

Customer and employee “abuse” are issues at Superstore Negotiations!

Superstore policy regarding “acceptable” customer behavior is unclear and it is an issue at the negotiations table.

Increasingly, it seems, some customers bring their stress and frustrations to Superstore with them.

Shopping can be an obligation to be performed after or during a difficult day in an already “time starved” world. Frankly, life can be difficult and shopping can be a real chore for customers.

But it is no easier for Superstore employees who face the pressure of their workplace. Departments are understaffed, hours are cut, and employees have had to somehow defend empty shelves and long line ups.

Many retailers and other service providers have a “zero tolerance” policy for abusive customer behavior. Customers cannot abuse employees or each other. Whatever the approach in your department, Superstore appears to either have no policy or no practical policy in this area.

Employees rightly complain about some cases of extreme customer abuse. Superstore managers are often absent and sometimes indifferent. Security staff are not employed to protect employees.

The Company’s approach to refunds, returns and exchanges is often ridiculous and demeaning to its staff. Diligent employees treat customers as they have been instructed to in these areas, only to see their superiors, often without any interaction with the customer, override them! “We are embarrassed and look like idiots” said one Superstore employee at the negotiation table, describing their feelings when bosses instantly and whimsically override them.

Problems in this area have been worsening and have reached a breaking point. The way Superstore has run its business and its failure to reward new and senior employees with a new Union contract undoubtedly contributes to turnover and diminished staffing levels. A lack of continuity frustrates customers already feeling the pressures of a complex world. They are forced to “self scanners” when they want service. They take out frustrations on employees – the “face” of the Company. Employees are not paid or treated well enough to put up with it. They quit. The cycle continues!

Superstore needs to run its business properly and treat its employees fairly to keep its customers happy. And while it is true that employees are there to serve the customer, they are not there to take anyone’s abuse! Zero tolerance for such behavior and a sensible approach to employee security and matters like return policies would help.

Bargaining continues in Edmonton during the week of December 10, 2007. Let us know if you would like to attend!