

## **Jonquière Wal-Mart Workers Get Their Day in Court**

OTTAWA, January 21, 2009

On January 21, former UFCW Local 503 members at a Wal-Mart in Jonquière, Quebec will finally get their day in court four years after Wal-Mart shut their store.

In April 2005, Wal-Mart terminated all the workers and shut the Jonquière store after arbitration for a first contract between Wal-Mart and UFCW Local 503 had been mandated by the province.

On Wednesday, the Supreme Court of Canada will hear arguments that the workers' Freedom of Association rights to form a union, guaranteed under the Charter, were violated when Wal-Mart closed the store.

At an earlier Quebec Labour Commission hearing, Wal-Mart denied it shut the Jonquière store because of union activity — saying it shut the store because it was losing money. The Supreme Court will hear the same defense from Wal-Mart: that a business has the right to close a store because of “good and sufficient” reasons.

“This isn’t whether Wal-Mart has the right to close a store,” said UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley. “It’s about Wal-Mart shutting down the Charter rights of 200 Canadian workers.”

“As Canadians, what’s more important to us? The business rights of some multinational corporation or the human rights of Canadian workers and their families here at home?”

The case was brought forward by five appellants who had all worked at the Jonquiere store.

The outcome could also affect 79 other Jonquière Wal-Mart workers who had also filed as complainants. The decision by the Supreme Court is expected before September.