

Sobeys Forest Lawn and UFCW401 Bargaining Update

Attention Union Members

On February 10 and 11, 2011 your **Union Bargaining Committee** was scheduled to continue negotiations with your Employer. As you may recall from our last update, the Company removed the lawyer who had been their chief spokesperson since day 1, and replaced her with its Director of Labour Relations.

Our committee was not overly optimistic about this news. As you know we have put up postings in the past outlining the Employer's conduct at the bargaining table. We spoke about their "retreating positions" and receiving documents from them, which upon our review, did not reflect the agreement we had reached. We specifically mentioned that as a result of that conduct, your committee was unable to trust your Employer's committee. This latest announcement didn't bode well for us or the process, **as in our opinion**, the Company's new spokesperson was the biggest part of the problem.

It turns out that we had concerns for good reason as it didn't take long for the problems to begin;

He immediately told us that he was unavailable for dates which the Company originally proposed to us.

He then cancelled half of the first day on very short notice. In fact he decided it was more important to attend other meetings instead of meeting with us.

When he and his committee finally showed up, at 2pm in the afternoon, they had nothing prepared for us. They had done no work.

The comedy of errors was just beginning it seemed; as he went through documents it was as though he was seeing them for the first time. He read from the wrong documents, he continually made mistakes and also had to ask team members for the relevant documents. It was embarrassing, a complete waste of everyone's time and it was clear to us that he was completely unprepared.

The next day didn't go any better. They again showed up without anything prepared. They had no documents for us, despite the fact that we had been asking for important information since last year. Your committee was getting very frustrated as it seemed as though he was incapable or uninterested in conducting bargaining.

Things got worse.

Despite the fact that the parties had been exchanging positions in writing at the table for nearly a year, he decided that he was no longer going to abide by that agreement. He claimed ridiculously, that not putting things in writing would expedite, or speed up the process. Remember, this is an Employer who we had previously outlined our concerns over our ability to trust. We told him that if he wanted to speed up the process, he shouldn't cancel our bargaining dates on short notice. He stammered quickly in response that he needed a "time out" and took his committee out of the room. When they returned, nothing had changed.

We had had enough! We told the Company that we believed they were not interested in concluding a Collective Agreement. They not only continue to hold to concessionary positions at the bargaining table, but now seemed to be playing games.

We demanded to know who they answered to. We wanted to know who was in charge behind the scenes. The new spokesperson refused to tell us. He was being evasive and coy.

We gave them our request in writing, citing the **Labour Relations Code**. You see by law, they are required to give us the information we have requested in writing. They are also required by law to come to the bargaining table and bargain in good faith, and to conclude a Collective Agreement. It is becoming more obvious to your committee, that your Employer doesn't seem interested in living up to those obligations under law.

We are currently waiting for the Company to provide us our request in writing. We are also scheduled to continue negotiations on **March 14/15, 2011 (another fact which he didn't seem to know)** at which time we sincerely hope the Company will send someone to the bargaining table with authority to conclude a collective agreement.

If they do not, or if bargaining fails to take a turn for the better, your committee will have to decide if it's time to take this process to the next level. That will mean applying for **Government Mediation** and somewhere in the very near future coming to you for a **Strike Vote**.

We hope that it will not come to that, but we need to ensure that the Employer begins to take your concerns seriously.

Please watch your Union board or check the webpage for bargaining updates, and as always, call Joe with any questions.