

UFCW Canada Local 1006A General Membership Meeting
January 17, 2023
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 their first telephone town hall of 2023. We're excited to welcome you to our town hall, which is an opportunity for you to learn more about the union and find ways to get involved in this year ahead. You'll also have a chance to enter our membership contest for a Samsung tablet. We've had to dial thousands of members from different workplaces, sectors, and cities, so thank you for your patience as we connect to everyone in the meeting. Tonight, we'll hear from President Wayne Hanley about the latest union news and member opportunities. 1006A Organizing Director, Lesley Prince, is here to talk with us about the growth we've seen in new members joining our union. Stay with us for the entire call and you'll have a chance to win a Samsung tablet. We'll have more details about that later on.

Tonight, we also hope to hear from you. 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 *3 on your telephone keypad. Make sure you give your full question, your name, and where you work to the operator and they will pass the question onto us. Again, press *3. 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 for our past meetings, we'll post an audio file, meeting transcript, and meeting minutes on our union website. During each telephone town hall general membership meeting, members will vote to adopt the previous meeting's minutes. Again, stay with us for the entire call and you will have a chance to win a Samsung tablet. Let's get started.

We'll be taking a vote for the adoption of the telephone town hall general membership meeting as posted on our local union website and which was held on August 16, 2022. Use your telephone keypad, obviously, to participate. The question before you is, do you approve of the minutes of the telephone town hall general membership meeting held on August 16th, 2022? Press 1 if you approve of the minutes of the August 16th, 2022 meeting, or press 2 if you do not approve of the minutes of the August 16th, 2022 meeting. Once again, press 1 if you approve, or press 2 if you do not approve.

As we wait for the results, I encourage you to visit your union website to stay connected. Every month, our union also sends out emails to our members. If you're not receiving these union emails or your union magazine, please visit our website to update your contact information. Our website is www.ufcw1006a.ca. Once again, our website is www.ufcw1006a.ca. The results are in. The minutes of the August 16th, 2022 telephone town hall general membership meetings have been approved, 95% in favour. Again, if you have any questions, please press *3 on your telephone keypad and an operator will pass them on to us. As a quick reminder, again, for our membership contest, members who stay on the entire call will have a chance to win a Samsung tablet. Now it's my honour to introduce the President of our union, Wayne Hanley.

Wayne Hanley:

Hey, thanks Glacier. Well, this is our first union meeting of the year and I'm thrilled to wish all of you a very happy and prosperous New Year. Now, New Year's is about hope and new beginnings, and I encourage you to think about how you can make a difference in your union and the community. Our union family is connected by the values of service, compassion, and inclusion. If this is your first union meeting or if you have never missed one, I'm glad you've joined us here tonight. I'd like to start tonight

by recognizing the hard work of our members at workplaces across Ontario during the holiday seasons. From grocery stores to hotels, airports, warehousing, transit, our members serve the communities, the communities in which you live. Wherever you work, thank you for all that you do.

I'm pleased to announce that our union continues to grow leaps and bounds in strength and size. UFCW Local 333 has merged with Local 1006A. We are proud to welcome more than 5,000 members from the hospitality sector and the security industry into our local. Bringing members together to build members' power is what unions are all about. The merged local will bring additional strengths to members working in hotels and security as we build greater density in these sectors. We welcomed the staff, and over the weeks to come, we'll be doing the necessary work to transition and welcome all the members of Local 333 to Local 1006A. 1006A is now composed of 40,000 members strong.

I'm pleased to report your union negotiating committees continue to achieve strong gains on behalf of our members. In one of our largest bargaining units, No Frills, members achieved one of the best union contracts in decades. It took 16 days of bargaining over a seven month period. But when it was all done, we secured many significant improvements for 12,000 members at nearly 150 stores across Ontario. The contract included significant wage increases, shorter progression scales for part-time, and improved supplemental benefits for full-time, to name just a few of the gains.

Quite frankly, many negotiating committees continue to do outstanding work for our members in a variety of workplaces and sectors across Ontario, including Grail Springs Health Spa in Bancroft, Sysco Meats in Toronto, Cineplex movie theaters. All have made strong gains in renewals of their contracts in the past few months. I want to personally thank our members who often volunteer their time and energy to serve on negotiating committees to help gain improvements for their coworkers.

In 2022, we also saw incredible growth in activism in our steward base coming off the two years of the pandemic when many in-person activities had to pause. The strength of their activism was evident at our annual stewards' conference, which drew a record 260 participants. It was incredible to see the immense power and passion we have when we all come together. For those stewards on the line, thank you for all that you do to help our members at work. We look forward to welcome you at our next conference this fall. Details will be announced later on in the year.

In addition, our education training department is relaunching in-person stewards training this spring. This training empowers our stewards with the training and knowledge they need to represent members. Registration packages are currently being sent out. We look forward to seeing you in person as well.

This year, some of you may see new faces from the union office coming into your workplaces. I'm pleased to welcome union representatives, Gloria Elstone, John Conway, Joshua Robichaud, Kallisha Hoyes, Michael Hurley, and Tachani Bishop to our union staff. These new staff will continue to ensure that your rights under your contract are protected through the grievance and arbitration process.

During previous telephone town hall meetings, we discussed how we believe the union believes that member seniority rights under the Loblaw's Great Food contract and the Real Canadian Superstore union contract are being disregarded due to the way the company is choosing to implement shift market program and, more specifically, the shift offer program. We spoke about the multiple individual grievances and the policy grievances that have been filed and our multiple meetings with employers to try and find an amicable solution that benefits our members. Well, after months of waiting with no resolve, the first arbitration meeting took place today and will continue tomorrow. It will take time to conclude the case as we expect there'll be more days necessary to be before the arbitrator. Then, of course, the arbitrator will have to take some time to come to his ruling in the case. As a result of all this, as soon as we know a direction and a decision has been given, we'll update members once again.

Our WSIB department continues to advocate for and win cases on behalf of injured workers, including at the WSIB appeals hearing. I'm proud of the work that we continue to do and the cases that we have won. As always, I thank our union stewards. I've got to thank our union stewards, the ones on the shop floor for being so active in documenting incidents that take place and happen and keeping the union office informed. It is your vital work that ensures that our members' rights are protected. Since our last town hall meeting, our health and safety department continues to empower union stewards with the knowledge that they need through online Zoom seminars. Our next online seminar, Preventing Trips, Slips, and Falls in the Workplace, will be taking place on January 24th. That's next week. If you notice a health and safety concern in your workplace, please contact your joint health and safety representative in your workplace or contact 1006A health and safety representative, Rick Young, by visiting our union website.

Our union committees are great opportunities for our members to learn more about the union, empower themselves, and to meet other members. Our Women's Issues Network, commonly referred to as the WIN committee, does vital work in engaging members who take action to eradicate gender-based violence, eliminate the gender pay gap, and empower women activists. This past December, members of the committee and staff undertook a social media campaign to raise awareness about violence against women. Thank you to everyone who participated. Remember, if you or anyone you know is facing domestic violence or abuse, you're not alone. There is help and resources out there. Visit our website to learn more. Committee members will be observing the International Women's Day in March, so please visit our website close to that date for more details on how you, too, can participate.

Our Young Workers Network is home to the next generation of UFCW activists and leaders. During our last town hall, we heard from two young members about their experience with the UFCW Young Worker Internship Program where members learn more about their union movement and social justice issues. If you're a young member under 30 and are interested, I encourage you to take a listen to the August 2022 interview, which is posted on the meeting section of our website. If you're interested in participating in the 2023 young worker internship, talk to your union representative or send an email to youth@ufcw1006a.ca.

Our 1006Outreach Committee is a dynamic group which works to eliminate homophobia, bi-phobia, and transphobia and build a more equal and just society for all. Our 1006Outreach is growing. If you're a member of the 2SLGBTQI community and are interested in joining our committee, please email pride@ufcw1006a.ca.

Outside of committee work, there are still many great opportunities to get involved in your union. You can attend contract proposal meetings to ensure your ideas are included when negotiations are taking place through the workplace. You can take part in community events like various pride and Labour Day parades. Or you can simply register for a free webCampus course to pick up new skills. There are many great opportunities for 1006A members who are looking to learn, grow, and make our union stronger.

Just a last couple of things before I wrap up. I'd like to congratulate the recipients of the 42 union scholarships that Local 1006A provides on an annual basis, each worth \$1,006. Every year, our local helps members and their families cope with the escalating costs of postsecondary education through our program. The list of our 2022 recipients is posted on the website. Scholarship applications are open on our website for 2023 and it only takes a couple minutes to apply.

Finally, delegates and alternates to the UFCW's International Convention have been elected. The UFCW Convention is held every five years. It is the governing body of our great union where members democratically set out our future direction through debate and voting on resolutions and policies. It is also where we elect our international president and officers and our international executive board. Nominations closed on November 11th, 2022. Thank you. Thank you to everyone who participated in

the process. Please visit our website for a list of delegates and alternates who will be representing 1006A at the convention. Now, I'd like to turn back over to Glacier for an interesting interview with UFCW 1006A Organizing Director, Lesley Prince.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thanks, Wayne. Hello, Lesley. Welcome.

Lesley Prince:

Thank you, both Wayne and Glacier. It's great to be here tonight.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Lesley, can you talk about the organizing successes we've had in 2022? Are you seeing anything different from five years ago?

Lesley Prince:

Well, I'm proud to report that, for 2022, approximately 340 workers joined our union family at Local 1006A. We've seen continued interest in cannabis retail workers seeking unionization with two Tokyo Smoke locations in Thunder Bay and Plateau Cannabis in Ottawa. This remains an industry that is still fairly new and lacking protections and safe working conditions. Along with this, we've seen some more places that have been untraditional for the local, such as PetSmart in Toronto, an education center, La Clémentine, in Ottawa. We also saw workers from Kintetsu World Express, a logistics distribution center, Springhill Suites in Vaughan, and Darling International, which is a plant that recycles used cooking oil and sanitary fat and bone pickup. They've all joined our local in 2022. As these units transitioned from a successful organizing drives to achieving first collective agreements, our organizers remain in constant communication with the workers to assist a smooth transition.

To the second part of your question, if I were to look back to five years ago, I think the two biggest differences we are seeing is that workers in industries which have not been traditionally unionized are now realizing the benefits of unions and are reaching out to us. Secondly, I'd say we're seeing workers reaching out to us because they know our members. I believe that when our members speak highly of UFCW Canada Local 1006A and the benefits of belonging to a union, they can relate these stories back to their work experiences and realize themselves that unionizing does benefit workers.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

What do you think is drawing workers to our Local 1006A?

Lesley Prince:

Well, as I just mentioned, I think it's hearing from our members. I think also our local has seen campaigns that have brought a lot of media attention to retail workers via social media, articles and mainstream news outlets, community support including writers, activists, teachers, and community leaders speaking directly to workers about why they support their efforts to unionize. I think this outpouring of support started a wave of retail organizing in an industry that has technically proven difficult to organize because of the challenges retail work environments uphold, including such things as high turnover, part-time, casual, and seasonal work. Also, several of our recent campaigns have been a direct result of the pandemic. The way management chose to handle concerns relating to the pandemic

were problematic, to say the least. Workers began to realize that their safety was not a priority or even taken into consideration by those making decisions affecting their lives and their livelihoods.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Lesley, what would you say to our members who may know a friend or family in workplaces that would benefit from unionization?

Lesley Prince:

I think a big obstacle is that there's so many myths surrounding unions. With the assistance of our numbers, I think we need to offset that misinformation being spread by management and corporations. Unions are about giving a voice to workers. Companies and corporations obviously don't want this. This is why they fight and spend an obscene amount of money for anti-union consultants and lawyers during organizing drives to try to remain non-union. Their goal is to maintain full control and power over workers and arbitrarily make all those decisions affecting workers at their workplaces. I would encourage members to have conversations about unions. Talk about the benefits of having a collective agreement that outlines your rights and your working conditions. Talk about the grievance procedure that's in place when you're unjustly treated at work. Talk about the health and safety committee in your workplace that works on your behalf to ensure a safe and healthy work environment. Talk about the fact that you have a union representative that you can reach out to for assistance when needed.

Ultimately, we want workers to feel empowered to regain their sense of value and worth. Today, the gap between workers and CEOs is higher than ever. In fact, by January 3rd, 2023 at 9:43 AM, Canada's richest CEOs have already earned the average worker's annual salary. It's literally one day of actual work. The issue isn't just how much they earn, it's also how they earn it. It's by exploiting the labour of their employees who make them successful in the first place. As a result, the average worker's quality of life is getting lower and lower, especially when inflation rates are at an all-time high and workers are facing challenges with the high cost of living expenses and interest rates.

Even more disappointing and sad is, if it weren't for minimum standards, companies would attempt to pay workers even less. Hence, the dissension when mandatory minimum wage increases. Minimum wage should only be a starting wage. It should never be a forever wage. Union contracts provide annual increases, premiums for overnight shifts and overtime work. It's the fact that workers who belong to a union make more money on average and have more protection in the workplace. I think the labour movement has been vitally important in changing attitudes towards gender gaps, diversity, and ableism in the workplace. When unions are found in underrepresented communities, these communities experience the economic benefit and social uplift.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Lesley, that was some excellent information that you just provided in your answer for our members to take back and hopefully start conversations with their coworkers or family and friends. One of the things you said is, when unions are found in underrepresented communities, these communities experience economic benefit and social uplift. Can you elaborate a little bit more on that?

Lesley Prince:

Absolutely. A perfect example of this are workers at various Indigo locations are now members of Local 1006A. Following the first unionized Indigo location, Indigo announced new policies for workers across the country, including wage increases from two and a half to 10% for workers with more than one year service, which was unheard of even before the union was approached. Service reps no longer having to

clean washrooms. 14 paid sick days for workers who tested positive for COVID and 10 paid sick and wellness hours. These changes were done, obviously, for reasons to halt the organizing efforts that were happening at the time, but it's still a win for workers in all Indigo locations nonetheless. This occurred before negotiations for a first contract had even begun. It was just the beginning of wins for our members and also non-union workers across the country at Indigo.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you so much, Lesley. That was a great session we had. You gave some very poignant information that I think our members will appreciate. If you would like to talk to Lesley or someone from our organizing team, or if you have friends or family that would like to learn more about joining a union, let us know. Press the 1 on your phone keypad now and someone from our organizing team will give you a call back tomorrow evening. Again, if you're interested in speaking to somebody from our organizing department, press the number 1 key on your phone and somebody will give you a call back tomorrow evening. Now, Wayne, I don't know if there's any questions that you see that we may want to answer before we wrap up the agenda for this evening.

Wayne Hanley:

Yeah. There's a number of questions, Glacier. Many of them deal with workplace specific problems or questions. As you said earlier, we'll have the reps reach out directly to those members before the end of the day tomorrow. There is one call, though, that comes in from a new member, who has worked at Real Canadian Superstore for six months. They're asking why they never get breaks. Quite frankly, to the member, you are entitled to breaks. The number of breaks you're entitled to are dependent upon the number of hours and the lengths of your shift. If you're not getting breaks, that is a violation of the collective agreement, your union contract, and I will ensure that the representative that services your store call you tomorrow and find out more details and rectify that problem in your workplace. Thanks for bringing that up.

I mentioned this question because it's important that all of our members exercise their rights under the collective agreement, from their 15 minute break or their lunch breaks, their washing breaks, or their rates of pay. You have to constantly be monitoring that the employer is living up to their end of the bargain, the terms of their collective agreement they have with the union. It's incumbent upon all of us to be on our toes, be aware of what our rights are, and make sure that they're enforced.

Second question I want to respond to is a question that comes from a Loblaw Great Food store. The question is, why are we still paying for the strike fund? Many of our members probably don't know this, but as a member of UFCW Local 1006, in the event that there is a labour dispute or a lockout, you're entitled to strike benefits. Our strike benefits for our members are made up from several different sources. One, there is a UFCW Canada National Defense Fund, which provides funds in the event of a strike to striking workers. There is the Local Union Special Assistance Fund that we established a few years back, four years ago and, quite frankly, has now got more than \$4 million in this fund. An internal fund is used to assist members when they're out on strike who are having individual hardships, like paying their hydro bills, paying their gas bills, et cetera. That's an internal strike fund. A third fund is the UFCW International Strike Fund, which again provides our members with up to \$250 a week in the event that there is a labour dispute.

All three of those funds put together provide significant income protection while you're out on strike. No member contributes directly to those funds. Those are funds that are established and funded through your regular union dues. Now, there's one additional fund that UFCW members have an opportunity to join. Workplaces vote on this on an individual basis, or in the case of Loblaw's Great

Foods or a Superstore where it is a provincial wide bargaining with many work sites, many stores, many members, et cetera, they vote collectively. A few years back, members voted to join that by taking or having taken off each week additional funds to go to this strike fund. This strike fund, again, depending on the level of contribution, can provide an additional \$100 or up to \$200 worth of strike benefits.

The importance of having the strike funds and having them where they provide substantial income is one of the best tools that we have when we're negotiating with your employer. Your employer knows that if they should choose to lock you out to try and gain what they want in their contract, or if they're not taking our proposals, your proposals, seriously – that we can withdraw our labour and go on strike and that won't affect us to the impact of not having any income during that strike period. The strike funds that we have available provide workers who are involved in a labour dispute hundreds of dollars a week to combat their employer to ensure that they have the best contracts possible. These funds have hundreds of million dollars in them, which sounds like a lot. It's a good question, "Why would we keep paying into that? We have so much money."

Think of it this way; in 2024, we'll have over 10,000 Loblaws Great Food RCSS members who are negotiating the collective agreement. 10,000 members going on strike, \$100 million doesn't go a long ways in the event that the labour disputes get drawn out. Employers have to understand that we have the financial backing, we have the financial assets available to support our workers in their fight against employers. It's rather a long answer to a short question, but it was a good question and it's something that isn't talked a lot about because we don't have a lot of strikes, but they do happen. We are in a good, sound financial position through the local union, through UFCW Canada, and through the international to take on an employer who thinks they want to take on us.

Glacier, I think those are the only two questions that I'd like to address tonight. Again, those of you who have left questions or leave questions after the meeting is over on the answering system, they'll be returned tomorrow. I guess, Glacier, you've got a little bit of business to wrap up the meeting, so I'll turn it back over to you. I'll just simply say to everybody on the line, Happy New Year. I wish you and your family well in 2023. There's so much to look forward to. I hope to see you get more involved in your union in 2023. Glacier.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you, Wayne. As Wayne mentioned, for those with questions that we are unable to get to, 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. Again, our website is www.ufcw1006a.ca. Just click on the Find Your Rep button. Also, remember that 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 approved during the next meeting, which is scheduled for April 18th, 2023.

Let's finish off our last piece of business, which is the draw for the Samsung tablet. To be entered into the contest, simply press 1 on your telephone keypad now. The winner will be announced on our website tomorrow at 3:00 PM. I will repeat the website again for a third time, www.ufcw1006a.ca. For those that would like to leave us a question or comment, please stay on the line. I'd like to thank you all for joining us. As Wayne said earlier, Happy New Year everybody. Hope we have a wonderful, prosperous year. Have a good evening. Take care.