not just saying, well, you can't have that because that's your cousin or that's your son-in-law. That's got nothing to do with it. Are they getting the training under the law that they deserve? So this is part of that supervisor element that I'll be focusing on.

Jeff Traeger:

Any other final thoughts that you would have for, we're just running up against the clock a little bit here, so do you have anything else that you'd like to share before we move on to our last questions?

Jack Slessor:

Just that I hope that by the end of the two days, Jeff, that people walk away and just as we talked earlier about first-aiders. A first-aider would never be able to walk by somebody and not help them quote "Off the clock." I want to be able to impart on them the importance of when they see something and they're not sure if something's wrong, that they understand, got a gut feeling, I want them be able to immediately go, that's one of the five different hazard categories.

Because the minute they can do that, I guarantee you they're halfway to doing a risk assessment. They'll be able to do a huge amount of good for themselves and everybody else at the store. So that's some of the knowledge I hope that they're going to take away.

Jeff Traeger:

You want to make sure that safety is not a job, not even part of a job. It's a commitment.

Jack Slessor:

And anybody who thinks otherwise is not just become a safety geek, Jeff. I've had people that are on the committees with five years later, they see me at a lineup at a grocery store. They come up and they talk to me and they tell me, "Hey, not only did I walk away with that corny joke of yours, you won't get lesser with Slessor unless you drop the S, but I also, I tie my ladder off now at home because I've heard stories and people got hurt." So yeah, I had that in an elevator too, went, "Oh really? Well, glad you took some way." But yeah, it's making, it's not just part of the job. I want them to take it, make it part of who they are.

Jeff Traeger:

Excellent. Well, a huge thank you to both of you for getting this critically important issue the attention it deserves tonight. And thank you for being here tonight, Jack, and for sharing some of your expertise with the listeners that were on the line.

Jack Slessor:

Thank you for the opportunity as well and for tonight and for the opportunity to collaborate with your members. I'm looking forward to it.

Jeff Traeger:

So are we. We really are. We have just enough time to answer a few more questions. I see we've got a few callers in the line, so we're going to go, we have an inbound unidentified caller at a 951 area code. Go ahead. We're going to move on to David Morrison from Maple Leaf, Lagimodiere. Go ahead, David.

David:

Thank you for taking my call. My question is Maple Leaf Food in the pre-cooked bacon side has increased productivity by at least 50%. And I believe that is an unrealistic goal that they're putting so much pressure on the staff and there's more near misses. And we had a staff meeting a few weeks ago, I believe it was two weeks ago, stating that. And I asked the same question. That the injuries or near misses wind up in coordination with the increase in production.

And I would like to know what would the union do to protect us? So we're not forced to, we work really hard and you can see it. Morale is down, everything is down, but production. And they said, well, we have increased production in the last two years, but that is true. But they increased the production on the line by at least, by my calculation, by 50%.

And I think it's putting a lot of people at risk for this. And some days, like I, for myself don't even, because I work in not sanitation, but I work housekeeping and condensation. I don't even have time to take a break because we're so rushed and they-

Jeff Traeger:

Wait a second. Wait a second, David. You have to take your breaks. You have a negotiated right to take your break. The employer cannot prevent you from taking your break. And if they do-

David:

Well, they don't prevent-

Jeff Traeger:

... you need to file a grievance. Do you have the right under the contract? I negotiated that contract and I'm telling you, you have the right to take a break. If you don't take a break, then that's very bad. And what you're doing is setting a precedent that the company will take advantage of. What you need to do is you need to insist that you get the breaks under the collective agreement.

And if any supervisor or member of management tells you you can't, you speak to your union immediately, and we will file a grievance and we will get you paid for that break, and we will make sure that you get all those breaks. But I also want to say that when it comes to the near misses and the injuries, and I might get jacked away in on this too, have you reported this to your health and safety committee?

David:

Well, they know about it because we had meetings, like I said.

Jeff Traeger:

No, but have you reported it though? When there's a near miss that you've been witnessing?

David:

Well, I didn't witness any near misses myself. I just hear by hearsay. But I believe that.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay, I've got to tell you, if the increase in productivity, and I know that they have increased their productivity because they're in business to sell bacon, and the precooked bacon sells very good for them, and they have lots of orders and I understand that. But that cannot be ever, ever at the expense of doing it in a safe fashion that does not cause our members to do things like one, be injured, or two, almost be injured, or three, have to miss breaks. Any of those things are problematic. But Jack, did you have anything that you would say on this one?

Jack Slessor:

Well, David, in terms of the near misses, what I could remind people is there was a huge study years ago, it's called the Heinrich Birch study that calculated, North America wide, that for every 600 near misses, it was up and right at the top, it will either always result in either a fatality or a major incident. So the numbers are there, which speaks to Jeff's question about why it's so important to make sure that every near miss is reported. Because it has to be taken into consideration. There has to be an investigation depending on what the potential outcome was. And if it could have resulted in a serious incident, then the law says it has to be investigated by the co-chairs or their designates.

Jeff Traeger:

Never assume that your health and safety committee knows about it, David, make that call. Speak to the health and safety captain on your line. Speak to the co-chair of your committee, or talk to your shop steward or your union rep. But make sure that that near miss gets recorded. Because what the union can do is the union can hold the company to the test of making sure that they're providing a safe workplace, but we need to know about it. And it starts with your workplace health and safety committee is where that begins. And if it has to, it gets right up to the grievance process. Okay?

David:

Okay.

Jeff Traeger:

Excellent.

David:

Thank you.

Jeff Traeger:

Thank you, David.

David:

You're welcome.

Jeff Traeger:

We got one more call, and that's Yitzhak from Life's Journey. Go ahead, Yitzhak.

Yitzhak:

Hello everyone. My question is pretty quick and simple. Just wanted to know if there's any workshops that are available for workplace health and safety, just so that we can get more familiarized with it. That's pretty much my-

Jeff Traeger:

100%. Our training center has courses for the ABCs in health and safety and actually a total of six courses. And we're certified to teach those courses. So all you need to do is reach out to your union rep and let them know. Are you on the safety committee in your workplace?

Yitzhak:

No, I'm not.

Jeff Traeger:

Well that would be a good start. Why don't you start by joining the safety committee and we could put you through a whole bunch of training that will help you recognize hazards and understand how committees operate and just generally have a better knowledge of health and safety. Not sure who your rep would be, whether it's Life's Journey.

Yitzhak:

It would be Hillary.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay, Hillary. Yeah, just speak to Hillary about this and she can get you set up now with the ability to take some training. Okay?

Yitzhak:

Perfect. Thank you so much.

Jeff Traeger:

All right, thank you, Yitzhak. Thank you very much. So just a reminder, if you're one of two people that are waiting for your question to be answered, we will have your full-time union representative contact you soon to answer your question. We're going to take down your names and numbers, but we have to finish up here. We're under the clock. So I want to thank all of you for joining us on our February telephone town hall GMM. We will be conducting our next general membership meeting on Tuesday, May the 21st, 2024, by telephone town hall beginning at 7:00 PM. In the meantime, have a great Manitoba spring. Stay safe and well everyone, and thank you for everything you do. We are now adjourned.