



WELCOME TO YOUR UNION

**Getting to Know Your
Workplace Rights**



New Member Booklet

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Welcome

A message from your union's Executive Board

Congratulations on your new job! One of the goals of this booklet is to let you know that you are not only joining a new workplace; you are also joining a community of over 15,000 workers who, through their work in grocery stores, warehouses, and food processing plants across British Columbia, are also members of our union.

As fellow members elected to lead our union, and on behalf of the entire elected Executive Board, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the United Food & Commercial Workers, Local 247.

With the day-to-day efforts of our shop stewards, staff union representatives, and members active in their workplaces, our union works hard to improve the lives of working people and to give you a strong voice in your workplace and your community. All workers play an important role in advocating for and enforcing workers rights. We're glad you're here!

In Solidarity,



Dan Goodman
President



We hope this booklet helps let you know a bit more about your workplace rights and helps you find ways to get involved in your union!

Who We Are



Curious about what a union is?

A union is an organization made up of workers dedicated to improving working conditions and enforcing workplace rights. As workers, we stand together and fight for our rights.

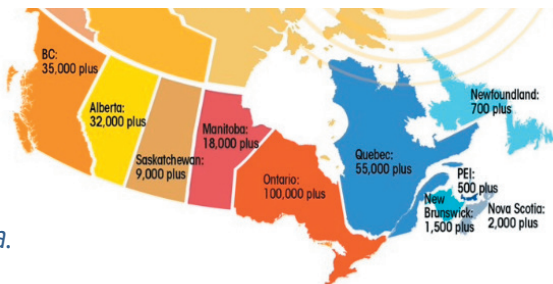
Unions and union members push for better wages, hours, and other conditions of employment, negotiating binding contracts with employers, known in each workplace as a "Collective Agreement." Your Collective Agreement sets out your workplace rights, and these rights are enforced by members, shop stewards, union staff representatives, and union lawyers.

Unions also help connect what happens in our workplaces to a bigger picture, pushing for improvements for all workers across industries, provinces, and even countries.

Our union, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 247, represents workers across British Columbia. UFCW 247 members perform essential work in the retail food, distribution, and food processing sectors of the BC economy.

We are also connected to a much bigger movement of workers across Canada and the USA.

UFCW Local 247 is part of one of the largest and most diverse private sector unions in Canada, bringing together 250,000 UFCW members across Canada and 1.3 million members in North America.



Get Connected

New members often wonder how they can get connected to their union. Here are some starting points:

Check your regularly updated union bulletin board

Usually found in the lunchroom at your workplace, you'll find union information specific to your worksite.

Reach out by phone or email

Use the contact information at the back of this booklet to reach out to us!

Check UFCW247.com

Find your Collective Agreement, benefit information and forms, contact information for your union staff representative, local and national news, and easily update your contact information.

See your union staff representative in your workplace

UFCW Local 247 staff representatives are assigned to cover many workplaces across BC. When they visit your store, chat with them about how you might be able to get involved; they are also just a phone call or email away!

Reach out to a Shop Steward *(see next page for more)*

Shop Stewards are workers just like you and can connect you with your union. Don't know who they are? Check the union bulletin board in your workplace, or give your union staff representative a call.

Watch for us reaching out to you!

We regularly send out messages to members by email, phone or text message. Make sure we have your updated email or phone number. Visit **UFCW247.com** to get connected!

Attend a union meeting or event

We hold Quarterly General Membership Meetings throughout the year, usually through a Telephone Town Hall format. We also regularly hold community and charity events where members can get together and get involved in supporting great causes.

Dates and information on how to attend union meetings and events are regularly posted and updated on union bulletin boards in your workplace.

A union isn't some outside agency at a workplace: it's you and your co-workers, acting together, standing up for each other, and advancing your shared interests.

Shop Stewards

Leaders in your workplace

A Shop Steward is one of your coworkers who has received specialized UFCW 247 education and has been tasked with providing voice and visibility for your union in your workplace. They are volunteers who give confidential support to other union members, and they are vital to building a strong union.

Enforcing the collective agreement

Shop stewards know the collective agreement AND they know your workplace well. Plus, they're always in touch with your union staff representative on things happening at your workplace. If something seems strange about how you're being treated at work, check in with your shop steward.

Shop stewards have your back

Having a steward means knowing that someone at work has your back. If you are ever called into a discipline meeting, we recommend you request the presence of a Shop Steward.

A resource for union information

A steward is usually aware of what is going on elsewhere in your union, including resources and opportunities you might find helpful.

Even if you have a question that your steward can't answer, they should be able to point you in the right direction.

Become a steward!

Remember, stewards are workers just like you! In fact, any UFCW 247 member can take the courses that are required to become a steward.

If you're interested in becoming a steward, reach out to your union staff representative, and let them know that you're interested in taking on the role as well!

If you find yourself in a discipline meeting or situation, check your Collective Agreement to see if you are entitled to have a shop steward with you. If so, request this from your manager before proceeding with the meeting.

Member Engagement

Your Union Needs You

Active and engaged members are more likely to know and exercise their workplace rights. Unions are stronger when their members are actively engaged.

There are many opportunities for UFCW 247 members to get active in their union:

- Community & Social Justice Events (i.e. Pride events)
- Social activities (i.e. Potlucks, BBQs)
- Fundraisers (i.e. charity events in support of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society)
- Engagement Committee (i.e. events that support fellow members and their communities)



Union committees are also great ways to participate in your union. Committees focus on issues related to workplace rights, health and safety, human rights, diversity, equity and inclusion, and more.

Check with your union staff representative or shop steward about getting involved. You can also contact our Engagement Coordinator at training@ufcw247.com to talk about getting active in a committee!



Your **Collective** Agreement

From grocery stores to warehouses and food processing plants, each UFCW 247 workplace has its own specific issues and needs. There are dozens of UFCW 247 Collective Agreements covering over 100 worksites across British Columbia.

Each Collective Agreement is negotiated through a legal process called Collective Bargaining. This is where a committee of workers, with the support of union staff representatives, meets with the company to negotiate an agreement covering the terms and conditions on behalf of members in a particular workplace.

"Our union's collective agreements set a standard that protects the rights, wages, and benefits earned by our members through their hard work. We seek to improve that standard every time we bargain with companies."

- Dan Goodman, President

Once a tentative agreement is reached with the company, our workplace bargaining committees then present that agreement to the members, who ultimately decide on whether to accept or reject it through a democratic vote.

That's right! Union members vote on their collective agreements.

Your collective agreement is the result of many years of members pressing for better conditions and standards. Getting to know your collective agreement is a great way to know your workplace rights!

A copy of your collective agreement is available on our website to view or download, simply scan this QR code:



It's important to remember that while probationary periods are designed to assess a new employee's fit within the organization, UFCW 247 members can still access the grievance procedure during this time. Even though there may be some limitations, this ensures that workers have an avenue to address concerns. If issues arise during the probationary period, UFCW 247 members can seek guidance and support from their union staff representatives.



Know Your Rights

Every worker in British Columbia has some basic workplace rights. These are built into Provincial Labour Laws, including:

- **Employment Standards:** Your basic minimum working conditions
- **Labour Relations:** Your right to have a union and participate in it
- **Occupational Health and Safety:** Your right to a healthy and safe workplace
- **Workers' Compensation:** Your right to support if you suffer a workplace illness or injury
- **Human Rights:** Your right to not face discrimination based on a prohibited ground (race, gender, disability, etc.)

Whether you have a union or not, basic laws apply to your workplace. If you are in a union, however, you can access and enforce better workplace rights.



Some key union rights you should be aware of:

Right to Representation

Every UFCW 247 member has the right to representation. Depending on your workplace, that can range from having a shop steward present with you in a discipline meeting, to the right to contact your union staff representative and file a grievance or complaint over a potential violation of your collective agreement.

Just cause for discipline

People make mistakes at work. Corrective action is sometimes necessary and is usually done through discipline. However, discipline must be fair and reasonable in the circumstances. Your union will press the company to show that it has “just cause” in discipline situations, which means ensuring discipline is warranted and the penalty justified.

Seniority

Seniority (your length of continuous service with your employer) is the cornerstone of any unionized workplace. It is something you build up over time, and depending on where you work, it can impact your access to other rights, including getting more hours, receiving overtime, choosing vacation time off, and more.

Union members have many more rights not covered here. If you feel your rights are being violated, contact a shop steward or union staff representative to talk things over.

Exercise Your Rights

When workers face issues and they don't have a union, they usually have to handle things on their own. This could include having to talk to their boss on their own, or if things escalate, hiring a lawyer to make a complaint or file a WorkSafeBC appeal. Many times, it means having to put up with violations of workers' rights or having no choice but to quit.

With a union, there are ways you can legally deal with workplace issues. In all of these scenarios, we recommend that you talk things over with either a shop steward or staff union representative before trying to resolve things on your own.

Because you have a union, you don't have to go at it alone. There is support through your shop stewards or staff union representatives. It never hurts to just reach out to your union staff representative to talk things over.

Informal Resolutions

There's usually nothing wrong with talking to your boss and trying to deal with workplace issues informally. In fact, this is usually the easiest and quickest way to handle day-to-day issues. We recommend taking good notes of any conversations you had, just in case things change later or things aren't fully resolved.

Grievances

Unions are known for filing "grievances." A grievance is a violation of an employee's rights on the job, whether under the collective agreement or the law. Usually after trying to resolve the issue informally, a union staff representative can file a formal written complaint. This is a legal way for us to resolve workplace issues.

There are time limits (anywhere from 3 to 10 days) regarding when a formal written grievance can be filed. Check your collective agreement or call your union staff representative to determine what those limits are.

Member Engagement Actions

Grievances are legal processes that sometimes take a while to resolve. We sometimes find that grievances are not what's needed to draw attention to an issue or concern. A union member engagement campaign can mean meeting as a group with a manager, replying to a company survey in the same way, or even wearing union-sanctioned buttons or stickers.

ALWAYS check with a union staff representative before considering member engagement actions.

Safety at Work

Every worker in British Columbia has the right to a healthy and safe workplace. As a union, we believe workers should always return home from work safely. But when they are injured or become ill because of their work, they should receive care and compensation.

Under the law, every worker has four basic health and safety rights:



The Right to Know

Workers have the right to know about any potential hazards in their workplace. That means you have the right to proper training and information on machinery, equipment, working conditions, processes, and hazardous substances in your workplace. This could mean the presence of ammonia or the frequency of customer abuse and violence.

Look out for a health and safety bulletin board in your worksite. This is often where your employer posts required WorkSafeBC inspection reports and other important information.



The Right to Participate

Workers have the right to participate in identifying and resolving workplace health and safety concerns. This usually happens through worker involvement in Joint Health and Safety Committees, workplace inspections, and investigations. It can also happen by simply reporting a potential hazard to a supervisor, committee member or shop steward.



Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. If you have reasonable cause to believe that performing a work task puts you or someone else at risk, you must not perform the job or task. You must immediately notify your supervisor or employer, who must then take the appropriate steps to determine if the work is unsafe and to remedy the situation.



Right to Protection in Relation to Prohibited Action

By law, employers are prohibited from penalizing workers for raising a health and safety issue, reporting a hazard, or filing a WorkSafeBC claim.

Safety at Work continued

Workplace health and safety is a shared responsibility. Your employer is responsible for training, orientation, providing personal protective equipment, and putting safe work practices in place. As a worker, you are responsible for following safe work procedures, wearing safety gear, and reporting any safety concerns you have. Even though it can be hard to bring up these issues to management, speaking up plays an important role in making sure all workers stay healthy and safe on the job.



To accomplish this, you must:

- Be alert to hazards and report them immediately to your supervisor or employer.
- Follow safe work procedures and act safely in the workplace at all times.
- Properly wear the protective clothing, devices, and equipment provided.
- Co-operate with joint health and safety committees, worker health and safety representatives, WorkSafeBC officers, and anybody with health and safety duties.
- Get treatment quickly should an injury happen on the job and tell the health care provider that the injury is work-related.
- Report the injury/incident to your employer, WorkSafeBC and your union staff representative. This means that there are forms you'll be required to fill out and sign.
- Return to work safely after an injury by modifying your duties and not immediately starting with your full, regular responsibilities.
- Never work under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any other substance, or if you're overly tired.

WorkSafeBC is a great resource for health and safety information and assistance, visit **www.worksafebc.com** or call toll-free 1.888.621.7233 to get help with:

- General workplace health and safety questions or concerns
- Information about Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requirements
- Reports of bullying and harassment
- Requests for a worksite consultation

For relevant information and existing campaigns, check out the Health and Safety page on our website: **www.ufcw247.com**.



Did you know?

If you are injured or become ill because of your work and your WCB claim is denied, as a UFCW 247 member, you have access to a UFCW 247 staff representative who can advise and may be able to assist you with an appeal.

Benefits, Education and Resources

Unions bring clear value to their members by winning conditions beyond those employers have to provide by law. Many UFCW 247 members have access to an array of benefits that may be specific to their workplace.



Get information specific to your workplace

Details of benefit and pension plans, including eligibility and how to receive them, vary greatly. Some require members to call a number to register, for example. Check out our website to see the benefit plans and forms specific to your workplace.



Free Online Courses for you and your family

Education is a big part of what we do as a union. Knowledge is power and workers who are empowered by knowledge can create change in their workplaces. UFCW 247 members and their families have access to a large selection of FREE online courses through our UFCW Canada's webCampus platform. Over 200 courses are available 24/7! To get started, members simply need to sign up for an account.



Scholarships and Grants

UFCW 247 members who, in addition to working, are also enrolled in post-secondary education at a Canadian-recognized institution, are eligible to apply for many UFCW scholarships and grants that range between \$750 and \$8,000. These are available throughout the year.



Additional Resources

Many of us may face challenges outside of work that can certainly impact our work life. There are many resources in the community that can be accessed at any given time. Some employers may also offer programs to assist workers with life challenges. UFCW 247 encourages members to seek help and support when needed; resources are often available free of charge or at low cost.

All of this, and much more information, is available on our website: www.ufcw247.com.



Your Union

The vast majority of the activities of UFCW Local 247 depend on the involvement of members in their union.

As a member in good standing, here are some ways you can get involved:

Joint Health and Safety Committee

Serving as a worker representative on the Joint Health and Safety Committee is a great way to learn about health and safety laws and ensure those rules are followed at your worksite. Worker representatives are entitled to 8 hours of paid training each year. These positions are appointed by your union, so reach out to your union staff representative to talk about how you can get involved.



Member Activist

Becoming an active member is a great way to jumpstart your union, even if you don't want to be a shop steward just yet. Members who are well-informed and encourage others to get involved are key to building a stronger union.

Shop Steward

Providing direct leadership and representation to fellow members in the workplace.

Executive Board

Members in good standing can run in union elections to fill positions on the UFCW Local 247 Executive Board. These elections are held every four years.

"UFCW members work to feed and serve our communities. The best chance at getting what we deserve is by building a strong union."

- UFCW 247 member who works at Superstore

Notes

Connect with your **Union:**

Call: 604.535.8329 or
1.888.361.UFCW (8329)

Email: ufcw@ufcw247.com

Visit: www.ufcw247.com

Social: @ufcw247



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