

UFCW Canada Local 1006A General Membership Meeting
April 18, 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 our second telephone town hall of 2023. The town hall is an opportunity for you, our members, to learn more about your union and get more involved in the year ahead. You'll also have a chance to enter our membership contest for a Samsung tablet. More details on that later on.

Congratulations to UFCW 1006 member April Keating from No Frills in Guelph for being the winner of the tablet of our last telephone town hall in January. So once again, we're dialing thousands of members from different workplaces, sectors, and cities, and we thank you for your patience as we connect with everyone for our meeting tonight. Tonight we will hear from Secretary Treasurer, Kevin Benn, about the latest union news and member opportunities. Long-time members who became new local union representatives are on hand to speak about how they became active in the union.

If you stay with us for the entire call, you'll have a chance to win a Samsung tablet. And again, we'll have more details on that later or if you've been on the call before, you know it comes at the end. So tonight we also hope to hear from you. Telephone operators are standing by to take down your questions and pass them onto us. To ask a question, just press star three on your telephone keypad. Make sure you give your full question, your name and where you work to the operators and they will pass the question onto us. Once again, press star three on your telephone keypad to ask a question. Questions about individual workplace issues will be forwarded to your union representative who will contact you no later than tomorrow night with an answer.

As we've done with our past meetings, we will post an audio file, meeting transcript and meeting minutes to our union website. During each telephone town hall general membership meeting, members will vote to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting. Once again, stay on the line for the entire call and you'll have a chance to win that Samsung tablet that I mentioned earlier. So let's get started with the first poll. So we will be taking a vote for the adoption of the minutes of the Telephone Town Hall General Membership Meeting, which was posted on the local union website and it was held on January 17, 2023. Use your telephone keypad to participate in the vote. And the question ahead of you is do you approve of the minutes of the Telephone Town Hall General Membership Meeting held on January 17, 2023. Press one to approve the minutes of the January 17, 2023 meeting.

Or press two if you do not approve of the minutes of the January 17, 2023 meeting. Once again, press one if you approve of the minutes or press two if you do not approve of the minutes of our January 17, 2023 meeting.

As we wait for the results, I will encourage you to visit our website to stay connected. Each 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 ufcw1006a.ca. Once again, our website is ufcw1006a.ca. So the results are in and the minutes of the January 17, 2023 telephone town hall meeting have been approved, 91% in favor. I'd like to remind members that telephone operators are standing by to take your questions and pass them on to us. To ask a question, just press star three on your telephone keypad. Also, a quick reminder for our membership contest. Members who stay on the line for the entire call will have the opportunity to win the Samsung tablet.

Now it's my honor to introduce Secretary Treasurer of our union, Kevin Benn, who will give us the State of the Union.

Kevin Benn:

Thank you Glacier. I'm pleased to welcome everyone to our telephone town hall meeting this evening. President Wayne Hanley wishes he could be here on this town hall but sends his regrets. I would like to begin by recognizing the hard work of our negotiating committees across Ontario, who continued to do excellent work in advancing improvements for our members. Thanks to our highly skilled and knowledgeable negotiators, members achieved several gains at the bargaining table. These include new contracts at Dessureault's Your Independent Grocer, as well as Rome's Your Independent Grocer, Independent City Market, Compass and OTG Toronto Airport locations, the Oxford Valu-mart, Manitoulin Hotel, and a first collective agreement at PetSmart to name but a few. I thank our negotiating committee members for volunteering their time to help win rights and build better workplaces. I thank our members for their support throughout the negotiating process.

If your contract is up for renewal, it's important to know that one of the biggest and most influential factors at the bargaining table is membership support and membership participation. Our organizing department continues to do important work to reach out to empower non-unionized workers and help them achieve union representation. So if you know anyone who you feel could benefit from unionization, please contact our union organizers at gounion@ufcw1006a.ca. As some of you on the call may know, our education and training department is holding in person stewards training this May and June. Finally, once again, it's been a long time coming. Our 700 1006A stewards are the heart of this union. They work closely with union reps to protect members' rights and ensure fairness at work. Our 1006A training programs are integral to empowering 1006A stewards with the knowledge and with the skills that they need on the shop floor to better, to best help our members.

Thank you to the many stewards who have registered for the training and to all of our stewards for what you do each and every day. As part of our education and training department, our scholarship program continues to generate strong participation from our members. Applications for our 1006A scholarship program are now being accepted. Every year our local union, as you may remember, awards 42 scholarships worth \$1,006 each to members or members' dependents. Please be sure to fill out an application or let your family members know.

Our Health and Safety Department continues to work to develop our members' safety and will be holding the next online Zoom seminar on Noise and Hearing Loss Prevention on April 20. Later this month, on April 28, your union will be participating in the National Day of Mourning. We encourage you to take the time to remember the thousands of workers that have been killed, injured, or made ill while at work. Workplace injuries can happen to anyone whether you are young or young at heart, a new hire worker or a long-term employee. Our Health and Safety Department reminds us that the common types of injuries includes strains and sprains, cuts, punctures, scrapes, bruises, and pinches, none of which is a surprise to us or you, I am sure.

If you notice a health and safety concern while at work, please contact the Joint Health and Safety representative at your workplace or contact 1006A Health and Safety Representative Rick Young by visiting our union website. As always, our union staff continue to work hard on your behalf by ensuring your voice is heard and your rights under your union contract are protected.

Next week, elected delegates and alternates will be attending the UFCW International Convention, which takes place every five years. At the convention, members democratically set out UFCW'S future direction through debate, through voting on resolutions and policies and electing our international executive board. Strong activists make for a strong union and we are so very proud of the growth in the

activism that we're seeing across our union. I am also proud of our activists for stepping up. I want to commend the efforts of long-term steward Audrey from Loblaw Great Food Store in Etobicoke. In February, in honor of Black History Month, Audrey worked tirelessly to create a massive window display in her workplace lunch room to raise awareness about the achievements and the struggles of Black people's across North America. The display featured prominent Black inventors, sports figures, writers, actors, musicians, politicians, and historical figures who have made an impact.

When members like Audrey take action, they help create change. It's truly inspiring to see our members step up and Audrey certainly does.

Our Women's Issues Network, commonly also known as WIN, continues to see strong participation with activists from workplaces across the province. In April, WIN raised awareness about the importance of embracing equity with community and labor allies at a rally in downtown Toronto. Several activists at workplaces across Ontario participated in the Embracing Equity campaign through social media platforms as well. On April 4, 2023, WIN also marked Equal Pay Day. That date identifies and exposes the extra days, weeks, and months into 2023 that a woman must work on average to make the same as a man made in 2022. 1006A is committed to eliminating the gender wage gap and promoting equal opportunities for women. Our 1006 outreach committee continues to grow with new members participating.

We're proud to stand in solidarity with the 2SLGBTQI community and work towards quality and inclusivity. Members of the committee also raised awareness and spoke out in a series of videos on the Trans Day of Visibility on March 31. This year, our Outreach committee will be leading participation at street fair and parades at Toronto Pride. The event takes place on the weekend of June 25. If you're interested in joining the committee or participating in Toronto Pride, please contact 1006Outreach Committee at pride@ufcw1006a.ca.

I'm also pleased to report that a few of 1006A young members have been selected to participate in the 2023 UFCW Young Worker Internship Program. These members will have the opportunity to learn more about the union movement and social justice issues. Thank you to everyone who indicated an interest, and please know that more spots will be open again next year.

Your union will be honoring, missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and two spirit people on Red Dress Day, which falls on May 5. 1006A is committed in helping to end this violence and to raise awareness and create change. We will be observing Red Dress Day at our offices on May 5.

As a member of UFCW 1006A, you're also part of a wider labor movement in Ontario and Canada. This includes our support of the Ontario Federation of Labour' "Enough is Enough" campaign. As part of this initiative, we are joining workers across the province and calling for change. We're advocating for real wage increases, keeping schools and healthcare public. We're advocating for affordable groceries, gas and basic goods, rent control, and affordable housing and ensuring that banks and corporations pay their fair share. Visit of ofl.ca to see more information. There are always many opportunities to be involved in your union and participate. Getting involved can change your life. I'll turn it back to Glacier now, who will be speaking to three longtime members who became involved in their union and had their lives changed.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you, Kevin. Today it's our pleasure to speak to three long service members who became union representatives with the local. Please welcome Kallisha Hoyes, John Conway and Tachani Bishop to a telephone town hall to speak to us about their journey. Welcome, Kallisha, John and Tachani.

Kallisha Hoyes:

Thank you for having us.

Tachani Bishop:

Thank you for having me.

John Conway:

Thanks Glacier. Thanks for having us.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

So my first question for the three of you, and I'll start it off with John. As a member, what got you involved in the union?

John Conway:

So my story might be a little different than some, but some of my coworkers and I decided one day that we had had enough with the way management were handling our schedules, had too much control of and were mismanaging our money and the way we were being mistreated on a regular basis. So one day over a year after work, we were trying to figure out what we were going to do and at some point forming a union was suggested. And so here, we started our research and years later, here we are.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

And Kallisha, what about you? What got you involved in the union?

Kallisha Hoyes:

For me, I had written working at No Frills for just over 10 years, and I knew my contract pretty well. And a lot of my co-workers would naturally kind of come up to me and ask questions about their rights, advice on how to handle things and questions about our CBA. And then it was my rep, Diana O'Brien, who actually asked me one day if I wanted to become a steward since I was so naturally good at speaking with all my coworkers about everything. So that kind of started my activism with my union.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Tachani, you want to share your story?

Tachani Bishop:

Yes, for me, thank you, Glacier. So for me, I was already in the union. I was already a part of Loblaw, so I got involved because the company, they weren't following the policy according to the collective agreement. So I advised my rep and when I spoke to my rep, I let her know what's going on and she recognized me and she asked me to become a union steward.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

I mean, you all have different stories, which started your involvement, but there's one main similarity in the fact that you all were trying to solve a problem and that was the main reason why. That's what it sounds like to me why you got involved, which was the same for me. So let's move on to my next question. Why did you stay involved more importantly? Somebody's phone needs to be on mute. Sorry. So why did you stay involved? I'll start off with Tachani.

Tachani Bishop:

Well, I stayed involved because the support I get when I became a steward from my local. I was able to take training classes that got me empowered. I went to rallies, I got out there and I just try to get to know my union and it was history after that. It just empowered me to go back in my workplace and let my coworkers know their rights. And after that, everybody keep coming up to me and asking me questions about the collective agreement. And I stayed because I liked it.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

And John, why did you stay involved?

John Conway:

Naturally I stayed involved because I was one of the original workers to help organize our workplace. I believed in what we were doing and from that point on, as a senior member, the staff looked up to me for advice. It was only natural that I was nominated to be a steward and at that point had gained so much knowledge that I was able to help my coworkers with their workplace issues in any way I could.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

And Kallisha, what about you? What kept you going?

Kallisha Hoyes:

For me, pretty much after I became a steward, I did the youth internship program that was offered by the national office. And I was pretty much given a crash course on the labor of movement, how unions came to be and the importance of having a voice in your workplace. I've always seen myself as a people person and I love helping and empowering people, whether it was marching in rallies, supporting and participating in fundraisers, showing solidarity on picket lines, helping to organize new members. I found the community within my union and like-minded people that kind of felt more like family. So that's definitely why I stayed around.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

I mean, so you all followed a different path, which is encouraging because I think that shows our members that there's multiple ways of getting involved. There isn't one cookie cutter path. There's lots of options for people to get involved with this. So that's great. My next question is, how has your experience been since becoming a union representative with the local? I'm going to start off with you, Kallisha.

Kallisha Hoyes:

For me, my experience has been great since becoming a union rep. I get the pleasure of representing multiple workplaces and I also have the pleasure of working with some great stewards. I've helped many members get their jobs back, find their voice at work, and I've gotten a few into the youth internship program as well. And I've even empowered a few of them to become stewards in their workplace. So for me, I've loved my experience.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Tachani, what about you?

Tachani Bishop:

Since I become a representative, it's been great. I have a great union steward in the store that helps me when I go in the store as well. The fact that I have to represent so many members could be challenging at time, but the satisfaction that I get when I do help these members, that was once in my shoes and in other shoes. So it's very good. It's pleasing. I like it.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

And John, how has your experience been since becoming a union representative with the local?

John Conway:

So far my experience has been great. Everyone at the local's been extremely welcoming, very helpful reaching out and offering their knowledge. It's a little different. I've personally been able to help members on a much larger scale and it's honestly been very rewarding. Sometimes people just need an ear to listen and that can often be just as important.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

I mean, speaking from experience, myself, your job, our jobs, they're challenging, way more than I think most members understand because I didn't understand when I was in my unit. But at the end of the day, it's worth it because I think it's worth it because we're helping people and ultimately I think that's what we're here to do is just to help each other. And so let's go on to the next question. What did you learn about the union from the perspective of a union rep that you didn't know as a member? Let's go back to you, John.

John Conway:

I'm definitely still learning every day. And I know I'll be learning new things for years to come. There are a lot of consistent issues that we see as stewards and as representatives that we deal with often. But then certainly there are often as well things that come up, curveballs that keep you on your feet.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

Yes. Always, curveballs. Kallisha, what about you?

Kallisha Hoyes:

For me, I think one of the biggest things that I've learned is the importance of taking good notes and asking the right questions. Representing members as a rep compared to representing them as a steward has an added layer of responsibility and due diligence. So especially when it comes to representing multiple members from various units. Also, the importance of staying organized. As a rep, we represent hundreds of members individually. As a steward from our unit, I didn't realize the amount of different contracts nor the amount of other issues that occur in other units. Our union's very proactive in addressing issues and ensuring that a problem for one doesn't become a problem for all.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

And Tachani, how did your perspective change?

Tachani Bishop:

Well, my perspective that behind the scenes looking in, I was selfish. I'm speaking selfishly because when I was in the store, I'm always dependent on my union and say, "Why are they not there?" But looking in, being out there now, it's a more broader scope. It's challenging. It has its good and its bad, but it's satisfaction. I love it.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

You get to see a bigger picture when you become a rep, right? It's exactly like you said, when you're in your own unit, it's just your one silo and you don't realize we have thousands of members, hundreds of units, and when you become a rep, that's when you see a bigger picture. And going back to what John said, the learning never stops. You could be a rep for 10, 15 years, there's always something new going on. So it's a very challenging job, but it's also very rewarding. And my final question for you guys would be, what advice would you give to members seeking to becoming or getting involved in our union? Who should I go with? Kallisha, you go.

Kallisha Hoyes:

I would say to them to just do it. As a member, you are the union. And I would say my only regret about my journey with UFCW is that I didn't get involved sooner.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

And John, what about you?

Speaker 3:

I would say just keep showing up, being present and not only to work or meetings and events, but also being present for your colleagues and lending a hand or an ear. The smallest gestures can affect someone's day and even your own.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

And I'll finish it off with you, Tachani, what advice would you give to our members wanting to become more involved?

Tachani Bishop:

Yes, my advice is take advantage of all the online courses. It's free. Get to know your rights. Get to know your union representative when they come in the store, go up to them, ask them questions, right? Be empowered. And that's what got me involved.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Well I want to thank you John, Kallisha, Tachani for this great conversation and welcome aboard. I'm so happy that you guys are a part of the team and you are both great stewards. I remember all three of you in steward's training. And so I know you'll be great reps. But thank you [inaudible 00:30:07] for the conversation.

Tachani Bishop:

Thank you, Glacier. Thank you for having us.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

You're welcome.

John Conway:

Thanks again.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

So we're always looking for ways to get our members involved. For these members getting involved, changed their lives. Getting involved can start by attending a union meeting, a contract proposal meeting, or taking part in a community event like a rally at Queens Park. There are many opportunities to get involved. Check out our website regularly or speak to your union rep if you'd like to be more active with your local union.

Kevin Benn:

You were so very right, Glacier, about your comments with respect to many opportunities to get involved with the local union in so many capacities. You just need to start. That's all you need to do. And we'll together plot the rest of the journey. Like you, I would also wish to thank Kallisha, John and Tachani for sharing their stories and thoughts with us today. We, of course, appreciated you taking the time to share your experiences with the membership. I'm sure many on the call found it inspirational and insightful. So thank you all again, sincerely. Now moving on, I'd also like to thank those of you who called in this evening with your questions. As we've been watching them come in, we realize that we have addressed many of the questions through our discussion today and any questions relating to a specific bargaining unit, we will have them sent to the appropriate union rep who will follow up with you in short order.

I'd like to remind folks that if you stay with us to the end of the meeting, you'll have the chance to enter our membership contest. And the winner of that contest will receive that Samsung computer tablet that Glacier had mentioned earlier.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

Well Kevin, that just wraps up our agenda for this evening.

Kevin Benn:

Well that seems to have gone quickly. Well, thank you Glacier for all of that you do. Again, I am excited to see our members get involved and step up in their union. Please never forget, as it was said earlier in this meeting, you are the union. All of our members are the union, and the more you participate and get involved, the stronger our union will be at the bargaining table in the workplace and beyond.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

Thanks Kevin. Again, for those with questions, as Kevin mentioned that we weren't able to get to, your union rep will contact you within 24 hours with an answer. If you don't know who your rep is, then you can check on our website at www.ufcw1006a.ca. Click on the find your rep button. Please 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 August 2023. And so before we go, our last poll question will enter you into the draw for the Samsung tablet. So to enter, simply press the number one button on your telephone keypad now, and the winner will be announced on our website tomorrow

by 3:00 PM. Again, if you do not know what our website is, it is ufcw1006a.ca, that's www.ufcw1006a.ca.

For those that would like to leave us a question or comment, please stay on the line and you'll be able to do that at the end. And I want to thank you all again for joining us for our second telephone town hall for 2023. And thank you for all the participants, Secretary Treasurer Benn and I hope everyone has a good evening. Take care.