

UFCW 832 Access Live
May 27th, 2025

Jeff Traeger:

Good evening, everyone. My name is Jeff Traeger and I'm the president of your Union, USCW Local 832. I want to welcome you all to the May 2025 telephone Town Hall general membership meeting for members of USCW Local 832, which is now called to order. As long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the river flows, USCW Local 832 acknowledges that we are gathered and work each day on ancestral lands, the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, and Nehiyawak Nations and on the homeland of the Red River Métis. We further acknowledge Northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. Our offices are located in Manitoba on Treaty 1 and 2 Territories, 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.

First things first, I want to say thank you to all of our local 832 members for the important work you do each and every day to keep our communities safe, fed, entertained, transported, and cared for. You are the pillars of our province, and you should all know how important the work you do each and every day is to all Manitobans. Second, I want to remind everyone about our new meeting format for 2025. We're going to aim for 30-minute meetings instead of the usual hour-long meetings, we'll do our best to keep our information as brief as possible. And this means we might have fewer live questions, but even if we don't get to your call during the meeting, your name and number will be recorded and your union representative will get back to you as soon as possible, and anyone that stays on for a majority of the meeting will have their name entered into a draw for a pair of tickets to Rock of Ages at Rainbow Stage on July the 5th. If your name is drawn, you'll be contacted by your rep or the communication staff within a few days and we'll get you those tickets, which brings us to tonight's special guest.

Tonight, we are very fortunate to have our UFCW Canada National President Shawn Haggerty, join us. Shawn was officially elected to be the national president in February of 2024, and we will speak to him in a few moments to get an update from the national level of UFCW Canada. Also joining me for tonight's general membership meeting is Sandy Forcier, one of our union reps. He's here as a guest and to help us with moving the minutes and Chris Noto, one of our communications coordinators will be making sure the call runs smoothly, and he will be seconding the minutes.

Our cycle of large workplace unit bargaining is currently focused on three workplaces, HyLife in Neepawa, where Marie Buchan is heading up negotiations along with Ron Allard, my executive advisor. They're joined by Union Representative Tyler Ledoux, Chief Steward Tim Whitford, along with 11 more members from the plant who are on the bargaining committee. They're actually finished bargaining and as of 7:00 PM tonight, they will have finished their ratification meetings that were held over the past two days. Likely they're just starting to tally up the votes now, and we're hoping for good news for that group of members.

We've also started the process for the Maple Leaf plant here in Winnipeg on Lagimodiere where I'm leading the negotiations, and I'm joined by our union rep, Sharon Foster, our chief steward, Alex Chumak, along with nine more members from the plant. We've had one round of bargaining so far, just a couple of days, and we're back at the table for that group on June the 9th and hoping for a good outcome in the fall. That contract doesn't expire until December 31st.

Those two workplaces combined represent over 3,500 UFCW Local 832 members in the red meat territory, but we've also have large retail bargaining on the go at Red River Co-op. Marie is leading that committee as well, and she's joined by 10 more bargaining committee members that are a combination of union staff and members who work in the stores. Marie, myself and the rest of the union staff want to thank all the members who step up and agree to be on bargaining committees. With your input and

support, your union gets to fight harder and work better to bring you the best contracts we possibly can and the agreements that you deserve.

So, let's get down to business. During our meeting as is required by our bylaws, we'll be voting to pass three documents. The first is the minutes of the previous full membership meeting held on February the 18th, 2025, the secretary treasurer's report on the current finances and the president's report. These documents have been posted on our website at uscw832.com for you to review, and they will stay posted there in our archives so you can refer to them at any time you like. We'll vote to pass these reports in between interviews.

I'll be taking a break halfway through and at the end of the meeting to take questions. And if any of you would like to ask a question, all you need to do is press the star key followed by the number three on your keypad at any time, and you'll be placed in a queue to ask your question. Remember that if you have a question about a grievance or an issue that affects only you, I would ask that you contact your union representative directly. You can get their name through our website or from the UFCW bulletin board in your workplace. So, to get things started, we'll need to take a motion to approve the minutes of our last meeting, which took place at 7:00 PM on February the 18th, 2025.

Sandy Forcier:

So moved.

Chris Noto:

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 will be placed in the queue. So now is my chance to welcome our UFCW Canada National President Shawn Haggerty to our general membership meeting. Thank you so much for joining us tonight and welcome Shawn.

Shawn Haggerty:

Thank you, Jeff and thank you members for having me. It's a pleasure to be here with you despite not being there physically. I'm happy for the opportunity to join with you and the rest of the members at this general membership meeting. We know 832 members and the Winnipeg Labour Movement have such a strong tradition of labor history from the Winnipeg General strike to being on the front line of today's progressive politics, you have all garnered quite the reputation for being strong and tough and a little rough around the edges when need be. And I can tell you all of Canada needs a little Winnipeg in them these days.

Jeff Traeger:

Thank you for that, Shawn. And it's true. Winnipeggers didn't need to be told to put their elbows up. So, tell us a bit about yourself, Shawn. As union leaders and activists, we all have a unique journey to where we end up. So, what was your path to becoming our national president?

Shawn Haggerty:

You're right, Jeff. We all have our own history as to how we got involved in our union, and I'm sure each person on the call today can reflect on a moment when they found their calling to becoming an advocate for workers and making a positive impact in their community. I got my start like many of you passionate and determined to make a difference in the lives of their co-workers. As a young electrician, and it really hurts me to say the word young, as a young electrician working in the maintenance department at Robin Hood Multifoods in Port Colborne, Ontario, I learned the value of solidarity and engaged my passion for justice, equity, and fairness on the job. When managers tried to overlook the health and safety concerns of my co-workers or when contract negotiations came around and we were being nickled and dimed out of fair pay and reasonable compensation, I knew standing up and speaking out was the right thing to do.

My union siblings took notice of my, I guess my propensity to rub the boss the wrong way and thought it would be a good idea to nominate me to be president of our small Local 416B. And when I say small, 60 people. Little did I know the decision to run and become president of UFCW 416B would change the course of my life. 35 years later, a tad grayer, I would go on to serve my local, national, and international union in various capacities from union representative to secretary treasurer to president of the largest local union in the Province of Ontario, to my most recent roles as international secretary treasurer and your national president.

Jeff Traeger:

Wow. Thank you for sharing that about your beginnings as a local union president and also thank you for letting our listeners know that you started on the shop floor where many of them are today and where I started as well. Now as national president, what would you say is the biggest difference between being a local union leader and a national union leader?

Shawn Haggerty:

I would say I used to think Ontario was a large region, but add in a few time zones, multiple languages, and the winter across the prairies, you really get a dose of what it is to be a leader tasked with representing a diversity of interests. Coming from a local that is very diverse in our own right from various industries to various cultures and ethnicities across the membership, to a national leader where that diversity is amplified and where regional disparities are amplified and just the challenge surrounding maintaining a clear and consistent UFCW brand across various regions and industries is critical to building solidarity and cohesion has probably been the biggest challenge, yet the most rewarding opportunity to engage and build relationships with local union leaders, members, and activists across the board. It has been humbling and inspiring.

Jeff Traeger:

Wow. And just to follow up on that sentiment, I understand that one of the first things you did as national president was to tour UFCW locals in all the provinces, and you were here at 832. How was that experience, and what did you learn about the Canadian locals that you didn't already know?

Shawn Haggerty:

Well Jeff, from my experience on the shop floor and working in the trades, I'm very much a hands-on kind of guy. And if you want to learn something new, I want to be where it's all happening. And the best way to learn about work of our local unions across UFCW, I needed to meet the members where they

work at. And traveling from coast to coast, whether it was meeting members at conferences or in the workplace, it's critical for me to hear from them and what they want from our national president.

And what I learned is as dispersed as we are across the country, we all want the same thing. We value a healthy and safe work environment where we can bring our full self to work and be treated with decency and respect and compensated fairly for our commitment and where we have a voice to speak up and be heard when issues arise. We all want a better future for the next generation, and we want this country to live up to its promise to defend the rights of workers, to support the most vulnerable like our seniors and those in need of care. And as their national president I want to assure members across the country that I will use the resources of our union to advance these objectives and make good on these commitments.

Jeff Traeger:

Well, that's excellent. Thank you, Shawn. And just for a moment here, we have to take a quick pause from this interview, since I see that the vote to approve the minutes has passed, so I now need to take a vote on our secretary treasurer's report, which is on our website for anyone to review, and I'll need a motion to approve that report.

Sandy Forcier:

Moved.

Chris Noto:

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 will be placed in the queue. Seeing is how we do have a couple of people in the queue. I'm going to take question or two here before we get back to our interview. So, we're going to start with Jesse from Burntwood Legion in Thompson. Hey, Jesse. How are you tonight?

Jesse:

Hello there. How is everything over there?

Jeff Traeger:

It's pretty good. It's pretty good. Are those wildfires giving you guys headaches up in Thompson?

Jesse:

Well, yeah, there's quite a bit of fire there. Yeah. Fire up in [inaudible 00:13:57], believe they're [inaudible 00:13:57].

Jeff Traeger:

All right. Okay, so what's your question, Jesse?

Jesse:

I'm thinking about everybody else, but for me I'm on disability. And my disability payments, it's not enough to cover a dozen or anything else.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay. Well, listen. I tell you what we're going to do, Jesse-

Jesse:

I'm thinking about everybody else. We paying you these things to help with that, to get our future, our health and whatever [inaudible 00:14:36] anything, but I know I'm on the verge of losing my home and everything. That's [inaudible 00:14:43].

Jeff Traeger:

Well, that's terrible.

Jesse:

I just can't get it. I just can't get it [inaudible 00:14:44].

Jeff Traeger:

That's terrible to hear. That's terrible for us to hear, Jesse. I really hope that we can get back to you and help you out. I'm not sure for Burntwood Legion what the disability benefit plan looks like, but I know your union rep is Mike Howden, and we're going to make sure that Mike Howden reaches out to you over the next day or so after he's had a chance to look at the disability program and if required, we will certainly make that a proposal the next round of negotiations to increase the amount of that disability payment. We're going to move on now to a caller from Winnipeg. Go ahead on the line.

Speaker 7:

Hello, how are you?

Jeff Traeger:

Hello there. I'm not bad. How are you?

Speaker 7:

Could be doing significantly better. Could be doing significantly worse.

Jeff Traeger:

So so-so then.

Speaker 7:

[inaudible 00:15:41] question.

Jeff Traeger:

Got you. [inaudible 00:15:42], what's your question?

Speaker 7:

So yeah, it's kind of a general question, but it's one I've desired to ask for a while. This is my first time actually attending one of these live membership meetings. I intended to join the last, but I slept through.

Jeff Traeger:

Oh, congratulations and welcome.

Speaker 7:

Thank you. And I wanted to ask about what's the most direct route to kind of engage in the direct activism with the union?

Jeff Traeger:

Well, you reach out to your union rep, so I'm not sure which workplace you are working at, but-

Speaker 7:

I'm working at Superstore, Real Canadian Superstore, Loblaw.

Jeff Traeger:

Okay. All right. So, all of our big Superstores have shop stewards and bulletin boards where you can see the name and the phone number and the email address of your union representative. And the first step, if you have an experienced shop steward in the workplace, is to have a discussion with them. But the second is to talk to your union rep about becoming a shop steward or a health and safety activist or getting involved in the union in some other ways. We have some members who are neither stewards or health and safety activists, but they're facilitators at our training center. Or they help out by participating on behalf of the local at the Winnipeg Labour Council or in a few other matters.

So, what I would suggest you do is reach out to your union representative and ask them that question the exact same way that you asked me, how can I get more involved in my union? How can I get more active, and how can I potentially one day become an activist at local 832?

Sandy Forcier:

Thank you very much. Well answered.

Jeff Traeger:

All right, you are very welcome. So, with that I'm going to, yeah, no more calls on the line. So, Shawn, we're going to get back to our interview now, part two if you will. So, you were elected by USCW Canada's National Council at the tail end of 2023. I know earlier I'd said you got elected in 2024, but that's really when it became official at the executive board meetings. But how has the transition period gone for you since then? What unexpected challenges or opportunities have you dealt with?

Shawn Haggerty:

Well, I'm going to say a lot has happened since I took office of National President. For me personally, taking on the role has both been deeply rewarding and uniquely challenging at times and being a voice for 255,000 members across four time zones, 10 provinces in two territories can be challenging. But

having the opportunity to visit members and hear from them, their concerns, their breakthroughs, their setbacks and their victories, whether that be in Halifax, Vancouver or anywhere in between, just experiencing the diversity of our membership and the great country we get to call home has made it so much more rewarding.

More recently as a leader of the national union and part of the broader labor movement across Canada, we've had to weather the uncertainty created by the US administration. We've had to put aside many of our differences to put Canada first, to put Canadians first and present a Team Canada approach to deal with the many threats our workplaces and industries are facing. It has meant being strategic in our support and alliances, working across political divide to ensure the livelihood of our members is secured and the industries they work in can continue to prosper no matter what party you may endorse or what candidate you decide to vote for in the last election.

What I've been hearing from members from coast to coast has been less about political loyalty and more about national unity. When faced with threats to our existence as a country, our values, our treasured way of life that promotes the very best that democracy has to offer. Whether it be a place of strange refuge, freedom from conscience, or protection of our basic human rights, defending our country against these threats has really taken center stage. To this end, we've been working with leaders across all political stripes who want to see an end to the hostility promoted by billionaires seeking a huge payday.

Should our public institutions be put up for sale like Prime Minister Carney warned in the most recent trip to the Oval Office, the hospitals of our nation, our schools, our public pensions will never be on the auction block because Canada will never be for sale. Our friends across the border have been resolute and supportive in our call to action. When meeting with Minority House Leader Hakeem Jeffries, and I want to just add that meeting with Hakeem Jeffries was really to educate him on how the pork sector, how the beef sector, how the poultry sector work across the border like the auto sector and making sure they understand where Canada stands on these issues. And clear and consistent in their message, relationships between Canada and the United States have been the envy unto the world, not just because of our shared values that promote democracy to protect our freedoms, but the respect we hold for each other as friends and allies and has ensured shared prosperity across both sides of the 49th Parallel, a sense of peace and security.

It's been abruptly upended by greed and intimidation, but friends I'm pretty confident in saying as Canadians we don't start fights. We know how to end them if we have to.

Jeff Traeger:

Absolutely. And we know a thing or two about trouble here in Winnipeg as well. But considering these emerging threats then, what has been your focus as a national leader?

Shawn Haggerty:

Since the new tariffs and new tariffs seem to be daily, threats of annexation and becoming the 51st state has garnered headlines, national and local union leaders have tried to stay away from the soundbites. Instead focusing leveraging our strengths on what we can control, like promoting inter-provincial trade, making it easier for USWU made products to find their way on shelves across the country, promoting bi-Canadian initiatives or supporting USWU members as part of demonstrating national pride and supporting members whose industries may be feeling the pinch amidst all the uncertainty. That means lobbying for expanded EI, affordable housing, expanded pharma, dental and healthcare coverage, reduce day-to-day costs that can burden members at this time.

Over the past few months alone, our power as Canadians has been on full display. The call to support Canadian-made has been answered in resounding fashion. Our friends south of the border have been complaining recently about the absence of Canadian tourists and visitors who not only bring their customary charm and demeanor but their check books as well. And that means big bucks for the US businesses. But guess what? These dollars are now being spent at Canadian hotels where USCW members work. They're being spent at Canadian restaurants where USCW members serve and ordering off menus where food is sourced from USCW facilities.

As mentioned earlier, this circles back to our Team Canada approach, and this has been my focus in the short term. How can we best leverage the strengths of our members? How do we promote the best in what they do, and how can we best support them throughout this uncertainty? How can ensure our members have the skills and knowledge to excel in their workplace? How can we reimagine opportunities for further training and development? And for workers out there who are proving their worth through hard work and dedication to a Canadian company, this just happens to be benefiting from the boost in national pride, but they're still operating non-union. How can we welcome those workers into our union and demonstrate to them that being a proud Canadian can also mean being proudly union. These are just some of my main priorities for the weeks and months ahead.

Jeff Traeger:

Oh, absolutely, Shawn. Those are some important and critical areas to focus on in the future considering all the uncertainty that we seem to be living with every day. I did want to ask, I guess one more question because I was curious about your thoughts on the future of work and how we are preparing as a union for issues like automation and AI and what impacts those are going to have on the sectors where our members work.

Shawn Haggerty:

Jeff, we are seeing the ways employers are using automation and AI to try to displace workers, only to find out the machines are not capable of problem-solving, teamwork, or building a culture of excellence across the organization like only a human workforce can. Of course, many employers are more concerned with what the machines can't do than what they can do. Machines can't form a union, machines can't demand proper health and safety, and they will never ask for appropriate compensation. More than anything, this is a real value of robots in the workplace. Machines can be very effective when introduced to complement the work of our members and not as a tool to reduce the workforce. Having the appropriate checks and balances in place before going all in on automation and AI is critical. What we've experienced over the years since automation and AI has taken off are new opportunities to provide unionization to a growing number of gig workers.

These are workers who provide a human touch to applications like Uber and Lyft, but whose working conditions are ultimately controlled by an algorithm programmed using artificial intelligence. This program may encourage workers to make unsafe decisions. It may penalize workers for putting health and safety first and above all it sets workers' earnings based on a secretive model that only the machine knows how the decision was made.

We've been working across provincial jurisdictions to ensure workers have recourse when machines make errors and when these errors have real impact on the lives of workers. Such as when workers are unjustly deactivated from an app for putting their safety first or ensuring there's a minimal earnings floor for anyone working over these apps. So, a worker's time and commitment to their job is valued based on a legal standard, not what the algorithm determines.

So as optimistic as we are when it comes to the future of work, we're taking a close look at how these technologies can be introduced in a worker-friendly way and as a complement to what we do, not as a tool to replace, discipline, or undermine the important work done by our members day in, day out.

Jeff Traeger:

Oh, thank you, Shawn for sharing these important updates with us and for the opportunity for our members here in Manitoba to get to know you a little better. We look forward to seeing and hearing more from you in the months to come.

Shawn Haggerty:

Thank you, Jeff. And before I leave, I do want to congratulate you and all the officers and the staff and members of Local 832 for everything you do to forward the resolve and commitment of our union and continuing to be a source of strength and a shining example of excellence across our national union. It's because of your leadership and the solidarity of 832 members that our union continues to be a force for change in Manitoba and across the entire country. Thank you again. Solidarity, my friends.

Jeff Traeger:

Thank you so much for your time tonight Shawn and your thoughtful answers to my questions. I really can't say how much I appreciate you doing this. And I do look forward to our next visit.

All right, so we've got one more vote that we need to conduct tonight. I see that the vote to approve the secretary treasurer's report has been passed and that it's time to make a motion to approve the president's report, which is the final one we will do at tonight's meeting.

Sandy Forcier:

So, moved.

Chris Noto:

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 will be placed in the queue. So, we have a couple. Nope, I think, sorry, there's only one question that we have and that's Jesse from Superstore 1509. Go ahead, Jesse.

Jesse:

Good evening. I know Union did a lot for us, including some program and including the year before last year I think you led us to strike for the salary, and we appreciated that a lot, but I also hope perhaps the price recently goes up so fast, so I'm not sure if they can ask to give us some salary increase again or not because every 500 hours we can only get 10 cents increase and we work in Superstore or local other branches for the normal worker, our income is not high to speak friendly, a bit low. So, it is harder for us to, how to say that? I just hope perhaps we can talk with them to give us some salary increase.

Jeff Traeger:

Right. Okay. So usually, the time that we negotiate salary increases is during collective bargaining and we set out the terms and conditions of your agreement for a period of time. I believe the contract at Superstar expires in the fall of 2028 next, but just because we were having a little trouble hearing you in the studio and I want to make sure that we get your answer correct, Jesse. So, what we're going to do is we're going to have your rep, who's the rep for Superstar 1509 to reach out to you in the next couple of days just to make sure that we got your question properly there.

So, I see that the vote to approve the president's report has passed and that we are almost out of time. So, if you're still waiting for a question to be answered, we will have your full-time union representative contact you over the next day or two to answer your question. I want to thank all of you for joining us on our spring telephone town Hall GMM. We specifically want to thank Shawn Haggerty for joining us tonight and helping us get to know him a little better. We'll be conducting our next general membership meeting on Tuesday, September the 16th, 2025. In the meantime, have a fantastic Manitoba summer and stay safe. Thank you for all you do. We are now adjourned.