

Telephone Town Hall – February 15, 2024 @ 7 p.m.

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1. **Meeting called to order** at 7:04 pm by Dan Goodman.
2. **Roll Call of officers:**  
Dan Goodman, **President**; Charles Pratt, **Secretary-Treasurer**; Margaret Robins, **VP 1**; Alicia Whitehead, **VP #2**; Susan Espin, **VP #3**; Sandra Peters, **VP #4**; Sandra Geldart, **VP #7**; Peter Parmar, **VP #8**; Kirste Hawgood, **VP #10**; Doug Insley, **VP #11**; Cathy Shannon, **VP #14**;
3. **Adoption of Agenda**  
m / s / c to adopt the agenda
4. **Adoption of November 16, 2023 Minutes** as posted on UFCW 247 website  
m / s / c to adopt the minutes
5. **President's Report**
  - Peter Parmar was joined in at our recent first quarter meeting as our new Executive Board member. He's been a member for almost 30 years, an active Shop Steward in the Prince George Superstore.
  - Paul Meinema, announced his retired as UFCW Canada National President in the fall. Shawn Haggerty was unanimously elected to lead the UFCW Canada National Council. Brother Haggerty brings three decades of activism to the role of National leader. He's been President of Local 175, which his our largest Local in Canada since 2007. We look forward to working with him.
  - When the Uber & UFCW Canada agreement was first announced, it created a lot of confusion as many people didn't and still don't understand what the agreement was. So, I asked our national office to provide me with an overview of the situation. To recap, in January 2022, Uber Canada and UFCW entered a historic agreement that provides drivers and delivery people on the Uber platform, access to representation, group discounts, free education training and more. To date, UFCW Canada staff have had over 30,000 conversations with drivers and delivery workers and successfully resolved over 500 cases in workers' favor. This is all within the last two years. The core of this agreement is about joint advocacy. UFCW Canada and Uber agreed to common ground on a package of legislative proposals, in which both parties agreed to lobby government to enact. There were proposals on earning standards, benefit-fund flexibility, health and safety, notice of termination and representation rights. Which would allow all app-based workers the right to join a union and engage in collective bargaining. In November of last year, the BC provincial government took the first significant step in legislating rights for app-based workers in Canada. On November 20th, the BC government tabled Bill 48 or the Labor Statutes Amendment Act of 2023. The new legislation amends the British Columbia Employment Standards Act and the Workers' Compensation Act. The legislation aims to redefine the employment status of online platform workers, explicitly targeting app-based, ride-hailing and food-delivery workers. Regardless of their classification under other laws, these workers would be considered for the purpose of employment standards and workers for the purpose of Workers' Compensation. This ties directly into the UFCW Canada Uber Agreement and its joint proposals. Five of the six joint advocacy proposals were obtained and the sixth was addressed in a minister's mandate letter. Meaning that the government will begin working or consulting on that issue before the next election.

- We will be introducing a Shop Steward Code of Conduct. Shop stewards are a critical part of the success of any union. As they represent members by defending their collective agreement rights, lend an ear to a member in distress, and are often the face of our union in the workplace and community. As we continue to develop new and enhanced steward training, we want to set clear expectations for those members that take on this important role.

- We have updated our internal phone system. The offices are now all linked, which means we can transfer calls between offices instead of each location being separate. Union reps now have an app which allows them to have calls to their office line forwarded to their cell when out of the office. They can have messages or voicemails sent to them as emails and members can also text to reps' cell phones.

We don't want text as the main means of communication. It doesn't lend itself to long conversations where you're looking for details, but it should be an option for first contact. This allows reps easier access to calls and messages and greater access for members to their reps. This was one of the issues raised during our initial engagement visits. There will obviously still be times where staff can't take a call. For example, if they're in a grievance or other kind of meeting, in negotiations or if they're dealing with a member.

- We completed the renovations on one of the offices on the main floor of our Surrey building. The room was opened up to provide us a much larger meeting area, one which can accommodate board meetings and negotiations. We lost the other space we used when PBAS, the administrators of the Local 247 trust plan took it over. We are also going to be installing some media equipment to make meetings via Zoom or Teams much easier to manage. We will easily make up the cost of the renovations with savings on meeting spaces moving forward.

- An update on our transition to the Unionware operating system. We are still in the Analyze-U phase, but it should be completed by the end of February. The next step will be for Unionware to present us our proposed system, from all the information they have gathered over the last year. At that point we will approve the modules and they will start to build our software to our specifications.

When implemented, we will be talking about big changes for our staff. There will be new ways for them to log their servicing times and locations.

They will also be able to link issues or conversations they have with members, directly to that member's profile in our database. It will be a much more comprehensive system and it will certainly take a bit of time getting used to. The Local's changes such as Unionware, the new phone system and our new meeting space should allow the local to run more efficiently while saving money long-term as well.

- PBAS is currently transitioning over to a new operating system themselves called Drawbridge, which will make registration and submitting claims much easier for members via an online member portal. Members will be able to upload supporting documents and check how much of your benefits you have used and your remaining balance. You can also add your banking information to get paid faster. They hope to have the system up and running very soon.

- The Workplace Violence Initiative was brought on due to the increasing number of violent incidents our members have experienced and the inadequate responses from the employers. We have put together a guide that has been posted online, and we will be directing members to it when these situations occur.

We recently held an information session for our staff, where we walked them through the presentation and also gave them an overview on their role in supporting members. We cannot prevent these incidents, but we certainly can be there for our members. Making sure that they and the employers are following the proper steps in reporting and provide support and resources if needed.

The union is not normally involved in these issues, as quite often we are not notified they even take place. Members file reports with employers and too often things are being swept under the rug, or the member is being blamed for not handling the situation properly.

De-escalation of the situation is the new-favored phrase out there for employers. The online information explains how they need to report what happened, what their employer should be doing and also generates a report for the union rep so they can support that member in any way they can.

We have produced a small card that will be distributed to members, focusing on the front end where the highest percentage of these occurrences take place. The card contains information on the steps to be followed and has a QR code, which when scanned will take members directly to the reporting form on the website.

We also want to involve our stewards to want to learn more on this important issue. On February 7th, shop stewards were emailed an invitation to participate in an informal webinar. The email included a link for stewards to register for the session they wanted to attend, along with the link to the Zoom webinar, which would be sent to them the morning of their preferred date.

On February 12th we ran the first session and had 10 stewards volunteer their time, to learn about the issue and the various aspects of the campaign. We also received some great feedback from stewards after the session. Over the next three weeks, we will be holding six more one-hour sessions for shop stewards as the awareness portion of our campaign is kicking off. On February 20th, the campaign will be officially announced on social media and via an email blast to the members.

- In regards to the engagement committee Ximena spoke to last meeting; an email was sent to every member who we had information for, outlining what the committee is about and a link to the application. I know Ximena will speak to the committee in general, but I want to talk about the makeup of the committee.

The goal is that depending on the number of applicants, we will have an approximate 10-person committee chaired by Sinead Wilson who did the first round of engagement meetings in stores. We will assign staff to liaison and work with them. Our goal is to get new members with new ideas involved. So, we have even told the executive board they are not eligible to be on the committee so we don't have the same members participating over and over. Let's find our next wave of union activists. Stewards are certainly welcome to apply.

- The new member kit we've been talking about forever is with the designer, who has put together a booklet that we are reviewing and will be printed soon. This project kept getting pushed back but is almost there. We have had Dawn Stevenson in our office doing relief while some staff are off, but she will be getting into the store soon, meeting with new members and distributing the booklets. She will also be discussing the engagement committee and encouraging interested members to get involved.
- A big thank you to all the members who volunteered their time and helped out at the various members' Christmas functions. Last year was the first solo year for us at Burnaby Heritage Village. Despite an atmospheric river of rain, we still had over 50% of registrants turn out, and over 320 families attended one of our six out-of-the-lower-mainland movie nights. We had our highest turnout by far.
- 2023 also saw Local 247 staff and members attend multiple Pride events, an Overdose Awareness walk. Run the Violence Against Woman Shoe Memorial. Attend various leukemia and lymphoma fundraising events including a member-run bowling night in Surrey, and support our members impacted by wildfires in the Okanagan. We will continue to participate in and support issues that are important and impact our members.

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

## 6. Secretary-Treasurer Report

- As a result of increasing customer violence and theft in Loblaw stores, a major push for additional health and safety initiatives has been started. As a result of these issues, Loblaws will be taking action to address some of these concerns.

Members have been complaining about poor lighting outside the stores at night, increasing the risk of unexpected confrontation with people hanging around the stores. Loblaws will be conducting an audit of all exterior lights at all of the stores, to ensure there's appropriate lighting in areas from parking to employee entrances.

Members have also been vocal with concerns about difficulties gaining access to the store after hours. And having to wait for other employees to open the door for them to enter the building. Loblaws will be doing a refresh of the door-access list, to ensure that all members who need access off-hours will be provided with door-swipe access.

- Due to ever increasing theft and potential for customer-based violence, Loblaws will be conducting an Asset Protection (AP) Awareness Week from February the 25th to March the 2nd. During this week-long initiative, the upper asset protection managers, supervisors and asset protection representatives will arrange an engagement week with the members. To discuss AP policies, violence in the workplace and the roles and responsibilities of the asset protection team. The team will conduct AP open houses allowing members to attend the AP offices to get better understanding of the AP roles and responsibilities. The topics of discussion will include safety is everyone's responsibility. Ensuring members are reporting all violence to store management, and making certain it is escalated to senior AD and operations leadership. Share resources available to members including de-escalation video training.

Asset protection representatives will share their specific roles and responsibilities and how they can better support the stores. Ensure messaging is shared with members that AP is a resource to be utilized, and that they're available to assist and support the members. Ask members what AP can do to support them.

They will be reviewing processes and policies, operational stop-theft policy. What members can and should do if they suspect customer theft. Violence, harassment and discrimination policies. Customer-de-escalation guidelines. Emergency-response guidelines, where are they located. Make certain that members understand the guidelines and know that they're accessible. When Loblaws officials talk about asset protection, they need to be reminded that their most valuable asset is their people.

- The Real Canadian Superstore annual safety shoe allowance (for retail) has been paid out to all full-time receivers and full-time grocery personnel who are required to wear safety shoes. This is required under section 26.9 of the CBA. It is typically paid out midyear.
- Real Canadian Superstore buyouts, as required by letter of understanding number 13 of the collective bargaining agreement, have again offered voluntary buyouts of up to \$50,000. All applications had to be submitted by February 6th with application being reviewed by the employer up until February 15th to determine successful applicants.

Consideration is given to operational requirements of the store and department when making the decision. From February 16th to March 1st, notifications will be sent to all candidates who applied, and everyone should be advised whether or not they have been selected. It's expected that the last day of work should be no later than March the 13th. Successful candidates can choose to take the money directly or have some or all directed to an RRSP.

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

Cathy Speaking on Safeway:

- For the Grid B, 4,000-plus members in the contract, which were to be reclassified as part of the agreement to Grid-A status, the change was completed December 3rd. Although we only had a few members in the stores, those who were affected by this were not advised of the status change when it occurred. They have now been notified.
- The employer's commitment to post 50 Grid B, full-time job postings three months after ratification, was completed on January 25th. The employer delayed awarding the positions until February 2nd when the full-time positions were to be effective February 4th.

The employer posted extra full-time positions in some store locations, and this created more movement. In total, there are 10 members who will be moving to other locations. And because of those moves, the employer approached the union to ask if we were okay with a delay regarding the transfers, as it would impact the schedules already written in those stores.

The union agreed but only if the hours they would receive and the full-time status change were awarded to them, and effect of the same day as all of the other members on February 4th. The company agreed. The employer had agreed to post a minimum of one Grid B, full-time position per store, with the possibility of two in some stores. However, in the end, the employer decided to post some extra full-time positions, so in total they posted 64 Grid B, full-time positions in the first round. They were only committed to post 50.

- There may have been some concern regarding the Grid B, full-time postings that went up. Those members if they feel they had a concern regarding the full-time postings. Need to contact their union reps if they felt they were not posted correctly, or they were prevented from posting for the full-time positions.
- The increased relief-premium pay was finally fixed and those members affected were paid the retro last pay period.
- With the Grid B, full-time postings out in the stores, the employer thought it would be a good idea to put out the company's severance offer for the Grid A employees at the same time, which they were committed to do once in the lifetime of the new agreement. This created some additional confusion and questions in the stores. The information for both the Grid B, full-time positions and the Grid A, severance information that was needed by our members was certainly lacking from the employer.

One of the important pieces of information needed was the FAQ sheet. The union has made the employer aware that some stores were not providing the document to the members.

The Grid A, severance-offer time limit to apply closes tomorrow, Friday, February 16th at 4:00 PM. If there is anyone out there that is wanting to apply for the offer they received, they need to do so by then. The company has informed us that once the offer has closed, they will not be telling anyone who applied if they were successful until March 15th.

Just a reminder, this severance offer is the employer's offer to the employees, so the union is not involved in the process. You can only ask for the employer to review an amount that was offered, but it's ultimately the employer who decides who gets it and when the people go.

## 7. **Bargaining Report**

- Kootenay Markets. After many weeks of trying to get Kootenay Markets owner to sign off on the memorandum agreement, the recommended deal was ratified on November 20th, 2023. There were many changes to the agreement, with the continuation of wage increases regardless of minimum wage and a new guarantee of hours.
- You may have seen one of the various news stories recently about Loblaw opening a new city-market location in what was the old Canada Post building downtown Vancouver on Homer Street. Loblaw obtained the space that used to be Vancouver's main post office several years ago. It's a coveted location, as there are thousands of office workers in the area including Amazon workers just above the store. The store opened on February 2nd, 2024. A collective agreement was ratified by the new members on January 30th of this year.
- Last fall, we were contacted by the employees at a Browns Craffhouse located in downtown Vancouver. They had several work issues and knew that by organizing they could improve their working conditions. With the assistance of the national office staff, we signed cards, made application and were certified for the location. We then reached out to the employer to begin negotiations for a first collective agreement. We canvased all the members, had a full proposal package ready and set dates with the company.

Our first meeting was set for January 17th. We showed up ready to exchange proposals. But instead of bargaining, the company handed us a letter to the committee to inform them that they would be closing the

location permanently on February 1st. The company claims that the decision was the result of slow business and not tied to the employees exercising the right to unionize.

We're skeptical of that claim, as the letter states that their employment with Browns is over, even though other locations have postings for various positions, vacant. There was no offer to let these members work in those locations.

The following week the company reached out to us, to see if we would look at an offer that included us not filing any unfair labor-practice charges and giving up our successorship rights. We said, "No." And no other conversation or offer has occurred. In their letter, they claim that the location is not financially viable and so why would they be worried about successorship rights? We will monitor the location of any redevelopment, as we believe they have over four years left on their lease. We have been assisting members in finding new employment opportunities.

- When we last met with Stong's, they said that they're interested in combining the two locations we represent and any future ones into one collective agreement. We are interested in doing this but need to get members from the Northwoods location to join the current committee, and we hope to have more dates soon.
- Notices to bargain have also been sent out to VersaCold and Fresh St Market in Fleetwood.

## 8. **Engagement & Education Report**

- We've been working hard on several initiatives. One of them is the establishment of an engagement committee that will help foster a more inclusive and empowered local for our members. We also wanted to represent the diversity of our membership.

The application has been emailed to our members. Notices have been posted on your union bulletin boards at work and you'll also see it on social media tomorrow. We are looking for members who are passionate and enthusiastic about creating a more vibrant local. And who are not afraid to share ideas and put in the work that's needed to build member engagement. The application deadline is March 6th.

- Another initiative is the customer violence and abuse is not part of our job campaign. This awareness and education campaign is listed on our website under the health and safety tab. We want to make sure that every one of our members knows what to do when faced with customer abuse in the workplace.

Employers have the legal responsibility of keeping you safe at work. And as workers, we have the responsibility to report incidents and that is what this campaign is all about. Please take the time to review the information on our website and keep an eye on your email for more information next week. Your shop stewards have been invited to participate in one of seven orientation sessions that explain this campaign in detail. However, we cannot only rely on your shop stewards and union reps to do all the work.

- We'll be extending our education offerings to our union members who are part of the Joint Health and Safety Committee in the workplace. We have been compiling the list of names, so that we can book the education sessions based on the number of members who require it. If we have any Joint Health and Safety Committee members listening tonight, please make sure we have your contact information on file, so that we can reach you when it's time to offer you a seat in a course.
- For members who are interested in online learning, webCampus offers a large selection of health and safety courses that are available for free to you and your families. WebCampus is currently offering a 15-minute online course about dealing with customer abuse.
- Our new member booklet should be ready by the time the new engagement committee is formed in March. The plan is for our union representatives, stewards and activists to personally hand the booklet to new members as soon as they identify the new members. The booklet explains the basics of what it means to be a union member, as well as some of our rights and benefits. We hope it will create meaningful connections with new members early on in their employment.
- The UFCW Charity Foundation will award several scholarships of \$8,000 each, to UFCW members and their unmarried dependents who are under the age of 20. Applications are available online and the deadline to apply is May 12th. More information is posted on our website, UFCW 247 under the education tab.

9. **New Business**

- No new business.

**Q&A PERIOD** - 1 question answered and 4 answered individually.

10. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:41 pm.

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