

## UFCW Local 401 Union Negotiation Update

### Union negotiations well underway for employees at XL Lakeside Packers!

On July 6<sup>th</sup> 2010, your Union negotiating committee met with management officials from lakeside packers to exchange proposals for a new Union contract governing your terms and conditions of employment.

The Union was represented by Senior Union Staff and a number of employees who are your co-workers from the plant. The Unions bargaining team was made up of 14 people, 10 of whom were from the plant.

The company has brought 17 proposals to the table and the Union has about 80 proposals.

It is important to know that most Union proposals had their origin in the everyday concerns that you have about your workplace. Obviously, and as you might expect, many of them have to do with wages and benefits. But others talk about everything from leaves of absences to line speeds. The proposals have been prepared based on surveys that you filled out and viewpoints that you expressed at Union meetings. It is absolutely critical, in your Union's view, that the issues discussed at the bargaining table are your issues.

Negotiations continued on August 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in Brooks. A number of topics were discussed including basic protocols for conducting bargaining. The company in our view pursued some unreasonable demands with respect to how bargaining should be conducted. The Union rejected those demands.

One of the most important things discussed in negotiations was the issue of health and safety. The company heard from employees who work in material handling, maintenance, processing, slaughter, and training about the kinds of health and safety problems that employees are facing. Other workplace areas were contemplated as well. Over 50 issues were raised by your Union. There seems to be a general consensus in the workplace that safety is not where it should be and is not being taken as seriously as it should be by the company. Line speeds are too high and there are too many injuries, WCB claims, and modified work situations. Training is lacking and leadership on the part of management is less than perfect to say the least. Many feel as though the situation has worsened since XL purchased the plant.

It is your Union's view that the right to be safe at work is a basic human right and it should never be compromised. Working in a packing house, some say, is the most dangerous work in the world if you consider injury rates. Your Union is putting a strong emphasis on health and safety issues and is demanding improvements. Wages and benefits are important. They are in fact vital in order for you to survive economically. No wage and benefit. However, has any value if your body is ruined.

The company and the Union will be meeting again later this month to continue the bargaining process.

We wish to advise that the company has told us that the XL plant in Moose Jaw is closing. Our local Union is in communication with the Local Union affected there and our National Union and more information will be forthcoming. Suffice it to say that we are very disappointed with this news and our hearts go out to the employees at that plant, some of whom have worked there for more than 30 years. This news should remind us that in our economy the bottom line, sadly, comes before human need. We should also be reminded though, of our need to fight harder than ever to make sure that people do come before economics.

Your Union is committed to providing leadership and support to Union members at Lakeside XL. With the Moose Jaw closure, the company will be more dependent on its Brooks plant and more dependent than ever on you. Our Union voices need to get louder at this time to ensure that your hard work is fairly and properly rewarded.