

Superstore goes to the Labour Board to prevent Mediation and Strike Vote!

Superstore employees are sick of waiting. They want a new Union contract! They want immediate and fair wage increases! The cost of living keeps going up!

Employees have been patient. They have told their Union to make every effort to avoid a strike, but that they would consider striking if necessary.

After over a year of bargaining Fort McMurray Superstore employees demanded action last fall. It wasn't just a handful of militant union members talking either.

Union officials were quick to act. Local 401 asked government officials to appoint a Mediator for the Fort McMurray Superstore negotiations. Mediation can sometimes be a valuable process to break a logjam in negotiations. Mediation, under Alberta law, must occur before a strike vote can be taken or a strike can occur.

The main reason the Union applied for Mediation in Fort McMurray was to respond to the clear wishes of Union members there. And it made sense for other reasons as well. Could it "wake up" the Company to all of the concerns of its Alberta employees?

A Mediator was, in fact, appointed under Alberta law by the Government's department of Mediation Services.

But the Company is trying to stop the Mediation and any resulting strike vote. They have been trying to argue that Mediation and strike votes might only be alright in a "pooled" process where Edmonton and Calgary are merged and employees in areas other than those are grouped together as well. This is unfair for a variety of reasons. Your gut reaction to this might be "do Medicine Hat and Fort McMurray citizens get to vote on each other's mayors?" What about the issues that relate to separate seniority and transfer rights? Why shouldn't employees from each area get to control their own Labour Relations destiny?

The Union is ready to respond to the wishes of its members. But your Union will not only fight for the right to Mediation when appropriate, but will also fight for a proper and fair democratic process.

The Company is going to try to convince the Alberta Labour Relations Board to overturn the decision of the Alberta Government's Mediation Service at a hearing scheduled for January 31 and February 1, 2008. The hearing is open to the public. If you would like to attend please contact your Union Representative.

Superstore employees are carefully watching what other Alberta unionized retail employees are doing. Safeway Local 401 members have authorized strike action if necessary by a 95% strike vote. These votes were conducted on a city by city basis. This approach to voting was, even according to Safeway, the correct approach.