

# MINUTES FROM GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING



Telephone Town Hall – May 28, 2020 @ 7 p.m.

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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, **VP #1**; Kathleen Allen, **VP #2**; Susan Espin, **VP #3**; 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 February 13, 2020 Minutes** as posted on UFCW 247 website  
m / s / c to adopt the minutes
5. **Business Arising from Previous Membership Meeting**  
None
6. **President's Report**
  - Thank you to our members who have been working on the front lines in your stores/units. We know this hasn't been easy for you nor was it particularly safe for you in the beginning weeks.
  - Operation of our offices has changed since March. In the early stages of the pandemic (first week of March), we reduced the number of days our Support Staff were working. It became quickly apparent that we would not be able to continue to run the office in person with large numbers of staff in the building. We had to find a way to continue the service to our members that they deserved while at the same time, keeping our own staff safe. In this scenario, I am the employer to the staff, and I had a responsibility to them as just as your employer had to you.
  - On March 16<sup>th</sup>, we suspended the servicing and visits to all of our stores, warehouse and food processing. All of the Staff Representatives were directed to work from home and no one was allowed to come to the Surrey Office without permission. All of our offices were close to any in-person visits. Kelowna office closed due to the location of a doctor's office across the hallway from our office in that building (they had patients waiting in the hallway in front of our doors).
  - The Training Centre was also shut down and all classes were cancelled. Our Staff Representatives worked from home 7 days/week. I commend our staff for all their efforts at keeping our members as calm as possible and to help them, and those first 3 weeks of the quarantine were just crazy.
  - In the first two weeks, we received a lot of calls from employers, setting out how they were reacting. They would tell us they were doing to do something and literally in the next few hours change their minds. It became difficult to maintain accurate information on the website with the constant changes.
  - As of today, all of our offices remain closed to the public or drop-in visits by members. All of our Staff Representatives are operational and have remained so through the lockdown. Our Administrative staff in the Surrey Office are working reduced hours.
  - Dan, Cathy and I, along with other Staff did make trips to the stores in March & April to deal with emergencies and the lack of personal protection.

- Dan, Cathy, Bruce & Guy made trips to various Safeway stores to hand out cloth masks that were made for us by a woman in Burnaby; and check on the members in the stores that began expanding their deli operations.
  - As of May 11<sup>th</sup> we've expanded our operation in the Surrey Office to include 1 day/week in office for the Reps and some of the Support Staff to 2 days/week. The days are scheduled and no more than 5 staff are allowed at one time. We also included one day/week of store/unit visits by the Reps. Effective June 1, we'll be expanding the servicing of stores/units to 2 days/week.
  - Reps will continue to take their calls from home for 2 days/week and work 1 day/week from inside the office, at least over the summer. We continue to meet at least once per week over Zoom video conference.
  - On the National level, all conferences and conventions that were to take place in 2020 have been cancelled or postponed to 2021. It includes the Women and Racialized Women in Leadership course, Member Engagement Conference, NDF Conference, CLC and the BC Federation of Labour's Convention.
  - Our charity fundraising events did not take place last week, but we hold out hope for the annual Light the Night Walk in Stanley Park in October.
  - We are not meeting in person for the National Council Board meetings or any of the International VP meetings. Any issues that we need to deal with at the Labour Board is done by conference call only. Everything with bargaining was suspended (Dan & Dean will give more details)
  - Our Executive Board meeting was held by Zoom conference call on May 19, including the presentation and approval of the 2019 Audited Financial statement.
  - We've had a few confirmed cases of COVID-19 in some of the retail stores (Loblaws & Sobeys). The Employers, in both cases, have acted quickly and well within the guidelines of public Health Canada to deal with isolation of workers who had contact with the infected person, with pay and the sanitization of the workplaces. We were able to reach out to some of our members in isolation and offer our assistance.
  - We have no deaths among our members in BC and none of the 247 staff have fallen ill. We've had no confirmed cases in any of our food processing plants so far, due mainly to the willingness of those employers to take early steps to protect our members (FG Deli & Five Corners Meat). In other provinces, this has sadly not been the case. Cargill in Alberta had 50% of the workplace infected, 2 members' deaths; and JBS in Brooks had over 450 infections. UFCW Local 401 has been extremely active dealing with the outbreaks in Cargill and JBS in Alberta.
  - Our National President, Paul Meinema, has written to the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau asking for legislation to be put in place to protect our members in food processing and retail. In addition, he has demanded that there be a federal program to protect against wage loss for anyone who is sick with COVID-19 or who had to self-isolate because of the contact with someone who has it. While Loblaw & Sobeys and many other employers we deal with have paid our members to be off or have topped up the CERB payments, many other employers, like Cargill have not.
  - Most of our members have continued to work, but Centennial Foods had layoffs due to the lack of restaurant supplying. Swiss Chalet in Victoria announced its' closure on May 15<sup>th</sup>.
  - Other issues we are continuing to deal with on our members behalf is the continuation of the premium pay for our members in the retail stores, more PPE, more sick time and the continuation of customer controls in the stores.
  - We are behind all of you and continue to take steps to ensure your safety as you work.
- m / s / c to adopt the President's report as read

## 7. **Audited Financial Statement**

- Dan's Report begins with the Presentation of the 2019 Audited Financial Statement. Just a reminder, the Local 247 Executive Board previously adopted a motion to do a yearly review of the finances at their second quarter meeting.

m / s / c to adopt the 2019 Audited Financial Statement report as read.

## 8. **Secretary-Treasurer's Report**

- At the last meeting with Sobeys regarding the continuing negotiations process, we talked about having a day of mediation on Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> with the assistance of Arbitrator Wayne Moore. We were under no illusion that we would be resolving any of the major items but we still wanted to keep up the dialogue.
- We did make some minimal progress but as part of the settlement, the parties agreed to keep the details confidential as they will form part of whatever FOS award we get. We left the process with all the major issues still unresolved.
- We knew at the end of that mediation that FOS was the next step and have had numerous discussions with Tony Glavin, our legal counsel. As we reported recently on the website we have two sets of dates. The first date was last week on May 20 where we presented argument on a preliminary issue and then full submissions are to be made and argued on June 25 & 26. Both processes will be heard by Arbitrator John B. Hall. The preliminary issue is what time period of financials should the arbitrator be considering when looking at our submissions. The Company is taking the position that the same financials that Vince Ready heard prior to issuing his award are the relative ones & we are saying they should be more recent in order to reflect the impact of the closures & conversions. If you recall, there were 10 closures announced in the first 6 months after the award, 5 in January 2019 and 6 in June. This second set of 11 were all included as Safeway stores in the financials Mr. Ready saw and most certainly those closures and conversion impacted other locations.
- On the 20<sup>th</sup>, Tony did an excellent job of presenting our case and on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Arbitrator Hall ruled that "the Union is entitled to disclosure of the most recent financial statements prepared by the Employer in the same form as provided to Arbitrator Ready in the Section 106 proceeding." He then went on to say "The preliminary ruling does not in any way affect the positions which the parties have respectively taken (or may take) regarding the merits of the dispute, including the factors relevant to the FOS decision." So although we get to see up to date financials, we will still have to argue their relevance at the June dates.
- Cathy Shannon has been working extremely hard in getting all the information and background needed for Tony and Murphy (assisting Tony on the case).
- Also with Sobeys and 1518, we continue to utilize the cross jurisdiction agreement between the three parties which allows members from each Local to access hours in other Locals jurisdiction to help keep members from each Local working. We just extended the agreement until the end of May. It has primarily benefitted our members as the deli departments were the areas most impacted due to the fresh offerings being temporarily shut down. Some stores have returned to full offerings and all should be back to normal by June 1<sup>st</sup> with additional plexiglass being installed.
- Last week, Loblaws called to inform us that they are eliminating the last of the scratch baking in Western Canada and moving to an entirely par-baked product as they have done in Eastern Canada. Currently approximately 75% of the bakery product offering is par-baked, with the remainder baked from scratch in the store. Par-baked products are mixed, shaped, proofed, and partly baked, then flash frozen with the remaining baking time being applied in store. The Company sites several reasons for the changeover, including being able to offer consumers a more consistent product, better availability of product on short notice and less opportunity for product contamination, although certainly we believe cost plays a part as well. This change will be phased in with Vancouver Island stores being affected beginning of June, and outside Metro Vancouver stores following in early July. Inside Metro Vancouver stores will be changed in early August. This will also impact stores in Alberta, Saskatchewan & Manitoba. We have been in contact with other UFCW Locals in those provinces. Although the employer advises there are

currently no plans to reduce labour, should there be an impact in the future, the collective agreement provides strong job and wage protection language.

- In reference to the confirmed cases of COVID 19 in some of our locations, the employers were not allowed to release the names of the members to us for privacy reasons, but they did all agree to contact the members and pass along that should they need any assistance, to call us. For instance, if the person needed help getting groceries or dealing with childcare, etc. we may be able to help. I spoke to a couple of the people who did call, and they were very appreciative of the offers but all were ok.
- Regarding servicing, from time to time we review the Union Representatives territories and make changes or adjustments, sometimes based on closures and new units, or even if we just feel a change for mental health is needed. This July will see the opening of the new Sobeys Campbell Heights Warehouse. This 500,000 SF warehouse will replace the work being done by our two Cold Logic Facilities and also a small non-union Sobeys warehouse. I had previously reported that we negotiated a collective agreement to cover the new warehouse and it afforded opportunity for employees for all three current warehouses to move over. We viewed this as an opportunity to move some units around so Guy Fraser will be servicing it, and working with the Company through the transition period. Guy will reluctantly give up his two Loblaw warehouses, Marine Drive & Pitt Meadows. He's been servicing those units for the past 8 years. Johnny Khakh will take them over. This expands Johnny's servicing responsibilities but also, he came from Marine Drive and knows all the main players and the collective agreement as well as anyone. Bruce Jackson, who currently has the two Cold Logic Warehouses will assist Guy with the transition and then help Cathy with some of the Sobeys servicing as she works on the FOS materials.
- It has been easily the most unique and challenging time I have ever seen. I believe, and I know at times its hard to see but the focus of everyone has been on ensuring a safe workplace for our members while acknowledging the need for our employers to continue to operate. More often than not, we are dealing with issues not even contemplated in the collective agreement but here is certainly a sense of wanting to work together to do what's best. There is no perfect system, and we continue to focus on the primary issue, safety protections, paid sick leave, mental health services, and personal protective equipment for front-line workers, have garnered thousands of petition signatures in support of these demands.
- Two campaigns have also taken off on social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), reaching over 468,000 people gaining more than 896,000 impressions, and attracting thousands of engagements across the platforms. Links to these campaigns can be found on our website or by visiting the UFCW Canada site.

m / s / c to adopt the Secretary-Treasurer's report as read.

## 9. **Bargaining Report**

- Grand Forks Extra Foods ratified their proposed collective agreement on March 24<sup>th</sup>.
- We will begin the Wholesale Club negotiations by video conference call starting in June. Our Committee members have been notified and they will participate by video conference call.
- We will then look at the No Frills and other small units whose contracts are up as well.
- We also have dates to start with BC Tree Fruits. We are looking to exchange proposals on September 18<sup>th</sup> and then meet October 26-28 and November 2-4.

## 10. **Education & Training Report**

- The Training Centre is closed to all in-person classes and visits. Ximena & Nolan continue to work from there from time to time concentrating on online courses and the mental health counseling reference earlier.

## 11. **New Business**

- No new business.

7 questions taken by members on the call.

12. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 pm.

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