

UFCW Canada Local 1006A General Membership Meeting
January 16, 2024
Telephone Town Hall Event Transcript

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Hi, everyone. My name is Glacier Effs-Samuel, Recorder of your union. Welcome to our second union Telephone Town Hall of 2024. Thank you for joining us for this meeting, which is about informing and engaging our membership. We'll provide participants with the opportunity to win a Samsung tablet or Toronto Blue Jays tickets if you stay on the call for the entirety of the call. We'll have details on that a little later on. We've dialed thousands of members from different workplace sectors and cities, so thank you for your patience as we connect with everyone. Tonight, we will hear from Secretary Treasurer, Kevin Benn, about the latest union news, including significant victories your union has had in the recent months. We'll also hear from Union Representative, Jackie Graticola, the 1006 Outreach Committee chair, and she will share with us how our members can participate in our upcoming pride events.

We'll also hear from Union Representative, Gloria Elstone, who's the chair of our union's Indigenous Committee and she'll share information about 1006A's newest committee. Tonight, we hope to hear from you, so telephone operators are standing by to take your questions. Just a reminder, if you haven't been on the call before, to ask a question just press star three on your telephone keypad. Give your full question, your name and where you work to the operator and they'll pass that on to us. Questions about individual workplace issues will be forwarded to your union representative who will contact you no later than tomorrow night.

As we've done in the past, we will post an audio file meeting transcript and meeting minutes on our union website. During each Telephone Town Hall general membership meeting, we will vote to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting. If you stay with us again for the entirety of the call, you will have an opportunity to win a Samsung tablet or Toronto Blue Jays tickets. Let's get started. We'll be taking a vote for the adoption of the minutes of the Telephone Town Hall general membership meeting as posted on the local union website, which was held on January 16, 2024. Use your telephone keypad to participate. The question before you is, do you approve of the minutes of the Telephone Town Hall general membership meeting, which was held on January 16, 2024? Press one if you approve the minutes of the January 16, 2024 meeting, or press two if you do not approve the minutes of the January 16, 2024 meeting. Once again, press one if you approve of the minutes, or press two if you do not approve of the minutes.

As we wait for the results, we'll encourage everyone to learn more about our scholarship program. Every year, our union awards 42 scholarships worth \$1,006 each. These scholarships are awarded to our members, their children and/or their dependents. This unique program is aimed at helping students with the escalating cost of post-secondary education. Together, we have helped hundreds of students and families achieve their dream of post-secondary education. As a union member, you're also eligible for other labor scholarships through the UFCW Canada and the Ontario Federation of Labour. Just visit our union website to learn more and that's at ufcw1006a.ca.

The results are in for the adoption of the minutes of the January 16, 2024 Telephone Town Hall, and it has been approved in favor of adoption. I would like to remind members that telephone operators are standing by, so press star three, if you want to ask a question. Again, a quick reminder, if you stay on the call for the entirety of the call, you'll have a chance to enter a draw to win a Samsung tablet or Toronto Blue Jays tickets. Congratulations to Karleen from Host International at Pearson Airport, who was our contest winner from our January meeting, and Karleen won a Samsung tablet. Now it's my honor to introduce our Secretary Treasurer of our union, Mr. Kevin Benn.

Kevin Benn:

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Thank you, Glacier. Thank you, very much, and good evening, everyone. I would like to thank and welcome our members on the call for making the time to join us this evening. President Wayne Hanley sends his greetings and his well wishes. If this is your first town hall meeting, we are excited you can join us. For our longtime members and stewards who are joining us once again, welcome back. In 2024, your union continues to work hard to improve our members' livelihoods and rights at the negotiating table and I'm pleased to report your union has helped members achieve fair contracts at a variety of workplaces across Ontario. We've made strong gains at several workplaces, including Cintas Canada, which has multiple locations across Ontario. Holiday Garden Inn in Mississauga, Aramark Services at Seneca College in Toronto, Topper Linen Supply in Toronto, Courtyard Marriott Toronto Mississauga West, and Homewood Suites Markham, and negotiations for many, many other contracts are still underway.

I wish to recognize our union negotiating committees for their hard work and dedication in helping make life better for our members. 1006A continues to evolve to serve our membership better. We continue to train staff to ensure they have the skills and the abilities to represent our members at the bargaining table and to help them achieve the best possible union contracts and to do so in a timely manner. 1006A continues to be tireless in holding employers accountable and in protecting our members' rights. I'm pleased to report that 1006A won a major legal fight with upwards of \$1.5 million on behalf of our former members at Ryding Regency Meat Packers. In 2019, Ryding Regency lost its license to operate. The owners refused to pay notice of termination or severance pay to our members. In response, we filed a grievance and advanced it to arbitration to ensure that our members' rights under their union contract and under the Employment Standards Act were to be honored.

We never stopped fighting for our members, even though the employer tried several times to evade responsibility and avoid paying workers what they're rightfully owed. When the employer used an unrelated employer argument to try and avoid liability, the Ontario Labor Relations Board ruled that Ryding Regency, True Harvest, Tri-Pet Holdings and a numbered company are one employer and are jointly responsible for the more than one and a half million dollars that our members are owed for their termination and severance pay. This victory is a testament to the collective power of your union to fight for and protect workers' rights under their union contract and again, under the Employment Standards Act. I am so proud of our union staff and our legal counsel for their hard work on behalf of our former members at Ryding. Recently, we also held Loblaw accountable and achieved enhanced buy-down and buy-out language for our membership-facing store closure or conversions at Loblaws Great Food and Real Canadian Superstore.

As some of you may know, three weeks after we ratified a new union contract, Loblaw suddenly announced that it was closing the Loblaws Great Food Store on Broadview Avenue in Toronto and converting it to a No Frills. This came as a shock as you can well imagine to our membership and to your union negotiating committee who were told by company officials during negotiations that there were no planned store closures or conversions scheduled for the near future. To hold the company accountable and to protect our membership during this difficult time, we filed bargaining and bad faith charges against Loblaw at the Ontario Labour Relations Board early in January. Subsequent to that, we held four days of meetings with the company and were able to reach a settlement with language addressing store closures and conversions. We achieved significant improvements to the buy-down and the buy-out language in the union contract, which will go a long way to assist members not only at the Broadview store, but at all stores that may face a closure or conversion in the future.

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We're also committed to protecting our members from public abuse while at work. The reality is many frontline workers instead of being recognized for their hard work, are facing increasing incidents of violence, threats and harassment from the public they serve. Recently, your union negotiated new language to protect our membership at Loblaws Great Food and RCSS from customer abuse, which reads, "The company will place visible signage reminding the customer of its zero-tolerance policy. It's our position that company is in violation of this commitment as the notices are being posted in areas where they're not visible to the customers." We filed a grievance and are pursuing all avenues to ensure our members are protected and the language in the contract is honored. Nationally, UFCW Canada has launched a Respect Frontline Workers campaign to ensure workers' voices are heard. Respecting Frontline Workers means listening to workers, providing workers with the knowledge to stay safe at work and exposing what governments are doing or not doing, to enforce the rules that keep workers safe. If you're interested in sharing your story, please contact us at communications@ufcw1006a.ca. Now I'll turn it to Glacier for a quick poll.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Okay, so our next poll question is, have you experienced or witnessed abusive customer behavior in the last three months? Press one for yes, I have experienced or witnessed abusive customer behavior in the last three months, or press no if you have not experienced or witnessed abusive customer behavior in the last three months. Once again, press one for yes, I've experienced or witnessed abusive customer behavior in the last three months, or press two for no, I have not experienced or witnessed abusive customer behavior in the last three months. Let's look at the poll. Thank you, guys, for your feedback. The bottom line is all workers deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. The results are in and 56% say yes, they have experienced or witnessed abusive customer behavior. 44 say no, they have not. Thank you, guys, for participating. Back to you, Kevin.

Kevin Benn:

Thank you, Glacier. We knew it, so many of our members have been affected by customer abuse. Whether you're working in a store as a cashier, as a security guard, operating a bus, working in a hotel, or any of the many other front-line roles our members work, your union will continue to advocate for your health and safety on the job. If you have any concerns, as always, please reach out to your union representative. I'm pleased to report our WSIB department continues to do fantastic work to support members who are impacted by workplace illness and injury. I now invite Glacier to share an injured worker story with us.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thanks, Kevin. Today, we'll be sharing the story of Thelma Blanchard who works at a Toronto meatpacking factory. From when she started, Thelma packed and taped boxes, packaged products, lift heavy boxes and operated machinery. She pushed and pulled heavy metal racks and boxes multiple times during her workday. Thelma said the constant repetitive movement took a toll on her physical and mental health, and I quote, "I worked through a lot of pain, but I couldn't take it anymore. I was in pain every day, but it got worse. I was in tears in the morning, in tears in the afternoon and when I came home because I was in so much pain." After trying to handle the WSIB case herself, Thelma eventually turned to her union. She goes on to say, "I reached out to the union, they helped me with the

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paperwork, went to the Tribunal, and I won my case. I would say go to the union, they can help, because they were able to help me with my case." Back to you, Kevin.

Jackie Graticola:

Thank you, Glacier, and thank you, Thelma, for sharing your moving story with our members. We strongly encourage members who are injured at work to reach out to our union's WSIB and or health and safety department. They'll be able to answer questions, provide resources and guidance to help you through the process. I'm pleased to report that our spring stewards training is underway at the union office. Our comprehensive training program empowers stewards with the necessary knowledge and skills to better help our members and resolve workplace issues. This spring, we've had a great number of stewards register for training. 1006A stewards from across Ontario are currently taking a variety of courses, including human rights and new stewards training. I want to thank our stewards for what they do every day and for demonstrating their commitment to the members and to the union through participating in stewards training. These courses help stewards develop skills that will help them at work and in life, frankly.

For stewards interested in participating, our next set of stewards training courses will take place this fall. I also wish to congratulate our stewards who have completed the volunteer Mental Health Advocate training on UFCW webCampus. The program which is available for free on webCampus is now open to all members of 1006A. Workplace issues often have a direct impact on mental health, and that's why this program is so vital. By completing this program, you can become a mental health advocate and be a support to other members. Visit the website to learn more about this important program. We have our annual Stewards Conference scheduled for September 21 of this year. In the next couple of months, stewards should keep an eye out for registration packages. We are excited and confident to have another successful conference this year. 1006A has a strong tradition of committees working to make a difference in the community.

I'm proud to recognize the efforts of our Women's Issues Network, also known as WIN. It's inspiring to see our WIN members rally the membership at their workplaces and help raise awareness about International Women's Day. The theme for 2024 was Inspire Inclusion, which means building understanding about the value of women's inclusion at work and in our communities. 1006A's WIN committee empowers members across our local union by raising awareness about gender equality, the gender wage gap and importance of eliminating violence against women and children. Thank you to everyone who participated in International Women's Day events in their communities. I'm also proud to talk about young workers in our union who are creating change.

UFCW Canada's Young Worker Internship program is scheduled from May 26 to May 31 of this year. 1006A is sending several participants to this session. Our young activists are an important part of our union's present and future, and it's inspiring to see so many young workers step up and take action to make a difference in their union and in their communities. If you're a young worker and you're interested in getting involved in the union, please contact your union representative. Our 1006Outreach Committee is preparing for pride season this year. 1006Outreach works to empower our members from the 2SLGBTQ+ community and raise awareness about equality and fairness at work and in our communities. I'll now turn it to Glacier for discussion with 1006Outreach Committee Chair, Jackie Graticola.

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Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thanks, Kevin. Jackie Graticola is a long-time union representative and one of the first members of our original Pride committee. She's now the chair of our 1006A Outreach. Congratulations on your role, Jackie, and welcome.

Jackie Graticola:

Thank you, Glacier. Thank you for a nice introduction. I'm very pleased to be here tonight to basically to say what Outreach is about and what we are committed to. To fight the discrimination, hate in all forms by participating in pride events brings visibility to the struggles that the 2SLGBTQI+ faces on daily basis. Most importantly, the importance of educating the workforce by presenting information that is useful as a form of tri-fold information glossary and even voluntary courses that they can take or we, as Outreach, will present in the future. We also want to note that we would like to have members to reach out to the union reps for those who are interested to be part of Outreach Committee. It will be welcome to all who are interested and also, to reach out to your reps for information about the coming pride events this year.

June month is considered Pride Month across the world, and we start with Brockville Pride that will be in June 8 and the big one in Toronto will be June 30. July 21 in London and August 25 in Ottawa. Everybody is welcome. We encourage the participation of all members because this is a way to support the community and to learn what the community suffers all year round. Not just at home, but also in the community, in particular the workforce by either your peers or customers. In terms of what the committee is all about, we talk about what the issues are in the workplace and trying to how we can resolve issues like that, like bathrooms for individuals that requires their own personal bathroom. We have created educational resources, as I said before, that are free and we will be having those during Pride Month and at the booth in Toronto. Yes, Glacier.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Let me ask you this question, Jackie, I mean, thank you for all that information. Let me jump to my second question. As a member of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, what does 1006 Outreach Committee mean to you?

Jackie Graticola:

For me, it means that as we are visible in the community, we can educate everybody and understanding the struggle that this community faces on regular days. Persecution, and particularly trans individuals that going through different scales of their own transition, they're having difficulties. Even different provinces, the law has changed and it's becoming a very persecutory kind of attitude towards the community. We have to fight in any way, form or shape by being visible, participating by being vocal. We all have a responsibility as a citizen to speak up and call when something is not right.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

You may have repeated some of this earlier, or said it earlier, but I just want to make sure people are aware, what are some of the key events coming up this year and how can members participate?

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Jackie Graticola:

In June, we will have two Pride events, one in Brockville, which will be June 8, and in Toronto will be June 30. We will have from Friday all the way to Sunday, the 30th, different events in Pride. People actually can come to the booth and sign up to walk with us with being proud members of the union and support the community. Those are the dates particular coming up. We encourage as well the members to reach out to the union reps at their locations and to sign up if they would like to be part of Outreach in the future.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Last question for you, Jackie. What are the key issues facing 2SLGBTQI+ workers and how can members help to create change?

Jackie Graticola:

Well, there's several issues that the community faces as discrimination in general. We believe that everybody is entitled to live their life as authentic as they are. When we see hate or violent statements against the community, that's hurtful to everyone. When we start having those kind of hate, it doesn't stop with our community, it permeates every single community in this country. We can speak up, we can educate everybody. I firmly believe in education, so I will repeat education, education, every single time. The discrimination exactly for today is very hard. The workplace can be discriminating by not having recognized their spouse as the same-sex partners. In Canada, we have been able to do a strong contract language which eliminates any possibility of discrimination. That is a strong work that we have done over the years to change that language, to be inclusive and prevent further hurt to the community.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you, Jackie. Thank you for sharing such insightful information. I hope we'll have lots of participants at Pride and we'll get more people involved in the committee. Thank you for joining us today.

Jackie Graticola:

Thank you so much, Glacier. I really invite everyone to participate. It's a life-changer for everybody. It's a very pleasant time. Thank you.

Kevin Benn:

Yes indeed, Jackie. Thank you for sharing that important information with us. I look forward to celebrating Pride with you and our members again this year. Many of you that are with us on the line tonight may recall that we have recently started our first 1006A Indigenous Committee. This is an important priority for 1006A as we seek to empower members from Indigenous communities to raise awareness about Indigenous issues in their union. I'll now turn it over to Glacier for a discussion with Gloria Elstone, who is chairing our new committee.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thanks, Kev. Gloria Elstone is a union representative and a member of UFCW Canada's Sub-Committee on Indigenous issues. Welcome, Gloria.

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Gloria Elstone:

Thanks for having me, Glacier.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Gloria, with the Committee in its infancy, when is your first meeting for the Indigenous Committee?

Gloria Elstone:

Absolutely. After the announcement of the Indigenous Committee, we had quite a few members reach out from 1006A, which is fantastic. I've had the opportunity to speak individually with each of them and we have our first official meeting in person coming up in the first week of June to kick-off Indigenous Awareness Month.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

That's awesome. If there are members who are Indigenous and who are listening today and interested, how can they participate and who should they contact?

Gloria Elstone:

Absolutely. I know it's hard for some people to reach out and say you want to join a committee. Our committees here with UFCW, I want to remind everybody, is a part of not just standing in solidarity but opening yourself up to the family and the absolute support we have in 1006A and in UFCW as a whole. If you're interested in joining the Indigenous Committee, you can either do the star three to contact one of the phone representatives now, or if you talk to your rep, they can provide my contact information.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Okay, good to know. As a member of UFCW Canada's Indigenous Sub-committee, can you speak about a campaign that the national office is working on currently?

Gloria Elstone:

Absolutely. We have a couple of exciting campaigns that our national office is working on. The first of which I want to talk about would be the Heritage Inn in Saskatoon. Members of UFCW 1400 were locked out on September 9 by the owners there. Because instead of coming to the table to have a fair and equitable bargaining process, they pretty well instantly locked out those members. Those members wanted to have things like continuing their dental benefits and the company put an absolute no to that, as well as to have wages above what minimum wage is, which is one of the perks of being in a union environment. We have lobbied the band council nearby to stand in solidarity with our union members and not cross the picket line. This hotel in particular is one of the government recommended ones for chiefs and band council members to use when they're traveling in the area. We're just asking them not to cross the picket line. We also have an incredible campaign right now with the MTO.

We're campaigning for Air Canada Transit security to have some sensitivity training when it comes to sacred items. This is because three of our female national sub-committee members were stopped during domestic flight screening and asked to open up their medicine bags, which are an extremely sacred item and it captures the spirit of somebody. Opening up that bag is a heartbreaking moment. Right now, in the website, traveling with sacred items is not in the What Can I Bring page, it's currently

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on the travel tips part of their website, which just it hurts. We've also asked for cultural sensitivity to be on a continuing basis for the officers that are doing screening for all members and to have officers advise passenger what their options are at the time of screening if they've informed an officer that it is a sacred item. Those can be just feeling the item, it can be putting it through an X-ray machine. That's because all workers' rights are human rights and we want this to be an improvement for every single member, family member and friend with UFCW.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thanks, Gloria. I hope this information will encourage some of our members, Indigenous members willing to participate. Thank you for joining us today.

Gloria Elstone:

Miigwech for having me.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

I'd like to remind folks, again, if you stay on until the end of the meeting, you'll have a chance to enter a membership contest. The winner will receive either a Samsung tablet or Blue Jays tickets. I'll pass it back over to you, Kevin.

Kevin Benn:

Thank you, Glacier. Before we take a look at some of the questions that have been presented to us, I'd first like to thank Gloria for undertaking the important work of this committee. The path to reconciliation requires us all to engage on these issues. We look forward to supporting the committee's vital work. With the review of some of the questions that are coming in this evening, and not so surprisingly, as is often the case, it appears that the questions that we are receiving tonight are workplace-specific questions. We will be forwarding those questions to your union representatives who will be in contact with you very soon. Glacier.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thanks, Kevin. Well, that almost wraps up our agenda for the evening.

Kevin Benn:

Well, thank you, Glacier. Before we get too much further, I'd like to take just a moment to thank, well, to thank Jackie again and Gloria for sharing their experiences and their expertise with us tonight, and also you, for doing such a fantastic job on the telephone town halls. I'd like to thank our members for their time tonight. I encourage each of you to stay engaged and informed with your union. If you have any questions about your workplace, please contact your union representative.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you again, Kevin. For those with questions, your union rep will be getting back to you within 24 hours. You can find out who your rep is by visiting our website at www.ufcw1006a.ca. Click on the find your rep button, an audio file and transcript of tonight's meeting will be posted on our website for your convenience. As well, the minutes of tonight's meeting will also be posted for your review and to be

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approved during our next meeting. We have one more piece of business to finish, which is the membership contest, and that's going to be our last poll for tonight.

You need to enter the draw in order to be able to win either the Samsung tablet or the Toronto Blue Jays tickets. To do so, just press one on your telephone keypad now. The winner will be announced on our website tomorrow by 3:00 PM. Again, in order to enter the draw to win the Samsung tablet or the Toronto Blue Jays tickets, press one on your phone now. Our website again is ufcw1006a.ca. That's ufcw1006a.ca. For those who would like to leave a question for us or a comment, please stay on the line. I want to thank everyone for joining us, and have a good evening. Take care.

Kevin Benn:

Good night, everyone, and thank you for sharing your time with us.