

Telephone Town Hall – February 11, 2021 @ 7 p.m.

1. **Meeting called to order** at 7:02 pm by Dan Goodman.
2. **Roll Call of officers:**
Suzanne Hodge, **President**; Dan Goodman, **Secretary-Treasurer**; Brian Taylor, **Recorder**; Margaret Robins **VP #1**; Susan Espin, **VP #3**; Sandra Peter **VP #4**; Sandra Geldart **VP #7**; David Mowatt **VP #8**; Gorden McDonald **VP #9**; David Haere **VP #10**; Dale Juvelin **VP #13**, Charles Pratt **VP 14**;
3. **Adoption of Agenda**
m / s / c to adopt the agenda
4. **Adoption of November 19, 2020 Minutes** as posted on UFCW 247 website
m / s / c to adopt the minutes
5. Nothing reported from previous membership meeting.
6. **President's Report**
 - A few changes to the Executive Board, as two new Board members have been appointed to fill vacation positions designated as Safeway/Sobeys. Margaret Robins has been appointed to VP 1 to replace Kathleen Allen who retired at the end of January. Congratulations to Kathleen on her retirement and thank you for all the many years of service as a Shop Steward and Executive Board member. Alicia White has been appointed to fill the position of VP 2. Alicia has been employed at Safeway for 6 years and worked her way from an MDS production clerk to applying for the Union Thompson River University Scholarship Meatcutter Training Program. She completed the 9-month course and is now a journeyman cutter. She's also an Assistant Meat Manager at her store & Shop Steward.
 - We are continuing to restrict the number of staff in the Surrey head office at any onetime, which means we all continue to work partially from home and the office. Staff Reps continue to service, however, they are not going into communities in person that are smaller than the cities/towns they live in. The reason is to protect those communities from us; to avoid air travel and could introduce the virus (or variants) into an area where there was none before. In those small communities, we have our staff contact members directly and continue to deal with any issues they may have remotely. The local continues to function remotely & will have to continue for at least the next three months.
 - We made changes to how smaller units vote on new contracts. At the 2018 International Convention, delegates gave approval to add electronic voting procedures in the International Constitution. It gave authority to the Executive Committee of the International Executive Board to determine this (at a later date). They allowed ratification & strike votes only to be conducted electronic in early 2020 due to the pandemic. The method, program or platform was left up to the Locals. The International Convention does not allow Local Union elections to be conducted electronically.
 - We recently negotiating a collective agreement via Zoom, for the Invermere No Frills. Due to the remote nature and small population of this town, we decided to conduct the ratification electronically. The BC Labour Board endorsed an application/Software called Simply voting.

After viewing it and testing it we selected this method. We have since conducted our first electronic vote and found the process secure, user-friendly.

- A follow-up to our Christmas donation that were made at the end of 2020. During the previous Telephone Town Hall (Nov. 19), I reported we'd make donations across the province with the approval of our Executive Board to support food banks, women's shelters, senior support, and those who provide food & housing to the homeless and other disadvantaged groups. We donated \$1,000 to each of the following: The Union Gospel Mission, First United Church, both in Vancouver, the Mustard Seed Food Bank in Victoria, St. Vincent DePaul Shelter in Prince George, the Salvation Army in Kelowna and the Women's Shelter in Surrey. We also donated \$4,000 to the Greater Vancouver Food Bank.
- One staffing change to report with our Training Centre Director, Nolan Eddy, retiring May 1. Nolan came to us from former Local 2000 and was hired by them in August 1992. We want to congratulate and thank Nolan for everything he's done for us over the years and his dedicated service to us.

m / s / c to adopt the President's report as read

7. **Secretary-Treasurer's Report**

- Welcome & congratulations to Margaret & Alicia on their appointments to the Executive Board.
- We reached a tentative agreement with BCTF in November, but members subsequently voted it down. Just this past weekend, we held a Townhall to update the members and take a strike vote. Members voted 91% in favor of strike action if necessary. Our Union Rep, Johnny Khakh attended and provided translation which was very beneficial during the meeting. We have further dates at the end of February and hope to see some movement from the Company.
- FG Deli Bargaining should be resuming soon. We did meet in person in a socially distanced room and made quite a bit of progress right up to getting a monetary offer before thing grounded to a halt before Christmas. We just confirmed a number of dates for March & April.
- Superstore/Western Grocers agreement expires later this year in August. We have started the process of getting ready. Charles & Ximena are developing an online proposal survey that we'll be posting for members' input shortly and Charles has also asked Servicing Reps what changes they feel are necessary.
- In the last negotiations, CCWIPP pension & Health and Welfare Benefits were major issues. Prior to bargaining last time, we met with the Negotiating Committee and went over the CCWIPP issues, so they understood what was needed & why. Our National Office had directed all Locals participating in the Plan as to what changes were needed, and that's what was bargained. Going into negotiations last time, the Benefit Trust was in position where the surplus had been shrinking and required additional contributions. We were successful in getting them. The plan is now extremely healthy. We added physiotherapy & massage benefits a few years ago, and are hoping we may be able to make more positive changes going forward. Since these issues were dealt with last time, it puts us in a much better position going in this time, as far as where we want to focus any monetary changes.
- We've also been in touch with Local 401 in Alberta as they are currently in negotiations for their Superstore members. Although our agreements are somewhat different, we don't want to do anything that would endanger their process. We've told Local 401 President, Tom Hesse, we are here to help them in any way we can. We will wait & see if their bargaining impacts our process and possibly our start time.
- With Sobeys, we are counting down the time towards our discussions on the profitability of stores currently under Appendix B. Under the final offer selection award, we can begin reviewing store financials in August to see if any stores are deemed profitable and should be returning to Appendix A. Local 1518 & the Company continue to meet quarterly to review financials; and I could see us participating in this process. I do get the feeling, from 1518 that we are getting close to the end of the stores that may get returned prior to the Vince Ready

award running out for them. We haven't heard anything back as well, from the Labour Board concerning the Company's appeal, the final offer decision and the limitations on the kiosks.

- We continue to deal with challenging and unique issues regarding COVID. Without naming the Employer, we had a situation where a Store Manager had a Department Manager meeting in this office, just like the would have pre-COVID times. These types of small meetings are not supposed to be happening. Subsequently the Manager began to feel sick. And the Department Managers who attended were told to quarantine for 2 weeks. The Company told them they could apply for federal benefits or access their vacation or sick time. We grieved the issue saying these members were placed in an unsafe situation due to the negligence of the Manager, and should not have to use their personal time. The grievance was just filed last week so it will be interesting to see their response. This is an example of an issue where we are getting legal counsel involved right away to make sure we are aware of any recent or new rulings or changes to health regulations.
 - The CLC will be holding its' 29th Constitutional Virtual Convention from June 16 to 18, 2021. UFCW will be supporting Bea Bruske the UFCW Local 832 Secretary-Treasurer, in her run for CLC President, along with the other Team Unite candidates. The National Office is encouraging all Local Unions to send as many delegates as possible. For as long as I can remember, we have never had the opportunity as UFCW to support one of our own. And I've personally known Bea going back to my time as a member of the Local 832 Executive Board. We'll be sending a full slate of delegates.
- m / s / c to adopt the Secretary-Treasurer's report as read.

8. **Bargaining Report**

- We've been busy with several No Frills locations since December. Port Coquitlam No Frills ratified a new agreement on December 15, 2020. This year, both Hastings Street & the Invermere No Frills also voted to accept new collective agreements on January 19 & February 3. The new agreements have benefits added for part-time and wage protection to ensure that there will be increases to cover up any increases to minimum wage, or it stays the same for the term of the agreement.
- The YIG in Vanderhoof is in the process of voting right now with Dave Baillie dealing with it.
- We start bargaining with Indigo Chapters on February 25th. We have had calls from other Chapters locations. So we hope the agreement will encourage others to join UFCW 247 across the province.
- We'll be looking at bargaining for IGA West Vancouver in the near future. We are communicating with Local 1518 with respect to their side of the bargaining and hope they would complete theirs before we would begin ours.

Loblaw, Masks & Duty to Accommodate – Special report by Charles Pratt

- Initially Loblaw wanted members to self-declare the inability to wear masks at work. The reason could be declared as medical or other. There was no requirement for further documentation and support of the declaration. There was a small number that declared their inability to wear masks for a variety of reasons. Loblaw accepted these declarations at face value. Loblaw, months later, requested reasonable medical evidence to support the inability to wear masks at work. And once that, the number of members requesting exemptions dropped to approximately 70 across the province.
- The employer is not entitled to specific detailed medical evidence, including the diagnosis, but accepted the doctor's verification that the patient was unable to wear a mask and some reasoning supporting that inability. Members requesting medical accommodation are required to provide sufficient medical evidence, supporting the need for an accommodation if they choose to request one.

- Largely driven by Ontario Health authorities and the legitimate concerns about the unmasked working in stores open to the public, the employer began to plan to offer those members seeking a mask-free accommodation work at the stores during hours that were not open to the public and there were fewer co-workers in close proximity. The logic being that there was less chance of spreading COVID if there was a greater social distancing. This was for the protection of both those wearing masks and those unable to wear masks.
- The employer's plan was that if the members refused the accommodation or there was insufficient work available during non-shopping hours, that member would be placed off work and on a personal leave of absence. We were concerned about this one-size-fits-all proposed accommodation and possible complications with those without work, being unable to potentially access government income assistance in any form. We requested a legal opinion. It centered on two issues. Firstly, the employer's position that only work to be offered was going to be on nights. Secondly, the ability of our members affected to be able to claim government wage benefits if they were not working.
- As we suspected, the employers blanket type accommodation on nights, did not meet the requirements of the duty to accommodate as required by human rights legislation. In essence, each accommodation must be considered under all of its own unique requirements, including the medical abilities and the availability of safe, suitable work.
- While night work may have been the best possible outcome for many people, the employer cannot predetermine that, without examining the unique circumstances on each case by case basis.
- On the issue of CERB benefits, the opinion was also very clear. The Canada Emergency Response Benefits is available by design to quote unquote, those who stopped working for reasons related to COVID-19. Unless people voluntarily quit their employment, they are eligible to apply for CERB benefits.
- Interestingly, the day we received the legal opinion, Loblaws backed down on the proposed accommodation plan and will now allow members who had verified medical inability to wear masks, to continue to work in their original capacity, if they're able and willing to wear a full coverage face shield.
- These are not the partial coverage, shorty style chin shields that some people wear, but a full coverage shield extending below the chin and covering the sides of the face as well.
- The employer will be providing one approved shield to each member with a medical accommodation. Replacement shields if required, are at the member's expense and are widely available for many local stores.

9. **Education & Training Report**

- Currently two courses available for members across the province to access through your Training Centre. Food handler certification and Sage 50 Simply Accounting. Both of them fully online and free of charge.
- In addition, webCampus continues to offer a wide variety of online courses that are available to all members and their families any date of the week.
- For Steward education this past month, we offered a virtual class to cover tips on how to handle difficult situations at work. This was a new setup for us, where the group met virtually for an hour in the morning, then the Stewards' learnt the material on their own, using the webCampus platform. We all met again virtually in the afternoon to discuss a few points and share experiences just like in-person courses. The feedback suggested that adding an extra virtual session in the middle of the day would be beneficial for future courses.
- We strongly believe that nothing comes close to in-person education, but also agree that something, meaning virtual or online, is better than nothing. Members who have been waiting for our three-day intro to Stewardship course will be invited to a 1-day virtual session.

10. **Organizing Report**

- Nothing was reported.

11. **New Business**

- No new business.

6 questions taken by members on the call.

12. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm.

Member Draw - was conducted electronically. 3 winners were picked; each receiving a \$100 gift card.