



Saskatoon Co-op continues discussions with UFCW toward a fair agreement

(Nov. 20, 2018) – Last week, Saskatoon Co-op met with its union, UFCW Local 1400, to continue working toward a collective agreement. No agreement was reached, but bargaining will continue when the parties return to the bargaining table on November 29.

“We want to get back to serving our communities together with our employees,” said Grant Wicks, CEO of Saskatoon Co-op, “We’re glad that we had discussions with UFCW leaders this week, and we’re always open to continuing conversations that help move us toward a fair agreement.”

In past negotiations, Saskatoon Co-op proposed industry-leading wage increases for its current employees. An adjusted wage scale was offered to new employees that still provides wages and benefits that are higher than most of Saskatoon Co-op’s local competitors. This type of wage structure is common in the retail industry, and in Saskatoon, UFCW has agreed to multi-tier wage structures with Saskatoon Co-op’s national competitors since as early as 1995.

“As a local business, we must stay competitive in our market,” said Wicks. “Saskatoon Co-op and its employees really contribute to Saskatoon and our communities. We’ve been here for over 80 years and we want to serve our communities long into the future. To do that, we must work together to find ways to compete.”

Saskatoon Co-op is still open to serve its members and customers during the strike, with plans to expand its hours of operation and re-open several locations in the coming weeks. The Co-op Food Store and Co-op Gas Bar at Centre Mall remain open with normal business hours as those employees are represented by Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) Local 480.

Since the strike began just over two weeks ago, Saskatoon Co-op has received many questions from members, customers and neighbours and is responding to these questions on its website. One common question is whether or not Saskatoon Co-op has locked out its employees. “Our employees are not locked out,” said Wicks. He noted that Saskatoon Co-op has issued a ‘lockout notice’ to the union, which is common practice during a strike, but has not implemented a lockout. “We want people to understand that we welcome all current employees who are willing to work to continue providing services to our members and customers.”

Wicks also recognized that the strike is placing a lot of stress on everyone involved. He shared that all employees, whether they’re on the picket line or working in stores, can reach out for support.

“We want to encourage any employee who needs support to take advantage of the Employee and Family Assistance Program,” said Wicks, noting that the program is provided by a third-party counselling service. “We all come across situations where we need to talk to someone about what we’re going through, and this situation is no different.”



About Saskatoon Co-op

Saskatoon Co-op is a retail co-operative that has proudly served Saskatoon and area for more than 82 years. Today, Saskatoon Co-op serves more than 116,000 members — and many more customers — in Saskatoon, Warman, Martensville, Colonsay and Watrous where it operates 30 locations. Since 2013, Saskatoon Co-op has returned more than \$53 million to its members in cash back and equity and paid over \$215 million in wages, while contributing over \$2.5 million to community organizations and initiatives.

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