

UFCW 832 Access Live
September 11, 2018

- Jeff Traeger: My name is Jeff Traeger and I'm the president of your union, UFCW Local 832. I want to welcome you all to the September 11th, 2018 Telephone Town Hall General Membership Meeting for members of UFCW Local 832, which is now called to order. It's hard to believe that another Manitoba summer is behind us. The days are already a little shorter and a little colder. The leaves are already a little less green. I hope all of you had an opportunity to enjoy a little of the beautiful weather we had in July and August. I know that we're gearing up for a busy fall with a whole bunch going on here at the Local, including Loblaws bargaining for a contract that expires in just 16 days.
- Jeff Traeger: With me in the studio tonight, along with our communications coordinator Chris Noto is your secretary treasurer Beatrice Bruske, our health and safety coordinator Phil Kraychuck, our organizer Mike Howden, and union representative Jeff Bergen. For tonight's Town Hall Meeting we will not be reading any reports, which will give us more time for presentations from our guests and more time for you to ask any questions you may have. There are three reports that our bylaws require us to approve at this meeting and they are the minutes of the previous meeting that was held back on May the 8th, secretary treasurer's report on the current finances of the Local, and my report. All three of these documents have been previously posted on our website at ufcw832.com for you to review, and they will stay posted there in our archives so you can see all of those documents from our Town Hall meetings at any time.
- Jeff Traeger: We're not going to read through those documents tonight, but we will conduct three votes throughout the meeting to pass the approval of them. This will allow us to dedicate more of the hour to hear from our guests and take your questions. For all the members on the line that would like to ask a question please press the star key, followed by the number three and you will be placed in a queue to ask your question. I would ask that you please remember that the purpose of this meeting is to discuss issues, or ask questions about matters that effect all Local 832 members. If you have a specific question about a grievance or an issue that effects your workplace alone I would ask that you contact your full-time union representative whose name and contact information is available on the UFCW bulletin board in your workplace, or online at ufcw832.com.
- Jeff Traeger: Tonight is our third quarterly Town Hall General Membership Meeting of 2018, and I want to thank all of you who have participated in these meetings for making them such a success. Our agenda tonight begins with voting to approve the minutes of the last meeting. While we're completing the results of that vote I will be interviewing Jeff Bergen, who is the union representative in our nonprofit sector representing workers at FASD, Winnserv, Vision of Independence, and many others. Jeff is here to talk to us about Abilities Manitoba and some initiatives they are taking to lobby for higher wages in this sector.
- Jeff Traeger: Following that we'll hear from our northern union representative Mike Howden, who is the lead organizer at Local 832. Mike represents UFCW members working from Gillam, and Thompson, all the way to The Pas and Dawson, and many places in between. He's here tonight to talk about some initiatives we're taking in the north, and to give us an update on some of the Local's organizing efforts.

Jeff Traeger: Finally, we will speak to Phil Kraychuck, our health and safety coordinator about what changes we expect might be coming up in health and safety, and WCB legislation in the months ahead. I will begin by making a motion to approve the minutes of our last meeting, which took place on May the 8th, 2018 ...

Speaker 2: Seconded.

Jeff Traeger: It has been moved and seconded so, please vote "yes" by pressing the number one on your keypad, or "no" by pressing the number two on your keypad. Once again, to get in the lineup to ask a question simply press the star key, followed by the number three and you will be placed in the queue. Since we will be opening up the phone line for questions soon please get in the queue now if you have a question again, by pressing the star key followed by the number three.

Jeff Traeger: Now, I'm going to turn it over to Jeff Bergen. Jeff maybe you can tell us a little bit about what initiatives Abilities Manitoba is taking.

Jeff B.: Yeah. Thanks Jeff. I would love to do that. First of all, I'm the union rep responsible for the field of assisted living in and around Winnipeg so, that's B&L Homes for Youth, Winnserv, FASD, Life's Journey, Visions of Independence in Winnipeg, Port Perry and Carman, ACL Interlake out in Stonewall, and Wings of Power out in beautiful Pine Falls, Parkview. Over the summer the week of September 9th to September 15th was declared Direct Support Professional Week by the province in recognition of the tough work you folks do. That's why I'm here to tell you all about a rally that's happening this Thursday at the Legislature Building between 11:30am and 1:00pm being put on by the Alliance of Direct Support Professionals of Manitoba and Abilities Manitoba.

Jeff B.: Abilities Manitoba is a network of agencies that exist to foster excellence in services for people with intellectual disabilities. What they're asking is for people to come down to the Leg. on Thursday, September 13th, bring a bagged lunch and make a sign to express the impact the profession has had on your life, and how a living wage would make a huge difference. What our members need to know is that these nonprofit agencies, meaning the funding comes from the provincial government so, we need to show them that proper care deserves proper wages. UFCW has over 600 members working in assisted living, and there's countless others, hardworking Manitobans who work in this field. A living wage would mean better care through more consistent support. This benefits the people working with people with intellectual disabilities, and this benefits the people living with these agencies. There's less turnover because the people actually have a wage they can live on.

Jeff B.: Right now, wages are low because the government won't properly fund this industry. The rally on 13th aims to promote proper funding in a positive manner, and all are welcome. We will be at the rally on Thursday and we hope to see you come join us. If you can't make it down to the rally you can also help by following Abilities Manitoba on Facebook, that's Abilities Manitoba, or visit their website abilitiesmanitoba.org, and sign the petition for a living wage here in Manitoba. We know they have more plans so, watch out for exciting things to come out of Abilities Manitoba and from your union.

Jeff Traeger: Thank you very much Jeff, appreciate that. It's the Department of Family Services that funds these agencies primarily, right?

Jeff B.: That's correct Jeff. That's who is in charge of the funding that goes to the agencies that have to do this work.

Jeff Traeger: Yeah. We've been lobbying that particular division of government for quite some time to improve the wages in this sector, but it's not just wages that are low. Right? These people don't have really significantly good benefit plans or pension plans. As a result is there a high turnover in the industry?

Jeff B.: That's absolutely the case Jeff. There's a very high turnover because the wages, the benefits aren't there to keep the people. Again, time and time again the members I meet love the work they do, they love the people they work with, and it's just if they could just have a higher wage to support themselves and their families.

Jeff Traeger: Yeah. Sometimes it's not really the kind of job that people stay in forever because, they just can't make a living at it. It has nothing to do with whether or not they like the job, it just doesn't provide enough to live on.

Jeff B.: Absolutely.

Jeff Traeger: All right. If you can make it out on Thursday please do. If you need a link to that website I spoke to our communications guy earlier, and we're going to make sure that's available. He tells me, he's whispering now that it's available on Facebook. For those old cronies like me who aren't on Facebook, are we going to put it right on the regular website, too, a link to that? We will do that. I got the thumbs up. Very good.

Jeff Traeger: I also see that the vote to approve the previous minutes has been passed so, now it's time to take a few questions. We only have one person on the line to ask a question now so, we're going to go to Peter. Peter go ahead ... Hello Peter.

Speaker 2: [inaudible 00:08:47]?

Jeff Traeger: Are you there Peter? Should we all hum the music to Jeopardy now? Peter's not answering on the line so, we're going to move directly onto our next guest, but before doing that I will make a motion to approve the secretary treasurer's report for the seven month period ending July 31st, 2018.

Speaker 2: Seconded.

Jeff Traeger: It has been moved and seconded so, please press the number one on your keypad to vote "yes" and the number two on your keypad to vote "no". If you have a question about the secretary treasurer's report or anything else at all please press the star key followed by the number three, and we will gladly take your questions.

Jeff Traeger: Now, we're going to have a chat with Mike Howden. Mike is our organizer and he's also our rep in northern Manitoba. Mike, what's new in the north these days?

Mike: What we've been doing in the north is, Sonya Taylor's been organize ... not organizing ... has been ratifying pretty much all of our northern collective agreements. She's done Gillam, Thompson, Allegion, Arctic Drugs, and she's starting on Leaf Rapids Co-op next week so, she's really had a busy summer. Those new collective agreements have been very well negotiated. The other things that we've been doing is changing the servicing model and how we're doing it a little bit.

Jeff Traeger: Okay. Now, you've been in the territory for almost a year, right?

Mike: Yes.

Jeff Traeger: How has the transition gone and what kind of servicing adjustments have you been making?

Mike: The north has been excellent. The people up in the north, they're very friendly. It's actually an excellent place to go up. They're inviting, everybody asks you how the road is. It took a little bit of learning. The last two trips I've forgotten a jacket. I think I don't need a jacket in July, but I did so, that's the one thing I'm tucking under the seat in the car for sure. What we have been doing is we've changed some of the training models and how we're doing it mostly with the training center. What they've done is we brought the training to the north so, the people aren't having to travel as far and make that much of a time commitment to attend training. With an extra day of travel on each end we're able to more effectively bring the training to the members, and they're getting a better benefit of that.

Jeff Traeger: Is the training held in Thompson?

Mike: The training was held in Thompson. We also had our first ever Northern Conference in the north, which we opened up not just to shop stewards and health and safety, but also to members. We did that in June. Erin from the training center did an excellent job, and I think we did get a lot of good value from the training. I think that not only the members that aren't shop stewards or health and safety, they were able to get some of the training and be stronger advocates for either health and safety, or even be able to answer questions for stewards.

Jeff Traeger: Are there other servicing options that you're looking at besides training in the north as well?

Mike: Yes. What we normally did in the city is you go into the workplace once or twice a month and you see the people. The north is quite a bit different. The distance between all of the places is huge, it's hours. To see ten people, you have to drive 300 kilometers so, what I've been trying to do is look at different models and how to service them better, how are they going to get more bang for their buck. We have been looking at,

we looked at the training initiatives, taking the training to them. We've also looked at utilizing other tools that may be more useful, Hustle Up, topic specific Town Halls.

Mike: For instance, if we were to do a healthcare Town Hall, the majority of members in the north are in healthcare. We could do a topic specific healthcare Town Hall just so that the healthcare members are getting what their points are [inaudible 00:13:28] similar to this GMM.

Jeff Traeger: Okay. That sounds like a great idea. Over the summer what events, besides the one that you've already mentioned, what events has the union been involved with? Is there anything coming up this fall?

Mike: Yep. What we have been doing is we have attended the Pride, we've had all the Labor Day picnics in all the smaller communities the Dawsons, the Brandons, the Thompsons. We've been doing all of those type of engagement opportunities ... just to name a few.

Jeff Traeger: I understand that we've also got an initiative going on with the OCN Blizzard in The Pas, right?

Mike: Yes. This is going to be exciting. We're going to be the opening game day sponsor for the OCN Blizzard in The Pas. We're doing the home opener on September 28th. This is the first time for an event like this so, we want to see how people react because, we only have a few stores in, or a few members in the north, but we recognize that we need some more engagement from our members there. I think that's going to be a really good opportunity. I think we're sponsoring the first goal and ... I don't know. We haven't called it a name yet, but UFCW Days.

Jeff Traeger: There you go. All right. That all sounds very interesting. It sounds like we've got a lot going on in your territory right now. As I said at the outset you're also the organizer for Local 832 so, how's that been going?

Mike: That's been going really well. I have a staff of one and he's on the line right now. We did actually have some success this year with the Viterra, it's a canola seed crushing plant in St. Agathe, Manitoba. We were successful in having them automatic where they didn't have to vote because the federal plant-

Jeff Traeger: Just maybe explain that for a minute. I know in Manitoba we used to have automatic certification if we signed up 60% of the members in the workplace, right?

Mike: Right.

Jeff Traeger: But, the new government, the Pallister government removed that and now even if we sign up 100% of the members in Manitoba we have to take a vote, right?

Mike: That's absolutely correct. So-

Jeff Traeger: But, this-

Mike: It doesn't matter whether we have one or 100.

Jeff Traeger: Right. But, this unit isn't covered by The Manitoba Labor Board, they're covered by The National Labor Relations, or the-

Mike: Federal.

Jeff Traeger: Federal, The Canada Labor Relations Board, right?

Mike: Yep. Their rules are different so, it's 50 plus one and we had much more than 50% so, we didn't have to go to a vote, which was great. This is a great group of guys that's going to be a really strong unit. We also, we're all set for bargaining next month, the third, fourth and fifth of October. Blake Cruthers is going to be the negotiator and Ron Allard is going to be the servicing rep so, those people are in very good hands, and I think that, that's going to be a unit that we can possibly build on.

Jeff Traeger: That's a real good news story, and congratulations on that certification. I know that you had kind of a bad news story recently and I think it's important that we hear about that one a little bit too because, it's got a silver lining in that cloud, doesn't it?

Mike: Yes, it does. It's actually bittersweet because we did apply for a welding shop in Oak Bluff, Manitoba called Vis, V-I-S. There's approximately 47 employees there. We had a really strong inside committee. They were doing an excellent job. We had to use quite a few services from the union. We had translation services to translate documents. We needed translation services at The Labor Board to change the ballots and those types of things so, there was a lot of effort that went into this campaign. The employer was anti-union so, they put up a lot of roadblocks, which we had to struggle through. There was some intimidation and some other unforeseen things that they would do, but at the end we were successful. We were able to get it to go to a vote. Unfortunately, we had to have a hearing before the vote to see who was going to be allowed to vote or not. We were successful at the hearing but we came up short on the vote, 23 to 21.

Jeff Traeger: Wow. 23, 21 so, it was just a couple of votes away from going the other way, right?

Mike: Absolutely. But, you know what, it's not all negative. With a close vote like that, that lets the employer know that they obviously have some significant issues. I think the employer did recognize this because, my inside person had also sent me a posting that the company had sent out, and actually, all of those employees are going to get a two dollar an hour wage increase. They got improvements to benefits because they didn't have benefits before. They also got sick time. They also graciously gave them bereavement leave and two family days. That's all things that they didn't have before and they hadn't seen that in the last ten years so, this is a direct result of the union being around. Hopefully, with that influence that keeps the employer on their toes and listening to the members.

Jeff Traeger: Good. Excellent. All right. Anything else on the go?

Mike: Lastly ... No. I don't have anything else on the go but we could talk about ... I'm still looking for SPURs, Special Project Union Representatives to help me organize. This summer we had, it was a busy summer, we could have organized more or been working on more things, but the time off, it was very difficult to get any employees off to do organizing because, it's summer relief time. We had a little bit of struggles there, but hopefully we're going to pick that up ... in the fall.

Jeff Traeger: What does being a SPUR actually entail? What does it involve? I know when we say SPURs and I know it stands for Special Project Union Representatives, but I'm not sure that everybody on the line is aware of what is expected of you if you want to help bring new members to UFCW. Can you give us just a real brief kind of update or outline of what it is that they do?

Mike: Yep. A SPUR basically, it's an employee, it's a health and safety person, it could be a shop steward, it could be an advocate. You don't have to be a steward or anything like that. What you do is you advocate for the union to get workplaces because, everybody has a story about a workplace where somebody is unhappy, they've been mistreated, they're not getting any benefits, they're not getting the correct pay, those kinds of issues. That's what happens is they call the union, and say, "This is my workplace. I need some help." Generally what happens is I don't make all the house calls myself. I have to have help to do that. What we would do is typically book an employee off that's shown some interest and has the ability to go out there and talk to the talk, and put our best foot forward. They basically become an employee of the union to work for a designated period of time on that campaign.

Jeff Traeger: And we provide them with a little bit of training so that they're not going out there cold the first time they do it on their own.

Mike: Absolutely. We do provide some training. We're also looking for people that speak different languages. That's a very big benefit right now because, there's lots of new Canadians that are working in these jobs that don't communicate as well as they could-

Jeff Traeger: In English.

Mike: In English. In the last campaign we had to use translation services quite a bit. Fortunately for us we have somebody in our office that can do that for us, and it was an excellent asset so, I have to thank Lynn for doing that for us.

Jeff Traeger: And Lou from our accounting department, right?

Mike: That's right. She was an excellent asset to have in this situation.

Jeff Traeger: Last question, if someone's interested in finding out more about being a SPUR, or helping the union with an organizing drive what do they do?

Mike: They can either call the office directly and ask to speak with me, there's the website, they can contact us through the website, phone calls go through their reps, anything like

that, and I'd be happy to hear them out and see if we can't work something out in their favor. One thing that I wanted to point is now that we're coming up into the fall and into the end of the year what I've done is I've set out all my scheduling, scheduled all my servicing for the northern area for the remainder of the year. There's going to be lots of opportunities for me to be out there, and you'll probably be seeing me two or three times in the month of September alone so, look for me in your workplace. This Sunday I'll be heading to Thompson so, Thompson people look for me.

Jeff Traeger: Okay. Excellent. Thank you so much Mike, appreciate it. I also see on the screen here that the vote to approve the secretary treasurer's report has been passed. It's a quiet night in the question department. I don't know if everybody's still got a little bit of that summer kind of leftover going on, but we only have one person on the line and that's Sandra. Sandra, go ahead.

Sandra: Hi. I work at the St. Boniface Hospital and I'm not really pleased with the union right now because, when I started there we made \$11 an hour and I'm making only \$17 right now, and I've been there 15 years. Some of the girls that are working in the [inaudible 00:23:29] are making the same amount as I am. We asked the union about it and she said, "Don't worry about it because they don't care."

Jeff Traeger: Oh my-

Sandra: I've been here 15 years and we're not getting nothing. The union won't do nothing for us.

Jeff Traeger: Right now, it's very difficult for the union to get to the bargaining table with the employer-

Sandra: Yeah. We-

Jeff Traeger: And government of Manitoba-

Sandra: Yeah.

Jeff Traeger: Because, they won't let us bargain and it's not just us, it's all the healthcare unions-

Sandra: Yeah. And the whole-

Jeff Traeger: Go ahead.

Sandra: The whole problem is that we do our work but they want us to do more. If someone phones in sick then we have to do extra and we don't get paid for it. I had to a porter's job and I never got paid the porter's job. She just said, "Go home," and I said, "No. I don't want to go home early because I'm not going to get paid for it." I love the St. Boniface Hospital, but they're not doing us any good right now.

Jeff Traeger: Yeah. [inaudible 00:24:29] Bea's got a comment-

Sandra: I'm almost-

Jeff Traeger: Can you just hang on one second Sandra? We're going to get Bea to respond to your comments.

Sandra: Okay. Thank you.

Bea: Hi, Sandra.

Sandra: Hi.

Bea: I have fortunately, I guess, had the opportunity to bargain healthcare collective agreements in the past and I think what's important to note is that all healthcare employees within the Winnipeg region for the job that they're doing have the same wage scale, and you have the same top rate regardless of which hospital, regardless of which union represents you. Unfortunately, as Jeff indicated due to Bill 28 being passed by our provincial government there is right now a freeze on all bargaining that's happening within the region, and the government has mandated zero wage increases for the next number of years. So, regardless of whether your union would like to bargain, or would not like to bargain, and we definitely would like to bargain, we have no ability to increase wages at this moment in time based on actions by our current provincial government.

Jeff Traeger: Yes. We can't leave politics alone because they don't leave us alone, and it does make a difference who sits in the big office on Broadway when it comes to bargaining. If you are experiencing heavy workload we have heavy workload forms available on our website so, you can go there and fill those out. We're going to take another question now. I'm sorry, the name here, I believe it's Paris Rose, is that correct?

Paris Rose: Yes.

Jeff Traeger: Okay. Go ahead.

Paris Rose: That is ... Hello?

Jeff Traeger: Okay. Go ahead. What's your question?

Paris Rose: Hey. I'm not sure exactly why I'm on this forum or what. Do you guys represent Pepsi or [inaudible 00:26:07]? I'm in the transportation industry and I don't believe my shop that I'm at right now is unionized so, I don't know why I'm in this.

Jeff Traeger: Where do you work?

Paris Rose: I work Westrans right now.

Jeff Traeger: Westrans?

Paris Rose: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Jeff Traeger: Okay. We're going to look into it. We've got your phone number Paris Rose, and if there was a problem with the dial out ... We do represent the workers at Pepsi, but if there's a problem with the dial out we'll check your name and we'll check your phone number. We'll make sure that we only call members of 832 because that's who is supposed to be on this call. I do apologize if you were called in error. We will move on-

Paris Rose: No worries. If you guys could just take me off the list.

Jeff Traeger: We'll do that. Okay. Now, we're going to go to Ruth. Ruth, go ahead.

Ruth/Bella: Hello Jeff.

Jeff Traeger: Hello Ruth. How are you?

Ruth/Bella: Oh. Pretty good. It's Bella by the way.

Jeff Traeger: Oh. Okay. It comes up Ruth on the call-

Ruth/Bella: I know. Yes. Anyway, the question that I have, and I have talked to my union rep, and I have talked to my shop steward about it. I used to work at Extra Foods on Regent-

Jeff Traeger: Okay.

Ruth/Bella: And it's been two years now. When they transformed or transferred us and everything was happening so fast that they were closing the store, they put us through a lot of stress. With the stress and everything else we became, we didn't want to really work where we were transferred to, and they were-

Jeff Traeger: Were you transferred to Superstore? Usually I think a lot of the people from that store ended up at Regents or Gateway.

Ruth/Bella: Yes. It was no fault of the company ... No. It was no fault of Extra Foods or Superstore, it was the fault of the company. Now, I've been working and talking with my MLA in Transcona ... not MLA, city counselor and I just recently found out that Extra Foods has been in the planning stages since we got closed down. They keep telling us, "No. This is not happening," but it is happening. It's happening on Transcona Way. I know exactly where it is. Is there anything that can be done about that? As far as I'm concerned they lied to us.

Jeff Traeger: Okay. First of all, the only way that you would have any rights to stay at that store would be if they built it in exactly the same location, or converted the exact same location. We've also heard rumors that there's potentially a No Frills store that's going up on Plessis near the corner of Plessis and Regent Avenue. I've checked with the company officials that I deal with directly and their official response is that there is no current construction of a new location No Frills in Manitoba. The only No Frills in Manitoba right

now is a conversion of the Selkirk Extra Foods to a No Frills. Selkirk closed this spring and is going to be reopening, I believe it's in October. It's slated to open a little bit later than that maybe. There are three, that leaves only three Extra Foods left in the province, one in Swan River, one in The Pas and the one on St. Anne's.

Jeff Traeger: They have indicated to us that they want to convert those stores by the end of 2019, but really, we don't have any control over the conversion. If they were to reopen the location on Regent, where the Extra Foods was on Regent we would be instantly making an application for successor rights at that location. We would have to see how The Labor Board would respond to that before we would really know whether or not the previous employees at that location would have any right of recall there. We will keep a close eye on it. Thank you for the call. We will keep a close eye on it and certainly we will be communicating to everybody if there is any action on the No Frills front.

Jeff Traeger: Now we're going to go to Russell Shoemaker out in Brandon. Russell, how you doing?

Russell: Good evening Jeff. How are you doing tonight?

Jeff Traeger: I am doing well. Thank you, and yourself?

Russell: Good. Thank you. This is just a follow-up from the last Town Hall. Remember, you and I had been talking about a prescription card program for the Safeway members, and you said you were going to be having a meeting over the summer, which you did have that meeting, and you and I had been communicating via email. I was just wondering if you could just take that information that you had reiterated to me and pass it along to all the other Safeway members that maybe happen to be on the line tonight?

Jeff Traeger: Sure. I can certainly do that. You and I had talked via email about why we weren't going forward with a prescription drug card at this current time-

Russell: That's correct.

Jeff Traeger: Yeah. Really, the reason behind that is the cost associated with it. I know that it doesn't seem as though there would be a lot of cost, but the cost that was associated with it when we met with the Safeway trustees was primarily around the setup of the card, getting the card setup, doing a mail out, getting a company to monitor all of the aspects of claims coming in, etcetera. It turned out that there would be a significant cost, and right now we were unable to secure at the last round of bargaining, I'm sure all of our Safeway members know that it was a difficult round of bargaining in that we actually had to give the company some concessions in the way of a wage freeze for two years. Our members were very clear with us that they wanted us to protect what they had, and many of them told us at the forums and when I was servicing the Safeway stores, told us that they didn't expect to make a lot of gains at this round of bargaining because they knew how poorly the company was doing.

Jeff Traeger: We were not able to secure funding to, additional funding to the benefit plan and that meant in one good way nothing was going to change, but by nothing changing it also

means no improvements. When we looked at the cost of doing a drug card it simply was going to cost the plan so much that we would have had to look at reducing benefits in other areas, and the trustees decided at that point not to do it. Russell, like you, and I think we talked about this via email as well, I, like you have prescriptions that I need to fill all the time and my plan does not offer a prescription card as well. I have to make a submission. It does archaic and I know that in the future all of our benefit plans, we're pushing them all to go to a prescription drug card, but right now with the current state of affairs with Safeway and with the money that, that company has been losing in their operations in Manitoba over the last three years it simply was more important for us to protect the wages, the benefits, the premiums and the pensions as they exist at that location rather than to put any of those other things in jeopardy by trying to get an increased, or an improved benefit.

Jeff Traeger: It doesn't mean that it's never going to happen. It doesn't mean that it's off the charts forever. We do hope that with conversions to FreshCo and some other initiatives that Safeway can turn their business around, and can once again be a successful company and have profits in Manitoba. Certainly, we'll be going back to the table in four years' time, and it's our hope that we'll be able to put some money into the wages for our members, some more money into the premiums that the company pays for health and welfare benefits so we can look at making that improvement.

Russell: All right. Thanks again for just reiterating it. I just wanted to pass that along to all of the other Safeway members out there.

Jeff Traeger: Very good. All right Russell you take care of yourself.

Russell: Yeah. You ...

Jeff Traeger: Okay. Thank you. We now need to make a motion to approve the final report of the evening, which is the president's report so, I will make that motion.

Speaker 2: Seconded.

Jeff Traeger: It has been moved and seconded. Please press the number one on your keypad to vote "yes" and the number two on your keypad to vote "no". If you have a question about the president's report or anything else at all please press star three, and we will gladly take your question. Now, we're going to speak with Phil Kraychuck. Phil does a couple of different things with The Local actually, quite a few different things, a little bit of servicing, a little bit of negotiating. He's our health and safety and worker's compensation specialist. We have him here to talk about both worker's compensation, and the health and safety reviews, and what we expect to see possibly with legislation changes from our government in the next few months. Phil, it's been a long time since the reviews were conducted and stakeholders were asked for feedback. What's the current status of that?

Phil: First off, good evening everybody and thanks for having me again. Interesting question because it's been ongoing for quite some time. Stakeholders were called upon for their

recommendations back in 2016 for the WCB review and 2017 for the Health and Safety review so, it's been quite some time that has passed since they asked for input on what changes should be. Since then, we haven't heard anything. Rumor has it that it will happen this fall and in the spring. We're not sure which act will go first, or if they're both going to go together and it's only going to happen in the spring or the fall, but we know it's coming and we know it's not going to be very good. I've heard a lot of people say, "Rip the Band-Aid off and get it over with."

Phil: I'm much of a different opinion saying this government has proven time and time again that they are not friendly to labor, and they are not friendly to the working Manitobans so, whatever changes they're going to make aren't going to be good ones. The longer we can withhold with the stuff that we have the better off we are, and the safer and better compensation we're going to have for working Manitobans. Interesting, but I think it's coming soon and I think we need to be prepared and grounded for when it does come.

Jeff Traeger: How often are these reviews normally conducted?

Phil: On the health and safety side of things it was actually part of the act. I'm going to put a little asterisk beside this one, and I'm going to come back to it a little bit later on when I circle around. It used to be part of The Health and Safety Act that there was a review every five years, and that included the act and on occasion the Minister would call upon the regulations, which are basically the back part of the act that explain exactly how to meet the act, if that makes sense. It was every five years, but there was a bill that was introduced towards the end of 2017 that changed that forever. In terms of WCB it's been a long time, 2004, 2005 was the last time we've seen a big overhaul of The Worker's Compensation Act.

Phil: As we all know things evolve over time and when you look at things like psychological health and safety that didn't necessarily exist back in 2004, 2005. That's a very hot topic issue right now and there's a lot of research being done, and a lot of education and resources being put into that area. Those things which currently aren't in our Worker's Compensation Act are things that we need to look at when the stakeholders were called upon and when the review was conducted.

Jeff Traeger: You were involved in the Health and Safety review, correct? Were you also involved in the WBC review?

Phil: Yeah. I would say I had a direct hand in the Health and Safety review, and an indirect hand with the Worker's Compensation review. Being from labor and representing members from a very large private sector union, we're often called upon to participate in these different types of reviews as representatives from the greater labor community. With Health and Safety I sat on the Minister's Advisory Counsel for a number of years. I went through the review with an NDP government, and now currently with the conservative government. I will say that this time around with Health and Safety it was much different. Midway through the act the bill was introduced ... Through the review of the Workplace Health and Safety Act the bill was introduced. The government was basically going to abolish the Advisory Counsel, that was the body that made the

recommendation to the Minister, but wanted us to continue with the act review until it was done.

Phil: We got basically, fired midway through. It was bittersweet because it was the first time I had ever been fired, but I hope it's the last. It kind of just went to show that this government doesn't care about what anybody says. It really made a strong statement that their minds are made up and the Minister is going to basically do what they want to do. I was directly involved with that. I would say that counsel as a whole, including the technical representatives and the employer representatives were extremely disappointing and voiced our concerns with the Minister by removing that language. The language that's spoke to the Minister's Advisory Counsel also spoke to the Minister's Advisory Counsel conducting a review of the act every five years. When the bill was introduced to abolish the Minister's Advisory Counsel they took out that entire piece of the Workplace Health and Safety Act, therefore, there's no more such thing as a five year review, as well as the Minister's Advisory Counsel.

Phil: In terms of worker's compensation because it had been so much time lapse in between that, the last two reviews, that one was done a little bit better, or a little bit differently I should say with input from again, labor and technical, and employers. It was done at a little bit different level with our main representatives coming from The Manitoba Federation of Labour, and then they were caucusing with the different labor representatives from the health and safety field across ... I'm sorry, worker's compensation field across the province.

Jeff Traeger: One of the things I was going to say there was that the employee representatives on the Advisory Counsel were also quite upset when they abolished that whole process and the Counsel, right?

Phil: Yeah. They were really upset. Prior to this particular review the last one that went through we had a great counsel. We worked well together, we understood each other, although we might not always agree we were able to hear each other out and we were able to come to consensus on most issues, and we were able to agree on issues to push forward and to not push forward. Given the different government in there the tone of counsel changed a little bit, but the bottom line is when you get to the higher level health and safety like that you're there for one reason, and one reason only. It's to protect people in the workplace. It's not to make employers prosper on the backs of injured workers, it's to make things happen so that all those workers could go home, and they could go home safe and not injured.

Phil: Everybody there is generally like-minded, and it was a counsel that was full of the right people with technical representatives, from occupational hygienists, ergonomists. We had the right resources, the right people in the right places to be able to do the right things for Manitobans. When you completely neglect that group, when you fire them midway through term you're basically saying, "We don't care what you have to say and this doesn't mean a lot to us."

Jeff Traeger: Yeah. I know my opinion is biased, but it's the exact same thing that we see at the Labor Management Review Committee. We see the new government treats us like a rubber stamp, and makes a decision that they're going to impose anti-worker legislation, and then they ask us to review it. We review it and we get a consensus with the management group and they still go ahead and make the changes even though labor and management worked hard to come up with a compromise that works for both sides. It's really sad to see that kind of thing happening. Back to the legislation now, do we have an idea of what's going to change, or when?

Phil: Yeah. I've been asked this question a lot over the last while. "Do we know what's coming?" My answer to that is that I can't say definitively what's going to happen. I think I have an idea on a few things, but the biggest factor here is that the government we have currently is extremely unpredictable. The one thing that we do know is that through the entire term of the last NDP government and leading up to the day of Tuesday, September 11th, 2018 we know that this government has opposed every positive change to the Workplace Health and Safety and the Worker's Compensation Act. It's very difficult to say if they're going to go all the way, and they're just going to gut both of them, or if they're going to kind of toy with moving administrative tools.

Phil: The Minister had referred to the Workplace Health and Safety Act review, or Health and Safety as being a red tape barrier so, are they going to try to get rid of some of that administrative stuff, but still leave the tools in there that our committees have to try to make some change? I can't definitively say what's going to come, but I know with workplace safety and health you're probably going to see some changes to do with committees, you're probably going to see some changes to do with minutes in submission to the workplace health and safety department. Occupational exposure limits, which are the limits you could be exposed to a chemical or biological hazard before it does damage to the human body, I think the way that they adopt those, those changes is going to change. What I will say is that I think we're going to see an absolute lack of new language around psychological health and safety, and a lack of better language or more enforceable language when it comes to muscular [inaudible 00:45:09] injuries.

Phil: In terms of worker's compensation if I was guessing and betting, which I like to do on the regular I would say that this one will probably get hit the least. I would say more status quo with worker's compensation would be my guess and my bet, but I would think that we're going to see things along the lines of an employer advocacy office similar to the Worker Advisor Office. We'll probably see a cap on maximum insurable earnings, which means if you make over a certain threshold in Manitoba they will only pay up to 90% of what that threshold is so, one hundred thousand dollars you get paid ninety thousand dollars and they won't go anything over the hundred. I doubt we're going to see any new legislation on the biggest workplace epidemic we face, which again, is psychological health and safety. I don't think there's going to be much change to that at all. I think that's extremely discouraging and shame on Brian for not recognizing that as being an epidemic in our Manitoba workplaces, and right across Canada and North America for that matter.

- Jeff Traeger: Great. All right. Obviously, those changes are going to have extremely negative effects for working Manitobans. We have mentioned that this government tends to make decisions without really listening to other Manitobans, or taking input from any stakeholders or any groups at all. Is there anything that UFCW can do to fight back?
- Phil: Yeah. Labor as a whole, not just UFCW, but labor as a whole is over one hundred thousand strong in Manitoba. Really, labor is the only body with the resources to go after and lobby against governments. That's not just here, that's true to be right across our country. There are things that we could do, and we're going to continue to do them. We're going to manufacture crisis so that this government can understand that what they're doing is wrong, or if they can't understand at least they're going to hear us. Lobbying will always be something we do, and we're going to lobby whether we have a friendly government or an unfriendly government, which is the case right now.
- Phil: Right now, we know nothing's going to change, but we know that we still have the ability to go to most bargaining tables and bargain cooperatively and in good faith with most of the employers. That means we got to get creative. In times like this where we know things are going to change, and not change for the good, we need to get creative with how we bargain, and the language that we put forward in collective agreements, and try to protect some of the things that either we've lost or we potentially can lose. It's time to put that language into our collective agreements and make it 100% regardless of what's in the acts. Then, education and membership. There's tools out there that we could use, there's tools out there that committees could use, there's tools out there that workers could use, and as long as we continue to use those things properly and in the right process then we're going to be able to make some effective change in the workplace.
- Phil: I wouldn't be completely discouraged, but I think there's a lot that the union can do and we will continue to do to not only have the backs of our 832 members, but the backs of all people working in Manitoba.
- Jeff Traeger: Okay. Anything that members can do? I know you've talked a lot about lobbying and negotiating, and those are things certainly that unions do, but what can the average member do to let this government know that they're unhappy with these changes?
- Phil: I don't think there's any way to not look at this from a political standpoint. I think that the next election is the biggest thing that the membership could do, and that's go to the voting booth and vote for somebody who's got your best interest in mind. I hate to be political on this, but it's the only way to do it when you're going to work and you're now being put in a vulnerable position, and you're not going home the way that you should be feeling, and you're going home hurting, you're not being able to do the things that you love to do. That's a direct reflection of the people who are supposed to be looking out for your better interest.
- Phil: UFCW's a big union. We have good staff and we have the right people in place, but we're only as strong as the voice of our membership so, we need you to speak up just as loud as we do, and we need you to be behind us when we actually go out and try to

force some change and get people fired up. There's resources, I talked about this already. The act's not going to get completely taken away, we're just going to have to use what's in there to our advantage. Depending on what the changes are we may still have those effective tools that we have right now. I'll say right now we have some very good ones in there that we just don't use at all so, now's the time to start jumping on those. The biggest thing is to be vocal, to be loud, and if you don't think something's right speak up, ask questions. Whether or not you get the answer you want, the most important thing you could do is raise your voice. Don't sit on it. Be the reason why you want the change.

Phil: That's it in a nutshell and together you can't do one without the other and we can't be loud without you, and we can't be who we are without you. That's about it Jeff.

Jeff Traeger: Thank you very much Phil. That's great, and that's really good comments at the end there about how we all have to work together to make change. I do see that the vote to approve the president's report has been passed. We've got just enough time, we only have about three minutes left here so, we've got enough time to take two more questions. We're going to go to Brenda Lee first. Brenda Lee, go ahead.

Brenda Lee: Hi.

Jeff Traeger: Hi. How you doing?

Brenda Lee: The question I had was I've been hearing a lot of rumors about our pension plan, that there's discrepancies about the financial status of it, like when we're ready to retire ... and the accounts-

Jeff Traeger: What is your pension fund? Where do you work Brenda Lee?

Brenda Lee: At Superstore-

Jeff Traeger: Okay.

Brenda Lee: West [inaudible 00:51:06].

Jeff Traeger: Okay. Your pension is a Canadian Commercial Worker's Industry Pension Plan-

Brenda Lee: Right.

Jeff Traeger: I am a trustee as of December 2015 I became a trustee on that plan, or 2016, sorry.

Brenda Lee: Okay.

Jeff Traeger: I've been a trustee for coming up on two years and I can tell you that the plan has had almost a 17% improvement in its financial operations since we went to Member Contributions back in July 1st of 2015. The plan is a lot healthier and has improved year

over year in 2016, 2017 at its own pace again in 2018. The statement that you would have gotten in June tells you exactly what your entitlement would be-

Brenda Lee: Okay.

Jeff Traeger: If you were to retire now. That is a guaranteed benefit, unlike when you talk about cash money purchase plans, defined contribution plans, the ones where you put in some money and the employer matches it and it gets invested-

Brenda Lee: Right.

Jeff Traeger: Those will change year to year, but the number on your document is actually a guaranteed amount that you will get if you were to retire now, and the plan will send that out to you every June. They have to by law send you out a report of all of the new hours that have been contributed on your behalf, and where your pension plan status is. Yeah. I'm not ... One of the reasons I agreed to become a trustee on this plan was because the plan was in really big trouble. The plan was only funded to the tune of about 32%-

Brenda Lee: Yeah.

Jeff Traeger: Now, that funding level is almost at 50%, and that change has been done over a very short period of time in the world of investments and pension plans. It is getting better. It is on a ten year plan to be fully funded. At the end of that ten year plan, which will be in 2025, July 1st, 2025, it's the hope of the trustees that we'll be able to restore some of the reductions in benefits that were made in 2015. All I can say is that your pension plan is a lot healthier than it was. We will be filing the reports that we need to file with the pension regulators. Right now there is absolutely no plan to make any further changes to the plan whatsoever because, we have what they call an assumption rate, which is about 6.3% what the investments have to make in order for the plan to stay healthy, and we've been averaging more like 9% so, we actually are ahead of schedule and a lot more careful than the previous trustees were about investing in real estate and investing in other things.

Jeff Traeger: I'm not really trying to take a shot at the other trustees, but it probably sounds like I am, but I'm not. I'm just saying that because the new trustees inherited a plan that was in trouble we are extremely careful with how we handle your retirement money. It's a huge responsibility. There are over 330 thousand plan members in CCWIPP, and we manage \$3.25 billion dollars in assets so, it's a job I take very seriously and a job thankfully, all of the other trustees do as well.

Brenda Lee: Yeah. That's good because, you figure we love working for the company and everything, but it's great importance that our money is intact and there for us when we do retire because, what's the point of working for a company for so long if there's not a benefit at the end of it, right?

Jeff Traeger: Absolutely.

Brenda Lee: Not too many [crosstalk 00:55:08]-

Jeff Traeger: Yeah. I believe it's hugely important that you have the respect you deserve while you're working, and that you can retire with the dignity that you deserve.

Brenda Lee: Oh. Yeah. For sure-

Jeff Traeger: Absolutely. I absolutely think that it's one of the more important things that I do as the Local Union president right now.

Brenda Lee: Yeah. I really appreciate that. Thank you so much because, like I said, a lot of us old timers have been quite concerned about that and hearing different rumors, and that so, I'm glad that I had a chance, the opportunity to speak with you personally.

Jeff Traeger: Excellent. Okay. I'm glad that I got an opportunity to let you and all the other folks on the line who are members of CCWIP know that the ship is sailing in the right direction now, and that it's certainly on track for us to heal the problems with the plan in the past. We have just enough time to take one more call and that's Collin. Collin, go ahead.

Collin: Hello. Yeah. Hey. Actually, now there's two questions I got. I work at Safeway, I was wondering what's happening with our pensions?

Jeff Traeger: I just explained it. It's the exact same pension [crosstalk 00:56:18]-

Collin: Oh. Okay. Same thing, okay. Never mind.

Jeff Traeger: It is the exact same-

Collin: Oh.

Jeff Traeger: You are members of the Canadian Commercial Workers Industry Pension Plan.

Collin: Oh. Okay.

Jeff Traeger: Yep.

Collin: Cool. Okay. Second thing is, I'm probably wasting my breath but I really do miss the 10% employee discount that Safeway used to have, and I also miss the brands. You guys probably can't do anything about that, but-

Jeff Traeger: I tell you what, I'm with you on that one. I used to like the Safeway Select brand and all [crosstalk 00:56:48] products-

Collin: Oh my gosh. Yes. Exactly.

Jeff Traeger: It's one of the reasons why I shopped at Safeway actually-

Collin: Oh. Heck yeah. When I first at worked at a ... whatever, you know, but then I started really liking the Safeway brands and the 10% off that came with it, and I started shopping there more. Now, there's less of an incentive for me to shop there-

Jeff Traeger: Collin, I actually believe that one of the main reasons, one of the reasons ... there's probably many, but one of the reasons why you've seen a decline in market share for Safeway in the last four years since Sobeys purchased them was because they made that decision to get out of manufacturing, close the Lucerne manufacturing plants all across western Canada, there were 22 of them, and stopped selling those product and replacing it with Our Compliments. I really believe a lot of people shopped at Safeway because they liked the Lucerne and the Safeway Select products. I heard customers say, "Well, jeez. If I wanted to buy Our Compliments products I would have been shopping at Sobeys all these years, and not at Safeway."

Jeff Traeger: I know the company did a whole bunch of other things that also caused them to lose market share, but I certainly think that was one of them so, I couldn't agree with you more. Now, we have actually run out of time to answer any further questions. Just a reminder if you were still waiting for your question to be asked and answered we will have your full-time union representative contact you soon to answer your question. I want to thank all of you for joining us on our September 2018 Telephone Town Hall. We will be conducting our next General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, November the 13th 2018 by Telephone Town Hall as well beginning at 7:00pm. Thank you again for participating in the call tonight, for participating in your union, and we are now adjourned.