

Union News



Fall 2026 Newsletter

To All UFCW Local 649 Members

Next General Membership Meeting: Wednesday, November 4, 2026.

Multiple meeting times will be offered throughout the day at the hall to accommodate all shifts. Please note that exemptions will not be granted for evening or night shift staff. Members who attend this meeting will receive \$40, payable on their year-end incentive cheque. Scheduled times are 11:00 am, 2 pm, 4:00 pm, and 7 pm. *Please note slight changes to allow extra time for questions and voting.* We will also be driving out to Melfort Propane for an 8 am meeting in the lunch room or shop on Tuesday November 3rd.

As a reminder, an additional \$40 (totalling \$200) will be awarded to those who attend all four meetings or have approved exemptions for one or two meetings.

IMPORTANT: *All members are required to attend at least two meetings in 2026 to be eligible for the additional \$40 payment.* Exemptions are limited to two meetings per calendar year for reasons such as vacation leave.

BARGAINING:

Our current collective agreement is set to expire on October 31, 2026. Your Bargaining Committee has spent a year preparing for this round of negotiations, and we have 10 dates set to meet with FCL in November and January, the first of which will be an initial exchange of proposals on November 12th.

ELECTIONS:

Nominations for Shop Stewards and OH&S Committees are now open. Nomination forms are up on our website and on all Union bulletin boards. Please consider running for a position with your Union.

PROPOSED MERGER WITH UFCW LOCAL 1400:

As I mentioned at the August General Membership meeting, we have been in discussion with UFCW Local 1400 about a potential merger between our two unions. We have reached a Merger Agreement and will be asking you to vote on it at the November meeting. The Union Executive is recommending acceptance of this proposed merger. The agreement is included with this newsletter and is also up on our website for review, and we will also be discussing the merger in more detail at the meeting and answering all questions.

For some historical context, all FCL unionized employees were members of Local 1400 until 1992, when the leadership at that time made the decision to break away and form our own local. Since then, we have punched above our weight and done the best we can, but working within a smaller local has been challenging at times.

We see a lot of advantages to a merger at this point. A merger would give us greater strength at the bargaining table, with more members, greater resources, and a stronger collective voice. We will benefit from access to additional staff and legal support; all while being backed by a larger organization with greater capacity to respond to grievances and arbitrations.

We are also looking toward the future and the long-term stability of our bargaining unit. Combining our resources will help ensure our members have a strong union representing them for years to come.

I look forward to discussing this with you all further at the November 4th meeting, and in the days and weeks to come. In the meantime, please see below for some frequently asked questions. UFCW Local 1400 President Lucy Figueiredo will also be on hand to answer questions, along with UFCW Canada Executive Assistant Mark Hennessey.

LOCAL 649/1400 MERGER FAQ:

Q: Will there be a dues increase as a part of this merger?

A: Yes, a slight increase for most of our members. At our last general membership meeting in May we voted to raise dues to \$35 per pay period. The post-merger increase would be an additional \$1, for a total of \$36 cheque.

Q: Will other members of Local 1400 be able to bid on jobs in our bargaining unit, and will we be able to bid on jobs in other Local 1400 bargaining units?

A: No. FCL employees will be a separate bargaining unit, just as we are now.

Q: Will Brant Palko still be the President of our local?

A: No. Lucy Figueiredo will be the President for all former Local 649 members. Brant will be the full-time representative assigned to the bargaining unit.

Q: Will Brant be employed by Federated Co-op?

A: No. Brant will be a salaried employee of Local 1400. This will ensure he, and any future reps, will be at arms-length from being beholden to the employer in any way, such as having to make time off requests for union business, or threats of discipline while acting in the their capacity as a union rep.

Q: Why a merger now?

A: It has become increasingly difficult being a part-time President given the present demands of the position. Members deserve to have Union representation that is focused 100% on union work. There are many other reasons, which we'll be detailing at the meeting, including the advantages that come with being a part of a larger Union that has an in-house, full-time legal team that works solely for Local 1400 members.

Q: Will Brant represent other units?

A: Yes. He will also help represent Saskatoon Co-op members, to help better align the two units in a way that strengthens the collective interests of all employees, but his primary focus will be Federated Co-op members.

Q: Does this impact bargaining?

A: In terms of who is at the bargaining table on the Union side – no. But FCL will be dealing with a much larger Union (7000 members, compared to our 450) with far greater resources.

Q: What happens if the merger doesn't pass?

A: Nothing. We continue as our own local.

Q: Why did we form our own local in the first place?

A: There are varying opinions and recollections from those who were there, and most of the leadership from both locals circa 1992 have retired, so getting an exact cause is difficult. It depends on who you ask. The bottom line is this: it's very rare that a Union will form their own local, and no locals have left 1400 since ours did 34 years ago. Almost all Provinces in Canada have one UFCW Local, with Saskatchewan being an exception.

Q: Will we still be holding General Membership Meetings at Sutherland Hall?

A: Yes! Nothing will change for our four General Membership Meetings per year, we will still be conducting them at Sutherland Hall, Brant will be giving a report, and we will still be offering incentive cheques to those who attend, the same as we do currently.

Q: Will we still have Shop Stewards?

A: Yes. We will still have our own Stewards and OHC, we will still have our own quarterly Union Executive meetings, and we will still pay honorariums to our internal Executive and OH&S reps, just as we do now.

Q: What happens to the funds currently in our bank account?

A: Those funds stay with our bargaining unit to pay out whatever the Executive decides, to be held accountable through regular financial reports to the members. Things such as meeting incentives, scholarships, honorariums, etc.

If you have any specific questions you would like to have answered at these meetings, please contact Brant by email and I will answer them in front of the members.

Hope to see you all on November 4th!

In solidarity,

B. Palko

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