

UFCW Canada Local 1006A General Membership Meeting
January 19, 2021
Telephone Town Hall Event Transcript

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Hello everyone, it's Glacier Effs-Samuel, Recorder of your union. I want to welcome everyone tonight for our first telephone town hall general membership meeting of 2021. I'd like to wish you all a happy new year, and thank you for joining us tonight. Our telephone town hall is about getting together with each other and connecting with thousands of us, members of 1006A, from all sectors and all cities across Ontario. We've got thousands of members across the province, so we'll take a little bit of time, as I mentioned earlier, but thank you for your patience for those of you who joined us early.

We've got a great program for you tonight. 1006A President, Wayne Hanley, will share with you the impact that COVID-19 continues to have on our members, and the latest union news. We will hear from 1006A legal counsel, Matt Masters, about vaccinations, testing, WSIB, and leave of absences in relation to COVID-19 in your workplace. We'll also hear from Mark Hennessy, who's a special assistant to the President at UFCW Canada, on the union's efforts to advocate for our members at Queens Park and at Parliament Hill.

Stay with us, again, for the entire call, and you'll have a chance to enter a membership contest to win a Samsung tablet. We'll have more details for that later on. We also hope to hear from you, so telephone operators are standing by to take your questions and pass them on to us. To ask a question, press *3 on your telephone keypad. Please make sure to put your full name, where you work, and the question to the operator, and they'll pass them on to us. Once again, just press *3 on your telephone or your cellphone.

Questions about individual workplaces will be forwarded to your union representative. They will follow up with you no later than tomorrow night. If it is an urgent matter, your union rep's contact information is available on our website at ufcw1006a.ca, and all you have to do is click the, "Find your rep," button, and you will see a list of reps.

For other questions that we do not get to, they'll be forwarded to your union rep, who will contact you with an answer. An audio file, meeting transcript, and minutes will be posted on our website, as we do for each town hall. During each town hall general membership meeting, we will vote to adopt the minutes of the previous meeting, which we will be doing now.

Before we move on, let's take the vote for the adoption of the minutes of the telephone town hall general membership meeting that was held on October 13, 2020, and was posted on our local union's website. Use your telephone keypad to participate in this vote. The vote question is, "Do you approve of the minutes of the telephone town hall general membership meeting, which was held on October 13, 2020?" Press one if you approve of the minutes of the meeting that was held on October 13, 2020. Press two if you do not approve of the minutes for the meeting held on October 13, 2020. Once again, press one if you approve and press two if you do not approve of the minutes.

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Glacier Effs-Samuel:

As we wait for the results to come in, I'll mention again for our members' convenience, an audio file and printed transcript of the minutes for each meeting are posted on our website. Click, "Get involved," and then, "Membership meeting," to access the file. If you know a member who couldn't come on the call tonight, you can let them know so they can listen to the call in its entirety.

The results are coming in, and the minutes for the October 13, 2020 town hall general membership meeting has been approved. I'd like to remind you that, again, telephone operators are standing by for your questions. Press *3 to ask a question. Now it is my honor to introduce the President of our Local, Mr. Wayne Hanley, for the State of the Union.

Wayne Hanley:

Thank you, Glacier, and good night everyone. Thank you, all of you, for being here with us tonight. We'll try and make you feel as welcome as we can. We'll start by saying on behalf of the staff and the executive officers of the local union, I want to wish all of you a very happy new year.

Since we spoke last, we all hoped that the spread of COVID would have decreased, but in fact COVID has intensified across the province. We find ourselves in the middle of another quasi lockdown, as COVID-19 cases skyrocket, stretching hospitals' capacity and healthcare workers to their limits. There is immense stress on our healthcare system right now, and thousands of people are getting infected, and hundreds, quite frankly thousands are dying.

In my opinion, the crisis is in part the consequence of ineffective actions by Premier Doug Ford. It didn't have to be this way. Ford could have listened to our health officials and scientists and not to his buddies in the business community. Ford could have implemented lockdowns sooner, which would have saved more lives and enabled a quicker recovery. He could have helped save our seniors who have died in the thousands during this wave. He could have introduced sick days for all, so that people could afford to stay home when they had the symptoms. He could have put lives ahead of profits, but he didn't, leaving people to bear the consequences. In fact, while people sacrificed seeing friends and family over the holidays to keep each other safe, we know what Ford's Finance Minister did, he ignored the travel restrictions and went on vacation in the Caribbean.

Now a second wave is prolonging the hardship faced by many of our members in several industries. The number of members diagnosed with COVID in our retail stores and our food processing plant has gone up. We are just under 500 of our members that we know about who have experienced COVID during the last 10 months. Many of our members in the service and hospitality industry continue to face financial difficulties due to slowdowns and closures to stop the spread. Many have seen a reduction in hours and work for the last 10 months.

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Wayne Hanley:

In addition to impacting members' livelihood and safety, the pandemic is also taking a toll on their mental health. Canadians are grappling with a wide range of emotions, from fear to loneliness, to uncertainty. It's absolutely normal to be anxious, nervous, and unsure, and you're not alone if you're feeling that way. During this difficult time, many people are reaching out to formalize the supports or seeking professional care. These include workplace supports like the employees' assistance programs you might have available to you through work, reaching out to community agencies or resources, reaching out to your family doctor, or reaching out to the Canadian Mental Health Association.

I encourage you to visit our website, ufcw1006a.ca, or our last issue of 1006Alive to read about the ways that you can strengthen your mental health. Having said that, Glacier, I believe you have a poll for us to take?

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Yes, thanks Wayne. I just want to say, before we do take the poll, protecting your mental health is vital during this difficult time. As many of you know, 1006A members work in a wide range of workplaces and industry. The pandemic has resulted in some of our members having hours reduced or cut, others have been laid off due to closures, and still others are working long hours on the frontline. Based on your own work environment during the second wave, we want to know how you're feeling.

For the second poll, we're asking you: Press one if you're feeling more stressed and anxious, two if you're feeling less stressed and anxious, or three, haven't noticed a change. Once again, the poll questions are based on your work environment. During this second wave, how are you feeling? Press one if you're feeling more stressed and anxious, two, feeling less stressed and anxious, or three, haven't noticed a change.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

I want everybody to remember it's healthy to talk about negative feelings that you experience, and it's okay if others want to express negative thoughts. Listening to each other can be one of the most powerful things you can do during this time. You don't have to fix other people's problems or try to make them feel better. Sometimes people just appreciate being heard and knowing that they're not alone.

The results are coming in. Again, I think as expected, most people feel overwhelmingly more stressed since the pandemic. Remembering to reach out for help is one of the best things you can do for yourself and your loved ones during this difficult time. Again, it's normal to feel this way, it's normal to feel anxious, and talking about it is a good way of dealing with some of these emotions.

Okay, I want to thank you guys for sharing your input on that and being honest. I'm going to turn it back over to Wayne.

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Wayne Hanley:

Thanks, Glacier. Looking back and reflecting on the past 10 months can be pretty depressing, and it is depressing. In looking for hope, we look for a light at the end of the tunnel, and there is hope. We know that 630,000 Canadians have already received their first dose of the vaccine, and many have received their second dose. All Canadians are expected to receive their vaccine by this fall, so we're going to get through this, so hope is on the horizon.

But until then, I encourage you to take then necessary precautions to keep yourselves, your loved ones, and your coworkers safe. Wear the mask and socially distant, so all workplace protocols is now super important, because there are government inspectors who are out there who are issuing tickets. But I encourage you to look through the Ontario government's lockdown guidelines, and really what you need to do is focus on what you can do to minimize your contact with others while at work and outside of the essential work that you have to do.

In these challenging times, as always, the important work of our union continues. Our union representatives are working hard to represent members, ensuring the rights and livelihoods are protected, and health and safety protocols are followed. I want to thank the union staff there on the telephone and doing emails and text messages more than they have in the past. I want to thank our stewards. I want to thank our health and safety committees for the work that you're doing to make life better for our members every day. You can read about some of our amazing stewards, as we profile them now on our Steward Spotlight series on our website.

I can report to you some good news for some, as of January 1, our union representative Gord Jackson, executive administrative assistant Mel Joseph, have retired. We'll also see regional director Roland Lapins retire on February 1. Their work with Local 1006A and predecessors represent more than 76 combined years of service. We want to thank them for their service and the commitment to our Local and to the members of 1006A, and we wish them a long and healthy retirement.

Wayne Hanley:

Our health and safety department has never been busier. It continues to help keep workers safe by providing guidance to members with concerns about safety protocols being followed at work. In addition, the department continues to host a number of online educational seminars to empower our stewards in assisting the members.

As we work to protect you, it's vital that we hear from you on the issues and concerns you are facing at work. Do your part and stay vigilant, and let your union representative or your health and safety committee know of any concerns that you may have. As always, remember to carefully document everything. With that in mind, I'll turn it over to Glacier for our next segment with one of our guest speakers tonight, who will delve into your rights at work.

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Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you, Wayne. Please join me in welcoming 1006A legal counsel, Mr. Matt Masters. He's here with us to lend his expertise about your rights, as they relate to vaccinations, testing, leave of absences, and WSIB as it relates to COVID-19 at work. Thank you, Matt, for joining us tonight.

Matt Masters:

Thank you, Wayne and Glacier for having me on the town hall.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Matt, now that vaccination protocol has begun, a lot of people have this question, "Can my employer require me to be vaccinated?"

Matt Masters:

Yeah. Well, the short answer is it's possible. At this stage, there's no legislation that directly addresses this issue, which means that we're left with kind of a tangle of competing rights and obligations to sort through. For now, that job is going to fall to judges, tribunals, and labor arbitrators.

It's not going to be a simple task. Vaccines and COVID-19 tests are invasive, and employees have the right to privacy. But on the other hand, the presence of an infected or symptomatic person in the workplace causes serious health risks. Workers also have a right to a safe workplace, and employers have obligations to take all reasonable steps to provide a safe workplace.

On top of that, there's also human rights' considerations, that may raise further employee rights and employer obligations. It's not hard to imagine situations in which these rights and obligations, all of them important, would demand contradictory results. What that means is that there's likely to be some uncertainty in the immediate future as to what the law says about these issues. It also means the answer could really depend on the particular circumstances of each case.

But we do have some guidance based on how similar situations have been dealt with in the past. We know that health and safety is going to weigh heavily. When an employer is acting based on reasonable concerns that are consistent with public health, they may be able to refuse to let an employee come to work, send an employee home, request that an employee take a COVID-19 test, and they may even be able to require a mandatory vaccine to enter or re-enter the workplace.

But we also know that even where such safety measures are justified, there could be some exceptions. For instance, a person who doesn't want to be vaccinated because of a sincerely held religious belief or who has an allergy that might interact with the vaccine, they may have a right to be accommodated. Our best advice at this stage is to contact a union representative or steward with the details of if your employer requires you to test, be vaccinated, or send you home for health reasons. You can know that your union will be following these issues closely as the law develops.

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Glacier Effs-Samuel:

That's some good advice, which I'm sure will help a lot of people. Another question, Matt, if workers contract COVID-19 at work, are they eligible for WSIB?

Matt Masters:

Well, they might be. The WSIB adjudicates COVID-19 claims through a two stage analysis. First, they're going to consider whether the nature of a worker's employment created a risk of contracting COVID-19, to which the public at large is not normally exposed. Second, they will determine whether they're satisfied that the worker's COVID-19 condition has been confirmed. If you meet those two criteria, generally that's going to be persuasive evidence that work significantly contributed to your illness. If you have a diagnosis or you have COVID-19 symptoms, you may file a claim.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Okay. Under which circumstances would a member be eligible for a leave of absence as it relates to COVID-19?

Matt Masters:

For provincially regulated employees, which almost certainly includes everyone on this call, if you meet certain criteria you are eligible for an unpaid leave under the Employment Standards Act. There are several reasons you might be entitled to a job protected leave related to COVID-19. You're following public health directives, you're receiving treatment for COVID-19, you've been directed to stay home by your employer because of concerns that you might expose others in the workplace, you're directly affected by travel restrictions and cannot reasonably be expected to travel back to the province, or you need to provide care or assistance to a specified individual. There's a list of individuals that are included in this, and this includes children who require care because of COVID-19 related school or daycare closures.

Matt Masters:

You need to let your employer know you're taking the leave as soon as possible, and your employer can require you to provide proof reasonable in the circumstances for the reasons of the leave. To give an example of this, a letter from your child's daycare informing you that they're closing due to COVID-19, that might be reasonable proof depending on the circumstances.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Okay. Finally Matt, if a member is no longer eligible for CERB, what would they be eligible for?

Matt Masters:

Now that the Canada Emergency Response Benefit Program has ended, there are a number of newer benefits that our members may be eligible to receive, that I'm going to mention briefly. But first I want to raise, there have been some temporary changes to EI that will expand who will be eligible to receive it. This includes a reduction in the insurable hours required.

Matt Masters:

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But in terms of the newer benefits, let's start with the Canada Recovery Benefit. This is for those eligible workers who are unemployed or self-employed due to COVID-19 who aren't eligible for EI, or for those who have had their employment income reduced by at least 50% due to COVID-19. That's a \$500 per week taxable benefit for up to 26 weeks.

Matt Masters:

There's also the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit. This is for those eligible workers who are unable to work at least 50% of the week because they are caring for a child under 12, because of school or daycare closure due to COVID-19, or because of a child or family member's illness, serious health risk, or requirement to quarantine during COVID-19. Again, that's a \$500 per week taxable benefit for up to 26 weeks per household.

Finally, the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit. This is for those eligible workers who are unable to work at least 50% of the week due to contracting COVID-19, self-isolating due to COVID-19, or who have underlying conditions, treatments, or other illnesses that in the opinion of a medical practitioner, a nurse practitioner, a person in authority, or a government or public health authority would make them more susceptible to COVID-19. That's once again a \$500 per week taxable benefit for up to two weeks. I realize I moved through those rather quickly, but if you google any of the benefits I just mentioned or if you Google CERB, C-E-R-B, you should be able to find these details on the Government of Canada website.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

I want to thank you Matt for joining us tonight. As cases continue to rise, it's important that our members understand their rights and responsibilities as it relates to COVID-19 at work. Thank you again.

Wayne Hanley:

Yeah, thanks Matt, and thanks Glacier for walking us through those questions. There are a number of questions that have come up that are really site specific or workplace specific. I think what we will do is have reps reach out to you and answer the questions related to the layoffs and leave of absences, etc. Thanks again, Matt.

I can report now that our Local continues to grow. Our organizers are successfully helping workers achieve union representation, despite the difficulties that are posed by the pandemic. I'm proud of the outstanding work they do in helping our union grow. I'm pleased to welcome approximately 30 new members from Chapters Indigo Bookstore in Woodbridge. They join a growing number of Indigo workers across Canada who are saying yes to union, yes to UFCW. Congratulations on your victory, and welcome. We're good to have you as members, and you join the Indigo workers that we talked about at our last meeting in Mississauga who joined our union.

Wayne Hanley:

We're also thrilled to welcome 25 workers from Superette Cannabis Retail Dispensary in Ottawa. The cannabis industry may be relatively new, but the issues that workers experience, especially in retail, are not. We're proud to have these members as 1006A members as well. Welcome.

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Wayne Hanley:

Remember, if you know anyone who could benefit from union representation, our excellent organizing team can reach out. It can be reached at gounion@ufcw1006a.ca, or by visiting our website, ufcw1006a.ca.

We also continue to see progress at the bargaining table. Our negotiating committees continue to help members win rights and protections in their workplaces. Negotiations almost exclusively now are being done virtually. In recent months, we've negotiated new contracts at various workplaces, including iFLY in Mississauga, Baxtrom's YIG in Cornwall, at Comfort Inn Airport North, Homewood Suites in Markham, and Mama Earth Organics in Toronto.

Our thoughts are also with our American UFCW sisters, brothers, and friends, who will be inaugurating their new President tomorrow. We saw democracy under attack, as Trump and his team of white supremacists and far right extremists attempted a coup at the U.S. Capitol. In Canada, far right extremists and white supremacists are also a reality. As a labor movement, we must stand in solidarity for equality and justice with our UFCW sisters and brothers, and black racialized and indigenous workers, and commit to doing our part in standing up in eliminating discrimination, hate, prejudice, and racism.

You may recall in our last town hall and in our 1006 Alive magazine, we discussed the movement of equality and justice with Black Lives Matter. Our union is dedicated to creating an inclusive, equitable, and fair society for all. You can help in your workplace to ensure inclusive, equitable, and fair workplaces by your own actions and by checking other workers on theirs.

Wayne Hanley:

I'd like to share with you a recent arbitrator's ruling in Ontario regarding racially charged misconduct at work. An arbitrator upheld the termination of a worker who uttered racial slurs at a black co-worker. The arbitrator ruled that racial or ethnic slurs can never be dismissed as mere shop talk, and concluded that they fall within the category of serious workplace offenses, like theft and sexual assault. This is an important and meaningful change, which raises the bar for cases involving racist language or actions going forward. In my opinion, it is a step in the right direction.

Wayne Hanley:

Finally, 1006A was proud to observe 16 days of activism against gender-based violence from November 25 to December 10. Members of our Women's Issues Network took the lead at their workplaces in raising awareness and inspiring action. All women and children deserve a world that is safe and free of threats and violence. During the pandemic, the situation is even more dire, with the UN reporting a rise in domestic violence around the globe. We must remember we all have a role to play in eliminating gender based violence. For those seeking resources, I encourage you to visit sheltersafe.ca.

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Overall, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we remain in a strong financial position, allowing us to do our job from a position of strength, and fulfill our responsibilities to our members. At this time I'd like to call on Glacier again with another guest speaker. Glacier?

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you, Wayne. Again, I'd like to ask you to join me in introducing our last speaker for the night. I just want to mention, throughout the pandemic, UFCW Canada has been vocal in advocating for members' interest across the country. As Wayne mentioned in his comments, the impact of the pandemic has been far reaching for many of our members. As a union, our efforts continue to be to protect and support our membership. With that in mind, please join me in welcoming Mark Hennessy, who is a Special Assistant to the President of UFCW Canada. Thank you for joining us tonight, Mark.

Mark Hennessy:

Thank you, Wayne and Glacier. It's good to be here.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Mark, let's get into it. What are the key advocacy issues that UFCW Canada is working on right now?

Mark Hennessy:

Well, it's a big list, but in broad strokes, I'd say we've been mainly focused on workplace safety, worker aid, specifically for our members, and economic recovery. What that specifically means is personal protective equipment access, security within our workplaces, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, CERB itself, or what's now been transitioned into the CRB, and pandemic pay.

Mark Hennessy:

We then take these issues and drill down even further to advocate for even more specific issues that our members are facing, like childcare, transit, and so on. UFCW was ahead of industry and other labor unions in calling for workplace changes for these sectors. Sectors that we knew would continue working, like food manufacturing and retail. And the first in advocating the wage subsidy and CERB, to help our members who are being laid off, or who were unable to work due to COVID-19.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Mark, with many UFCW Canada members working on the frontline of the pandemic, what are we hoping to see with the vaccine rollout and the prioritization for our members?

Mark Hennessy:

I am extremely proud of our union in this area. I know firsthand, we were the first union to begin advocating for our members on this issue, when we began last summer with the federal government. We've been asking for and hoping to see our members, specifically those who continued to work and deemed essential, on the priority list for vaccination. We fully understand that vulnerable citizens in communities, healthcare workers, and first responders, need to be first, but we want our members in food manufacturing and grocery retail to be next.

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Mark Hennessy:

So far it looks like we're getting that consideration. Although the actual rollout of vaccinations is handled by provincial governments, we know that the federal government has been urging all provinces to consider our request. I know that we were just deemed essential here in Ontario, under the new state of emergency. If governments are able to stick to their timelines that they announced, it would appear that our members would fall into what they call phase two of the rollout, and would begin receiving vaccinations as early as May. We continue to work on this issue daily, and that's just a lobby strategy, in terms of we know that if we were to let off, that someone else would step up and take that place, so we're constantly pushing this issue every time I meet with any politician.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

That's good to hear, that we're pushing for such an important thing. Let's hope we get into phase two. Mark, many UFCW 1006A members work in the airport, and they've experienced the pandemic firsthand. What is UFCW Canada doing on this important issue?

Mark Hennessy:

This one actually ... This one breaks my heart. We worked with Local 1006A in raising this issue at the national level. Last fall, we coordinated the town hall with Jagmeet Singh, leader of the NDP, yourself from Local 1006A, and other unions representing airport and airline workers. We raised the issue with both government and the public, and I was most affected by your comments, when you reported that Local 1006A has over 3,000 members at Pearson Airport, but only 100 were currently getting work at that time.

We have been pushing for measures on requiring employers to use the wage subsidy, to ensure workers and our members were getting paid, and to help stabilize the economy. A small win in this area came our way in December, where the government made it possible to search employers by name, to find out if they are in fact receiving the wage subsidy. This will make it easier not only for our union to expose an employer for any wrongdoing, but it'll also show us who's not currently receiving or applying for this benefit, which will then provide us with the opportunity to meet and find out why. Then finally, we are getting closer to having the federal government set up a sector working group for the airline industry, to see what more we can do for this sector.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

On the lines of pandemic pay and safety protection, they are vital issues for our members. Can you discuss the union's advocacy on this matter?

Mark Hennessy:

Yes. UFCW has been well coordinated on these issues from the beginning of the pandemic last year. It was thanks to Local 1006A, since advocacy on this issue started at the local union and employer level. From there, we took the issue to the federal government, who helped in urging the national and international employers to implement safety measures and to consider pandemic pay. When employers canceled it, we worked with the federal government again to have them called before a government

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committee to explain themselves. While we knew it wasn't likely going to change employers' minds, we knew it would help expose them publicly.

Mark Hennessy:

We continue to raise the matter with all levels of government, and we're looking at ways to implement wage protocols automatically when governments implement states of emergency now and in the future. Then the same applies to safety measures, we're currently getting input on what safety measures need to remain in place or need to have automatic implementation in the cases of pandemics or states of emergency.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Finally Mark, what can members do to support the union's advocacy efforts?

Mark Hennessy:

Number one is always communication. Please communicate any concerns to your local union, even if you're not sure if it's a union matter. I've got many examples over the past year, where it was unclear what the rules were or how they should be implemented. It was a privilege to see if there was something that we could do politically to help in these areas. Some of those, including stopping the closures of food processing plants, raising the profile of our members and the issues they face in the airports with Wayne and Glacier, to pushing the federal government and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency for quicker action in reopening plants. It's really rare that we are not only able to help, but then to see quick results, which we did in some of these cases. It also really showcased the value of our political work.

Then number two is share those same concerns with your provincial MPP or your federal MP. Once a month make a call or send an email to share your experience, and ask them what they are doing on those issues, on these issues that we're discussing here tonight, like pandemic pay, like paid sick leave, and vaccine priority for all frontline workers.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

Thank you so much, Mark, for joining us tonight. It's so important that you share with the members or we share with the members what UFCW is doing as advocacy for our membership. I think some of the stuff you mentioned is really imperative, and will answer a lot of questions that people had. But thank you again for joining.

Glacier Effs-Samuel:

I want to remind everyone on the call, if you stay with us for the entire call, you will have the opportunity to enter a membership contest. The winner will receive a Samsung tablet. Once again, if we do not get to your question for tonight, if we're not able to answer your question, your rep will be contacting you tomorrow with an answer for all the questions we didn't get to in the night. I want to pass it over to Wayne before we wrap it up, so that he can have the final words for the evening. Wayne?

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Wayne Hanley:

Thanks, Glacier. I've got to tell you that the number one question, and not surprisingly, that people are asking on the call tonight is about the pandemic pay. I know that Mark talked about it briefly from a national perspective and also a local union perspective. I can tell you that there isn't a month go by, sometimes more often, or a change in status, whether it be going to the next level in the pandemic for regional areas, or doing a complete lockdown, every time there's a change in status of where we're at with COVID, I'm in contact with Loblaws, and telling them that, look, you paid the pandemic pay upfront and this is not only Loblaws, it's with other employers that stepped up to the table 10 months ago, and they should be commended.

But they shouldn't be commended for their actions more recently. Very few employers now are stepping up to the table. We're still in a pandemic, we're still in lockdown. Our members are still working as frontline workers, whether it be in a food store, whether it be in a takeout restaurant, one of our Swiss Chalets, whether it be at the airport or a food processing plant, we are on the frontline. If there was ever a time for pandemic pay to be paid to our members, it is now. It should have happened months ago. It should have, quite frankly, never stopped.

But employers are not doing that. There are some employers, retail employers who across the country in certain provinces have introduced the pay, but here in Ontario they're just not doing it. Quite frankly, on my most recent call, which was last week, there is still no intention or no direction from them that they're interested in pandemic pay. They keep telling me that they are considering it, are considering it, but I don't have confidence that we're going to see it, which quite frankly really demonstrates to us that the pay at the beginning was not a hazard pay in the companies' minds or a pay for pandemic.

It was a payment to try and retain people during uncertain times, not knowing where things were going to land. That's why they introduced the extra pay. They did it to recruit people, people that were being laid off from other jobs not essential, not front line jobs. They used that pandemic pay to try and entice people so that they'd be able to cut their chickens in the plant, or ring out the groceries, or put the produce on the shelf, or operate their essential service. It's really disappointing that they tried to let the public think that they were doing a positive thing in paying workers extra money, but the hazard pay or the danger had, in my opinion, nothing to do with the pandemic pay.

Wayne Hanley:

We've seen that when they were called up before the government, and they discontinued the pay about three months into the pandemic, when things looked like they were getting under control, and they had an adequate workforce, a sufficient number of people working, they thought that things were settling down. We've learned now that they didn't, but they thought things were settling down, so they cut it off. They stopped paying it, and they took a lot of public pushback on that, and a lot of public embarrassment. Kudos to Mark and his team at a national office and National President Paul Meinema for leading that charge on a national basis.

Wayne Hanley:

I think it is despicable that they don't recognize the work that's being done out there in the trenches, and that they haven't reinstated the pandemic pay. I am not optimistic that we're going to see it

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reinstated, but we'll continue to fight for it. Every time there is a changed circumstance, an extension of the lockout period, if we ramp up the curfews, I'll be on the phone with Loblaws, just telling them how I feel and how deserving our members are. Not only Loblaws, but all of our employers out there that are an essential service. I just wanted to make that statement, because a lot of people on the call here tonight have asked that question.

Wayne Hanley:

Just as a bit of a wrap up, Glacier, to those who are listening tonight, thank you for joining us. I know that many of our members, like all Canadians, may be feeling tired, lonely, scared, and frustrated, as this pandemic reaches the one year mark, and it's going to go longer than that. I encourage members to take care of each other. When we choose solidarity, we can lighten the burden and we can lift each other up. I strongly encourage you to stay in close contact with your union reps, because as always, your union is here for you. Thank you for your hard work, be well, be safe. Glacier, you have a little bit more business to do, so I'll be quiet here and let you take the show.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

All right, thank you, Wayne. Thank you for those kind words. If we were not able to get to your question tonight, your rep will get back to you with an answer within 24 hours. If you do not know who your rep is, you can visit our website at www.ufcw1006a.ca, and click the, "Find your rep," button. An audio file and transcript of tonight's meeting will be posted on our website for your convenience, so anyone who missed the call tonight, please let them know. As well, the minutes of tonight's meeting will also be posted for your review and to be approved during the next meeting.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

Now that we're at this point, I'm going to take the time to have the third poll, which will be for the Samsung tablet. To enter the contest, please press one on your telephone keypad, and the winner will be announced tomorrow by 3:00 PM. Once again, to enter the contest just press one on your telephone keypad, and the winner will be announced tomorrow on our website, which is ufcw1006a.ca.

Glacier Effe-Samuel:

I want to thank everybody again for joining us tonight under these pressing and unprecedented circumstances. We have to stick together and stay safe together, and just stay safe and stay in contact with your rep, as Wayne mentioned. Our next town hall is scheduled for April 20, 2021. Please mark it on your calendar, and I hope everyone has a good evening. Thank you for joining. Goodnight.