

Telephone Town Hall – August 29, 2024 @ 7 p.m.

1. **Meeting called to order** at 7:02 pm by Dan Goodman.
2. **Roll Call of officers:**
Dan Goodman, **President**; Charles Pratt, **Secretary-Treasurer**; Margaret Robins, **VP 1**; Alicia Whitehead, **VP 2**; Dino Catellarin **VP 5**; Kirste Hawgood, **VP #10**; Cathy Shannon, **VP #14**;
3. **Adoption of Agenda**
m / s / c to adopt the agenda
4. **Adoption of May 30, 2024 Minutes** as posted on UFCW 247 website
m / s / c to adopt the minutes
5. **President's Report**
 - UFCW Local 1518 President, Patrick Johnson was elected President. On August 15th, they announced Ronda Melbourne had been elected as Secretary-Treasurer by their Board. We reached out to congratulate her and let her know we are looking forward to working together.
 - I nominated two members at last week's Executive Board meeting to fill the vacancies from Susan Espin and Sandra Geldart leaving. For Sandra's vacancy, VP 7 – Vancouver Island, I nominated Michele Venables from Superstore 1524. For Susan's vacancy, VP 3, I put forth Nalini Nowrang from Superstore 1554. Both were unanimously elected by the Board.
 - Some staff changes at the Local. Mike Toal who had units on the Island, Lower Mainland and did some communication work chose to take another opportunity and left our Local. We wish Mike all the best. Sinead Wilson who has been off on temporary staff with us for a while and was spearheading the engagement visits came on as a full-time Representative as of this week.
 - The role of communications has always been a bit of a challenge for us. We have had multiple people looking after communications and it wasn't running as smoothly as we wanted it to. Daniel Tseghay was hired as of this week and we are excited to have him with us. Daniel is a long-time union communication representative having worked with both public and private sector unions, most recently with CUPE in Toronto. He's looking forward to being back in the lower mainland having grown up in Newton Surrey.
 - Our National office has announced that Lily Olson will be replacing Pablo Godoy in the role of Western Regional Director. Pablo is moving back to Ontario. Lily will continue to be based in Saskatchewan.
 - With regards to servicing and with Mike's departure, we had to look at moving some units around. Tima will now have the entire Island and Wojtek will look after FG Deli. Mike spent lots of time with Wojtek prior to leaving, took him into the facility last week and had Zoom meetings with the Stewards jointly.
 - We have spoke a lot on the topic of violence in the workplace. Our initiative with the reports going to Reps and the follow-up has received National attention. I was fortunate enough to be on a panel at our recent NDF Conference and spoke about what we are doing. A number of Locals have reached out looking for information. We had been communicating with Local 1006A in Ontario as they were doing some great things as well. They had developed a sticker that was to be placed alongside the Union Shop sticker by the entrances to stores. Its purpose was to send another message to customers that there was zero tolerance for customer rudeness and abuse, except this time and an additional step in making the public aware of the issue. Local 1006A was successful in getting Loblaw to agree to let them be posted in corporate stores, and as soon as

they got the okay, we sent off a letter also looking for approval. We got the okay last week. Our stickers are being produced and we will arrange to put them up as soon as we can into the Superstores.

- We have also emailed a copy to Sobeys and said that we would like them up in their stores with a joint message from us and Local 1518. We are awaiting response. The message on the sticker reads:

"Workers here are proud members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 247. They're doing their best to serve you and their communities. We expect everyone to treat our members with respect and dignity. Zero tolerance for customer rudeness and abuse. Workers at this store are protected by anti-bullying language in their union contract. If you have an issue, please address it with the store manager directly."

- On July 26 we were notified just like the rest of the public that BC Tree Fruits were shutting down immediately. Members were not given proper notice and there was a lot of confusion. We quickly filed the grievance against the company on behalf of all members alleging breaches of the collective agreement and the BC Employment Standards Act.

The grievance covered all North and South Union members and seek to deal with the company's failure to provide sixty-days' notice of closure and the company's failure to meet with the union to discuss closure plans per our collective agreement. Importantly, the grievance also dealt with the right of union members to severance pay under the BC Employment Standards Act, as well as payment of monies owed to employees such as but not limited to earned vacation, bank overtime, and then any other form of earned wages.

We did have a meeting with the company officials on August 12th, but they were not in a position to mediate at the time and made us aware that they would be seeking additional protection from all creditors by filing for creditor protection in the BC Supreme Court, pursuant to the Company Creditor Arrangement Act, the CCAA Act. This meant the company was seeking court protection from those it owed money to. They filed that same day. There was a hearing on this application on August 13th, 2024. Our lawyer, Anthony Glavin was present to ensure the union and its members' interests were identified for the court.

- In a recent communication from the employer, the company referenced the ability for members to file a claim under the Wage Earner Protection Program Act, or WEPA, in order to deal with any monies they may be owed. This process may have confused some people who were unaware the process even existed. A monitor was confirmed by the court to assist in dealing with this matter. They will be calculating each employee's outstanding claim amount and providing each employee with an individualized letter outlining what the employee's claim is, how to apply for WEPA and providing the employee with a proof of claim form and instructions to fill out the form. They will need this before filing a claim. We will be working with our members to help verify those numbers to make the claim successful. This process may take a few weeks.
- Earlier today, Eliska Long, the union rep for BC Tree Fruit, met with the Community Transition Team, which is a program that is led by the BC government Community Transition team who gathers service providers and organizations to share and discuss opportunities for individuals and communities that are impacted by a significant job loss. Everyone who joined today, which included Okanogan College, WorkBC, Service Canada, the mayor of Oliver, council members, and more all have their focus on supporting the impacted workers and are partnering together to support those that need assistance. There may have been individuals accessing some of the services already and we strongly encourage others to reach out to these programs as there are many options for training, education and assistance to get the job ready.
- From time to time, we experience issues at our warehouses with the companies and their expectations for our members. Union rep Eric Seto had made me aware that the Surrey and Marine Drive facilities were interested in having the UFCW International engineer come out to their workplaces. The labor standards Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the time studies need to be validated and verified to ensure the system has fairly captured the current

conditions. Assistance has been requested through the national office for the support of a union industrial engineer to verify and audit the Loblaw company engineer's time and SOPs. The union industrial engineer will conduct their own time studies, verify all SOPs are up-to-date, verify travel times and distance coordinates. The industrial engineer is a vital resource provided by the International Union to support and aid various union locals with engineered labored standards in their warehouses or production facilities. As companies always try to maximize production and have their colleagues do more with less, it is vital that we have a safety check in place to ensure that employers do not put their profits first and set standards that are not attainable at a reasonable pace.

Cathy speaking on Safeway:

- A small delivery of the first printing of the Safeway collective agreement has been delivered, and in some cases, mailed to all the stores in B.C. and it's now also available to members on the website site. The job postings from the vacancies created by the recent severance of the meat, deli, and seafood clerks will be posted on October 1st. These vacancies will be at the discretion of the employer on whether they will all be full-time grid A postings or all full-time grid B postings or a mixture of both. These severance vacancies will be posted in the stores of the employer's choosing. These postings are strictly because of the severance. They will not impact the total overall 90 full-time grid B positions that were agreed to over the term of the agreement, so for every full-time grid A severance accepted if filled by a grid B full-time position, those postings will not impact the 90 agreed to in bargaining. The language for the posting information can be found in letters of understanding 30 and 32 of the collective bargaining agreement.
- There have been some recent changes in the labor relations and Human Resources Department of Safeway. In labor relations, they have a maternity leave and have filled that position temporarily, so we have only seen a minor drop in responses to the union issues at this point. In the Human Resources Department, they're down a human resources director and that vacancy has had an impact getting some simple answers to issues in a timely manner. We urge our members not to wait but to use the employee service center the company has for things like your benefit questions, vacation entitlements, including how many hours you have worked for your next step increase.
- There are also some recent store manager vacancies as well, at least two that we are aware of. There may be some store manager moves and other department manager moves made as the employer indicated they were looking at where their current managers lived to see about moving some of them closer to home.
- The meeting between UFCW 247, Safeway, and UFCW 1518 to discuss the locations of the 10-store pilot program for the implementation of the grid B 36 hour modified work week will take place September 23rd. All the parties have agreed to meet to determine if we can come to an agreement on the locations of the pilot program. The 10-store pilot program information I'm referencing is also found in letter of understanding 30 of the agreement.
- The meat cutter in-house training continues with Safeway. The cohort's six group of cutters are being tested in the coming weeks, and for those that pass the cutting test, they will join the meat cutters on the float pods. The company had sent out an expression of interest to stores for those members interested in learning to cut meat for the in-house training for the upcoming Cohort 7 group. The union has not seen the list of members yet who have been accepted.
- We want to remind members we also have a meat cutting scholarship and sponsorship program through Thompson River University (TRU). With Bruce Jackson's recent retirement, the union has asked Alicia Whitehead from your executive board, a journeyman meat cutter on the float pool who has gone through the TRU program to review the applicants we receive to see if we can provide sponsorship for the program to become journeyman meat cutters. We are looking to establish a process for members to make it easier to put themselves into the application process for this journeyman scholarship and sponsorship program. If you have any questions about the program, you can email ufcw@ufcw247.com.

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

6. **Secretary-Treasurer Report**

- It recently came to the UFCW 247 Benefit Trust Fund trustees' attention that there had been an unauthorized change to the optical benefit available to participants under the plan. A steward from the Okanagan raised an issue with the trustees as to how the benefit coverage for optical worked as he had received an unexpected answer from PBAS when his claim was submitted. The administrator took the position that the provided coverage was for \$250 on a rolling 24-month period and that part of his claim would be denied as he had exceeded the coverage limit within that time period. The issue at hand is that the administrator had arbitrarily imposed the rolling aspect of the maximum rather than the Trustees' position that the \$250 coverage limit began on the date of purchase and was in effect for a two-year period from that date. The trustees taken strong issue with the unauthorized change to the provided coverage and have scheduled a meeting with the administrator for further investigation."
- There's just the Trustees that make these decisions and it is PBAS's task to follow their instructions on coverage. PBAS has responded that they made the change to be in line with how others similar plans functioned. At this point, we are only aware of one individual impacted, but this will be part of our investigation to see if others have also been negatively affected. When participants purchase glasses from most suppliers, they typically cost over \$250 and this would be a non-issue. In this particular case, the participants purchased low-cost glasses at \$100 and it was a later purchase that brought the issue to light.
- Loblaw has initiated an engagement campaign of its own by reaching out to all their employees across Canada, including management and head office. The program consists of twice-weekly texts, updating people on some of the feel-good pat-on-the-back type things and information on things that Loblaw and its employees are doing."

"Consider this to be something of an internal public relations exercise that is being done within its own ranks. Loblaw in the grocery industry in general have been getting a lot of bad press over pricing and shrink-flation over the past several years, and this is an attempt to let employees know about the positive things that are happening in their organization. The feedback so far has been quite positive. While they're hoping all of their employees continue to participate, anyone can decide to opt out of receiving the text."

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

7. **Engagement & Education Report**

- In addition to the education sessions and pride events that we had booked and mentioned at our last quarterly membership meeting, we've been busy hosting union open houses at many of your workplaces with more being booked in the weeks to come. Notices for this type of events are posted on the union bulletin boards and are followed by an email to members of the particular workplace the day before the specific event. So if you are not currently receiving our emails, please call our office to update your contact information.
- Applications for our UFCW 247 scholarships and education grants are available for one more month. The deadline is September 30th, information is posted on our website as usual.
- August 31st marks International Overdose Awareness Day. We know many whose lives have been changed by overdose and we want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the devastating impact that overdoses have on our workplaces and our communities. We also encourage you to show your support by wearing purple on Sunday.
- Together with your engagement committee, we've been busy planning the engagement conference that we announced a few months ago. By now, you should all have seen posters and

received emails inviting you to apply for this conference. Our engagement committee members were also out in many of the workplaces at the end of July, personally inviting many members to apply. Our engagement committee members will be reviewing the applications and helping select the members who will be invited to register for this conference.

If you have already applied, please keep an eye on your email for information coming your way no later than September 8th. All applicants can expect an email from us by this date either to invite you to register or to let you know that you've been placed on a wait list. This will be determined by your responses in the application form that's been submitted. This conference is taking place in Surrey from October 20th to the 23rd, our engagement committee and UFCW staff are working hard to ensure that this event is informative, engaging, and inspiring for participants attending from across the province.

8. **New Business**

- No new business.

Q&A PERIOD – questions were unique and individual of nature therefore members were called back.

9. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 pm.

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