



**your
voice at work**

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Dental (meats):

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Superstore PT Benefits:

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Pension:

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United Food and Commercial Workers Canada Union, Local No. 401

March 23, 2020

Via E-mail

Gateway Casinos & Entertainment Limited
4331 Dominion Street
Burnaby, BC V5G 1C7

Attention: Julia Simpson, Director of Labour Relations

Dear Julia:

Re: Supporting our Members through COVID-19

Your Alberta operations are now closed.

The well-being of your employees and customers should now be your utmost priority. In the positions stated below, we are asking for evidence of your stated commitment to following "guidance from government" and implementing all recommendations from health authorities to ensure that your casinos will be safe places to work and visit when they are able to re-open under what may still be challenging circumstances.

Given Mr. Santo's statement that the "health and safety of employees and customers is always our highest priority", we are requesting all information on all Gateway's Covid-19 policies and emergency preparedness plans along with all updates as we work through this evolving situation together. This is in addition to our request at the bargaining table on March 12, 2020, where you stated that you do not normally share this information with unions. We remind you that, even during this unique time, under the Collective Bargaining Agreement Article 7.04 and 39.09 you have legal and statutory obligations to ensure the health and safety of your employees in a safer workplace in which all employees are informed of all workplace rights, obligations, policies and rules.

We can not fully express the anxiety that our Union feels for and shares with our members. The closure due to COVID-19 has had massive impacts on our members' health, well-being and financial situations. Though we understand that no one could have predicted COVID-19, we continue to be shocked that prior to this pandemic, the employer has continued to blame everyone from the Edmonton Oilers to the lack of parking spaces for the situation at Grand Villa. When will company officials accept any responsibility for their business plan and their failure to manage the casino leading up to COVID-19?

Now we are concerned the company might put COVID-19 as an excuse to avoid their responsibilities. We are very displeased with how you handled the COVID-19 matter before you closed. You say you care about your employees but your actions around COVID-19 show the contradiction is profound. In anticipation of a reopening we can tell you that these issues have not been forgotten and that our Union takes its responsibility to its members very seriously. We will revisit what has happened and we will speak for our members' past, present, and future concerns.

For now, we are formally requesting that Gateway step up for employees in the following ways.

Supports for Your Employees

Respect our members

Our members are frontline workers and heroes of the company. Please be kind to our members and take all necessary measures to ensure a **culture of respect** in your workplace. Every subsequent request contained in this letter is an elaboration on what we mean by "respect."

Financial Assistance for employees

Employers are uniquely positioned to play a critical role in our societal response to this pandemic. As a matter of social responsibility, employers have an obligation to ensure that their **employees are fully supported** and assisted during this COVID-19 crisis and beyond.

Because you had to close your operations without proper notice, we are concerned that many employees will be in dire need of additional supports. Despite the new measures announced by the government, workers may only expect to see 55% of their income without gratuities, and only after several weeks without pay.

We have heard others in the industry have offered additional wages past the date of closure to offset losses until EI claims are processed, as compensation for lack of notice. We ask that Gateway consider joining the leaders in the industry and offer the same compensation. Additionally, we urge you to immediately set up a fund that can be used to assist our members in EI claims, resume writing, and job placement assistance.

Further, we request that all employees have their recall rights extended until the COVID-19 threat is over, the closure requirement is lifted, or one year (whichever period is longer).

Health benefits

We also request that Gateway show leadership and kindness to all employees by extending their benefits until the COVID-19 threat is over, the closure requirement is lifted or one year (whichever period is longer).

Suspension of all grievance time limits

This circumstance is disruptive in many ways. We are hereby requesting the **immediate suspension of all grievance time limits** and their application to both parties in the collective agreement.

We believe the temporary closure of casinos ordered by the government provides Gateway with ample opportunity to revisit and revise its policies and practices for the good of its employees and clients.

We put forward these positions to ensure that when employees do resume their work, they can do so with confidence that Gateway values them not just as employees, but also as people who have struggled through a time of great personal adversity.

We look forward to your reply to these urgent requests.

Sincerely,



Thomas Hesse
President, UFCW Local 401



Richelle Stewart
Secretary-Treasurer, UFCW Local 401

cc: Dan Schuler (via e-mail)
Dee Mae Beler
Lee Clarke
Ricardo de Menezes
Michael Hughes

Charmaine St. Germain
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