

UFCW Canada Local 1006A General Membership Meeting
November 20, 2024
Telephone Town Hall Event Transcript

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Hi, everyone. My name is Glacier Effs-Samuel, Recorder of your union. It's great to see so many members joining us for our final Town Hall General Membership Meeting for 2024. We're excited to welcome you to our town hall, which is about informing and empowering our membership.

We have lots of new and exciting opportunities, whether it be scholarship programs or free online courses to share with you tonight. Plus, if you stay with us for the entire call, you'll have the chance to win a Samsung tablet or a set of Toronto Maple Leafs tickets. We'll have more details on that later on.

Once again, we've dialed thousands of members from different workplaces, sectors, and cities, so thank you for your patience as we connected with everyone. Tonight, we'll hear from President Wayne Hanley about the latest union news and member opportunities.

We'll also hear from 1006A Members, Annie Sundar and Penny Patterson, who are members of our Women's Issues Network. They will join us in an important discussion about the continuing prevalence of gender-based violence, and our network campaign involving the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.

Tonight we also hope to hear from you, so telephone operators are standing by to take down your questions and pass them on to us. To ask a question, all you have to do is press star three on your phone keypad. Make sure you give your full question, your name and where you work to the operators, and they will pass your question on to us.

Once again, to ask a question, just press star three. Questions about individual workplaces will be forwarded to your union representative, who will contact you no later than tomorrow night. Now, as we've done in the past for our meetings, we'll post an audio file, a meeting transcript, and the minutes of our meeting on our union website.

And during each Telephone Town Hall General Membership Meeting, members vote to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting, so let us begin. We'll be taking a vote for the adoption of the minutes of the Telephone Town Hall General Membership Meeting, which was posted on our union website and held on August 15th, 2024.

Use your phone keypad to participate in the vote. And the question before you is, do you approve of the minutes of the Telephone Town Hall General Membership Meeting held on August 15th, 2024? If you approve of the minutes, press one on your phone keypad. And if you do not approve of the minutes of the meeting held on August 15th, 2024, press two.

Once again, if you approve of the minutes of the general membership meeting held on August 15th, press one, and if you do not approve, press two. As we wait for the results, I'd like to remind you about UFCW Canada's webCampus program. We offer more than 100 free online courses to our members and their families.

From the comfort of your home or wherever you have internet access, you can learn about a variety of topics, including digital skills, mental health, and food safety. A new on-the-go course being offered this year, is SOS Gender-based Violence where participants will be provided prevention training, and ways to react effectively, if someone you know is threatened by gender-based violence.

We encourage you to visit the national office website at ufcw.ca to take advantage of this new, free course offered on webCampus. The results are in and the minutes of the August 15th, 2024 Telephone Town Hall General Membership Meeting have been approved, 92% say in favour.

I'd also like to remind everyone telephone operators are standing by. If you have a question, all you have to do is press three on your telephone keypad. And a quick reminder, members who stay on the

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line or stay on the call for the entire call, will have a chance to enter a draw to win a Samsung tablet computer, or Maple Leafs tickets.

I want to say congratulations to Mahrud from RCSS in Newmarket, who is a contest winner from our August meeting, so stick around for your chance to enter to win. Now it's my honour to introduce the President of our local union, Wayne Hanley, for the State of the Union.

Wayne Hanley:

Well, thank you, Glacier. I would like to welcome everyone once again to our town hall meeting being held tonight. Once again, thanks for making time to be with us here tonight. We know everybody's schedules get busy, especially around this time of the year, so thanks so much for joining us on our final general membership meeting of 2024.

To recap, it's been a year of achievements for our union, as we continue to evolve and build strength to meet the changes and the challenging needs of our membership. I'm so proud of all that we've accomplished this year together. It's achieving significant improvements at negotiating tables, helping non-union workers win rights to be unionized.

Workers ensuring our members who are injured receive compensation that are rightfully entitled to them. I'm also so proud of our negotiating committees, which are made up of the union staff and rank-and-file members. I want to thank you for your involvement.

It's truly inspiring to see the dedication and commitment of our negotiating committee members. Our volunteers, they volunteer their time. They share their experience and expertise and knowledge to negotiate strong contracts that meet the needs of their coworkers.

I'm also proud of our members, who take the time and make the effort to have their voices heard, whether it's filling out a proposal form for negotiations, or participating in a strike vote. Or simply by voicing the support for their negotiating committee and coming out and voting at the time of ratification of a memorandum agreement.

If you ever wondered if you could make a difference during negotiations, well, I can assure you that you can and you do when you participate. The employers know when workers are disengaged, and they leverage that to offer less or demand concessions at the negotiating table.

So the secret to any fair contract is strong membership support and participation, so thank you to everyone that has stepped up over the past year. Since our last general membership meeting, I'm pleased to report that our union has ratified new contracts for our members who worked at Feather Industries in Toronto.

They worked with the Arc Hotel in Ottawa, at Nitta Gelatin in Toronto, Comfort Inn in Pickering, at Canadian Rail Car Cleaners in Toronto, the Travelodge in Simcoe. Our negotiating committee for over 1,400 members, who work at Swiss Chalet locations across the province, recently reached a memorandum agreement for a new contract.

And we did everything in our power to put pressure on the employers to secure a strong union contract, including holding customer information tickets in front of Swiss Chalet restaurants across Ontario, and it worked. Members now at Swiss Chalet are voting over the next couple of days on their new contract, so congratulations to them.

I'm also thrilled to announce that in October, our union welcomed to our union, 90 new members from SilverCity, the cineplex movie theater, at Trinity Commons in Brampton. Our newest members work in a variety of roles at the theater, including the ticketing, the concessions, and in the maintenance.

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Welcoming non-union members to our local is a great reminder of the importance of our union movement. As Sabrina, a worker at the theater said about becoming a union, "It's been a long fight, but honestly, it was worth it to achieve a union contract. Having our rights written in stone will make a huge difference."

And Sabrina, you are so correct. It's an exciting time for workers and we look forward to helping them secure the workplace improvements that they deserve in their first contract. I'm also pleased to report that more than 220 stewards have registered for a stewards' training this fall, including many first-time stewards.

Training kicked off earlier this month and will continue over the next few weeks. This program, which is run by our education and training department, provides our stewards with the essential skills and knowledge that they need to help their coworkers resolve various issues that arise at work. Thank you to everyone who's registered for and are participating in this year's training.

Our 2024 Stewards Conference was held just this past September, and it was a great success. We saw the biggest participation in our local union's history, with more than 250 stewards in attendance. Now, the theme of the conference was 1006A Action: Transforming Lives, Workplaces, and Communities.

And this keynote event empowered and encouraged stewards to take the action in their workplace, communities and lives. We were fortunate enough to have NDP Leader Marit Stiles to take time to address our conference on the importance of political action, and getting involved to protect and fight for the public services that we all depend on.

I want to thank her for her commitment to standing up for the workers of Ontario. Now, at the conference, stewards had the opportunity to hear further about the union's health and safety department and the public abuse campaign that's underway.

This campaign, as I've mentioned in previous town hall meetings, began in response to the rising incidents of customer and public abuse that our members were suffering. Our goal is to raise the awareness about the issues amongst the membership and the wider public, to protect our members' health and safety while they're at work.

Since our last town hall, we've created a public awareness abuse reporting form to help members, who experience or witness public abuse or harassment, and to report it to the union. I encourage you to check your union bulletin board for the reporting public abuse poster, which contains a QR code.

This reporting tool allows members to directly inform the union about their experiences, so that we can react to them and record them. Our work also included zero tolerance for customer abuse decals at the front of all Loblaws and No Frills stores. Talk to the consumer before they come in, let them know it's a zero-tolerance workplace.

We also advocated despite employer challenge, to secure zero-tolerance signage at prominent locations throughout the unit. I must congratulate also our scholarship recipients for 2024. Every year, 1006A awards 42 scholarships to our members and/or their children or dependents.

And since its inception, this landmark program has helped hundreds of families across Ontario achieve their dream of post-secondary education, so thank you to everyone who took the time to apply. And I encourage those who are not amongst this year's recipients to try again next year. Applications are open for 2025 on our website.

I also want to recognize our 1006A WSIB Department for its outstanding work helping injured workers receive the compensation that they deserve. So I'm going to pause for a minute and invite Glacier to share a story from Union Member and Union Steward, Annabelle, who was injured at work. Glacier?

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Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thanks, Wayne. So UFCW 1006A Steward Annabelle works at a laundry facility in the GTA. After her workplace injury, Annabelle was in a lot of pain and WSIB was refusing to provide her the compensation she deserved.

Here she shares her story about how the union helped her win her WSIB case.

Annabelle:

I was in a lot of pain. I couldn't lift my shoulder, I couldn't do a lot of stuff with my hand, and it's my right hand that I injured, so it was limitation. I can't carry a bag a certain way. I can't lift certain things. I can't lift it above my shoulder. There's a lot of things that I couldn't do with my injury.

Emotionally, I was angry and I was hurt the way WSIB was dealing with me about my injury, but I feel hopeless, I feel helpless, I feel hurt. I said, "I'm injured and I have no one to turn to, and WSIB was my only hope." And they decided that they wasn't going to help me. Even when I present all my evidence that I have, they decided that, "No."

WSIB tried to take my hope away from me. Three to four years, they were telling me they were not going to help me, they were not going to help me. If the union didn't step in, I wouldn't be getting help. I would have to be paying it out of my pocket. I wasn't aware of how much other things the union can do, and that they have a WSIB, they have legal.

I wasn't aware of anything until when my rep explained it to me. The union step in and had a long fight ahead of them. They never give up, they take action. They were with me all the step of the way, until they win the case for me. They always keep me updated on the file. They always let me know everything that's going on.

They never leave me out. They're always with me every step of the way, and they win the case. They did it, they never give up. They win it. I feel excellent when they win the case. It was such a joy. Yes, it felt great. I didn't have to worry about it. I'm getting my treatment.

I'm very proud to be a shop steward, because I believe in taking action and helping my coworkers with any challenge they may face in the workplace. My name is Annabelle Smith and I'm a steward in action.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Wow, that's so powerful. That's such an amazing story. I love that when we get a win for the members. So remember, if you're injured at work, you're not alone.

Your union has highly skilled professionals who are able to help navigate this process. Our health and safety department, together with our WSIB Department, will be able to provide you with the assistance you need. So I'll take it back to you, Wayne.

Wayne Hanley:

Thanks, Glacier. And you're right, it's a powerful and amazing story, and we thank Annabelle for sharing her story with all of us. We ask all our members and any member really to share your stories, to highlight the important work that we do day in and day out to protect our members. All members should be proud to share in their successes.

Because it is through your and our collective efforts by being a 1006A member, that Annabelle didn't have to face the brutal bureaucracy of WSIB alone. Together we are stronger and can lift each other up.

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Thanks again, Annabelle, for sharing your experience. Now, Glacier, I'll turn it back to you for a conversation about the important work being undertaken by our Women's Issues Network.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thanks, Wayne. So every year, our Women's Issues Network Committee members come together to raise awareness about the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence. This is a global campaign, which runs from November 25th to December 10th. Every year, there's a theme, and this year's theme is Every 11 Minutes, a Woman is Killed. #NoExcuse. UNiTE to End Violence against Women.

According to the United Nations, violence can take different forms, from intimate partner violence, sexual violence. Femicide, which is killing based on gender, human trafficking, genital mutilation, child, early-forced marriage, and online violence. I'm proud to welcome 1006A Members Annie Sundar, who's also a member of our local union executive board and Penny Patterson, a long-time activist and instructor with our union, to discuss this important campaign. So welcome, Penny and Annie.

Penny Patterson:

Thanks, Glacier.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Penny, I'm going to start with you. I want to ask you, how big of a problem is gender-based violence in our society?

Penny Patterson:

Gender-based violence is a global problem. Over one-third of the women and girls globally will experience some form of violence in their lifetime.

I know I have. This number increases in emergencies, conflicts and crisis.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

And this is just what's reported. It's appalling, but there's more. The number is higher than this because a lot of this doesn't get reported, so it's appalling how widespread gender-based violence is. And according to Statistics Canada, certain groups are more likely to experience gender-based violence.

So according to the Government of Canada, these groups include women, young women and girls, Indigenous women, girls, and members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. It also includes women living in northern, rural and remote communities, and women living with disabilities.

Annie, WIN participates in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence every year. Why are the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence so important? And what are you planning to do for this campaign?

Annie Sundar:

Good night, everyone. To be honest, every woman I know has experienced gender-based violence at some point in their lives. This includes intimidation, degrading someone, humiliation, threats and physical violence. This could be from a partner, a family member, or many times, even strangers. This is why this is a global campaign.

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It is so important, we want to raise awareness as a committee about the reality that many women face on a daily basis. Our committee members will raise awareness in our workplace and starting the conversation on this important issue. Gender-based violence must be brought to the forefront to be eliminated.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

That's so shocking when you think about it. I think if anybody were to think about it, I know every woman I know has experienced gender-based violence in some way, shape or form, but yet it's not even spoken about as much as it needs to be.

So Penny, I'm going to ask you the same question. Why is the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign so important to you? And what are you planning to do as part of this campaign?

Penny Patterson:

Just like you, Glacier, like you just said, I've been a victim and it's important to me because it needs to stop. It's tragic that in 2024, women, young women, girls find themselves victims of abuse. This annual campaign is our opportunity to continue to raise awareness and encourage action against gender-based violence.

We need everybody to get involved in this campaign, especially men and boys. We need to change attitudes and behaviours. The social norm needs to be different than what it is. This is the only way we're going to succeed. As part of our campaign, we are going to give out white ribbons to try and get people talking about the elimination of gender-based violence.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Yeah. I think you hit the nail on the head, awareness, awareness, awareness is the key, right? People need to be aware of this thing happening and not pretend it's not happening.

So Annie, I'm going to go back to you now. What do you want women to know who are facing gender-based violence?

Annie Sundar:

Do not give up if you are in abusive relationship. Whether it's within a friendship, a marriage, a family, or at work, gender-based violence is never acceptable and never okay. There is hope and help out there for you.

There are many women who have gone through this and have survived and thrived, so you can too. Reach out to your community support group, family members and friends who can help. Use your resources at work. You will get through this.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you, Annie. Penny, same question to you. What do you want women to know who are facing violence at home or in their workplace?

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Penny Patterson:

Well, being a victim of gender-based violence can be incredibly challenging and an isolating experience, but know that you're not alone and it's not just you. Support is available, whether you just want somebody to talk to or you need help in getting out of an unsafe situation.

I would like to add that I am really proud of our union and what we do to raise awareness for this really important campaign.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

I want to thank you both so much for taking the time with us today to discuss this very important and sensitive issue. Penny, you shared that you experienced gender-based violence as well, and I want more people to be comfortable, to be honest and share the truth about this pervasive issue that plagues our society.

If you are experiencing any form of abuse at home or at work, as Penny mentioned, you're not alone. There's help and resources out there and people who will support you. ShelterSafe.ca is a great website for folks looking for resources, including shelters to escape domestic violence. And the website again is ShelterSafe.ca, which is S-H-E-L-T-E-R-S-A-F-E, one word, .C-A.

You can also visit our website for more information on this subject. I'd also like to remind everybody, that if you stay on again until the end of this call, you'll have the opportunity to enter into a contest. And the winner will receive either a Samsung tablet or a pair of Maple Leafs tickets. So I want to thank Annie and Penny again for joining us and having this insightful conversation.

And now I want to, I'll turn it over to you, Wayne. I'm not sure if there's any questions from the membership that need to be discussed.

Wayne Hanley:

Well, Glacier, it looks like we're probably closer to giving away some Maple Leafs tickets, and I think we've only got a few questions here tonight. And the questions are dealing with individual issues relating to a specific workplace. So as our policy, we will forward these on to the reps, who will follow up with the answers to the people that have sent in the questions.

There is one question that the individual did not identify their name, but we do have the phone number so we'll track it through our computer. And please remember, if you do stay on the call or if you're making a call to us during the telephone town hall, it's important that you leave your name and phone number and workplace.

It helps us get back to you quickly. So Glacier, we're moving to the end of the agenda, so I just want to thank you again for doing a great job as host. But I want to thank Penny and Annie for joining us here tonight and sharing all the insights, especially around the gender-based violence issue.

Conversations like this brings the ugly truth of gender-based violence out into the light, so that this epidemic and the suffering it causes cannot be ignored. And we all have a role that we can play, and I'm proud of the work that the Women's Issues Network is doing to make a difference to raise the awareness and eliminate gender-based violence.

As this is our last town hall meeting of the year, just before I sign off, I want to thank all of you for being a part of our great union. I encourage all members to get out, to get to know your union stewards, get your union stewards to follow up with your union reps. Get to know your union reps, and always strive to get more involved in our great union.

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It's never too late to attend your very first proposal meeting or any union event. So with that, I'll just say we'll talk to you in the new year. And I hope everyone has a happy and healthy holiday over the next month or so.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you, Wayne. So for those with questions, your union rep will be getting back to you within 24 hours. If you don't know who your union rep is, you can find them by visiting our website, www.ufcw1006a.ca, and just click on the find your rep button.

Also, remember that an audio file 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 approved during the next meeting, which will be scheduled in the new year.

Now, for one more piece of business, let's do the membership contest. And to enter into the contest, get your phone pads ready and press one on your telephone keypad. So again, to enter the membership contest, just press one on your telephone keypad. The winner will be announced on our website tomorrow by 3:00 PM.

If you don't know our website, it's ufcw1006a.ca. Once again, the website is ufcw1006a.ca. And for those that would like to leave us a question or a comment, stay on the line until the end. And we want to thank everyone for joining us this evening. And we wish you a happy, safe rest of the year and we will see you or hear you in the new year. Thanks, take care.