

Wal-Mart in Weyburn certified as UFCW Canada unionized store

WEYBURN, SK, December 8, 2008 – A Wal-Mart store in Weyburn, Saskatchewan has been granted union certification by the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board (SLRB) after years of Wal-Mart legal wrangling and delays, including two Wal-Mart applications to the Supreme Court of Canada to overturn the process.

“Justice has finally arrived for these Weyburn workers, in spite of Wal-Mart’s extraordinary attempts to thwart the workers from exercising their constitutional right to have a union,” says Wayne Hanley, the National President of UFCW Canada.

“The time has come for Wal-Mart to end the stalling tactics and start respecting worker rights and Canadian laws. They are not above it.”

The written decision, delivered by the SLRB on Monday, comes almost five years after UFCW Canada Local 1400 applied to the SLRB to represent workers at the store, located about 115 kilometers southeast of Regina.

Determination hearings into the application began in April 2004 after a majority of the workers at the Weyburn Wal-Mart indicated their support to form a union.

Those hearings dragged on for 19 months as a series of Wal-Mart legal challenges interrupted the proceedings, including a Leave to Appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada to stop the process. The court declined to hear the case. The hearings finally concluded in December 2005, but before the SLRB could render a decision, Wal-Mart again filed to go to the Supreme Court – this time challenging the authority of the SLRB to rule on the application. Again the Supreme Court declined to hear the case. That was in April 2007.

A change in makeup of the SLRB caused further delay, but finally this week the original board members who heard the case ruled in favour of the application.

“I want to welcome our newest members and congratulate the workers for standing up to Wal-Mart and fighting for our rights,” said Paul Meinema, President of UFCW Canada Local 1400. “This has been a long time coming and it’s a victory for them and for all Wal-Mart workers.”

Applications for two other Saskatchewan Wal-Mart locations are also before the SLRB. UFCW Canada also represents Wal-Mart workers at three locations in Quebec where the process leading to first contracts is underway. In Saskatchewan, UFCW Canada Local 1400 is in the process of contacting Wal-Mart to also commence first-contract bargaining for the Weyburn store.

“Weyburn is yet another example of Wal-Mart workers in Canada coming together and demanding their rights to bargain collectively,” says National President Hanley. “It’s high time for Wal-Mart to start respecting Canadian traditions and the Charter rights of its workers, and to get to the table without further delay to bargain a first contract in good faith.”

UFCW Canada is Canada’s largest private sector union with over 250,000 members coast to coast.