



your voice at work

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Dental:

1.866.961.6147

Dental (meats):

1.800.667.2816

Safeway PT Benefits:

1.866.544.9686

Superstore PT Benefits:

1.866.342.3513

Pension:

1.888.811.7227

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April 12, 2020

VIA EMAIL: dale_legrange@cargill.com

Dale LaGrange
General Manager
Cargill Meat Solutions
P.O. Bag 3850
High River, Alberta
T1V 1P4

Dear Mr. LaGrange,

RE: Safety of all members at Cargill Meat Solutions

Today is Easter Sunday. This is a day of enormous significance in the Christian world. Yet somehow, this day must feel significant to those of all faiths and belief systems. This is a day of pause for most. During this pause, during this very troubling time, everyone is surely reflecting on the value of life. The intersection we face is unprecedented.

Our Union is very bothered and deeply troubled about your Alberta workplace. In recent days, the Premier of the Province has spoken to Albertans. He has revealed new public health figures. He indicated as follows “from the beginning of the outbreak to the end of summer, we could see as many as 800,000 infections”.

CTV News says, “factoring in the government’s last population estimate...it means more than 1 in 6 Albertans could contract Covid-19”. That is about 17 in every 100 people. That is 170 for every thousand. That is 340 out of every two thousand citizens.

Your workforce approaches or exceeds two thousand people. There is no reason to believe that hundreds of individuals in your working environment won’t soon be carrying the virus.

Your plant is designed around efficiency. Work is done and the workplace is arranged around something that is the opposite of “social distancing”. Your workplace is designed around the concept of “social proximity”. Unfortunately, the employer is just not doing enough to protect its employees in this environment. You need to do more.

I am hearing mixed actual numbers and perceived numbers around Covid-19 diagnoses in your workplace or similar workplaces in Alberta. The numbers that are emerging from comparable plants in North America have now reached a tipping point so as to obviously necessitate new preventative action in your plants. There are now reports of 30 North American UFCW member deaths. Employees are scared. Your employees are scared. It is time to act. It is time to protect life.

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

Decency itself demands the following:

1. An immediate 2-week closure of your plant to conduct a comprehensive assessment of its safety.
2. Guaranteed full compensation for every single employee during this temporary shutdown. There is no reason why workers' livelihoods AND lives can't be protected.
3. An immediate meeting with Union officials, experts, and government officials of appropriate competency and jurisdiction to design clear and enforceable rules around health and safety in your workplace.

Our members bring food to the tables of Albertans. Access to food is a human right. But safety and security of the person are also human rights. There is no reason why Albertans cannot have both. We urge you to show leadership and to do the right thing.

We look forward to your immediate response.

Sincerely,



Thomas Hesse
President

Cc: The Honourable Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta
The Honourable Jason Copping, Minister of Labour and Immigration
Tanya Teeter, Vice President of Labor, Cargill Protein
Rob Hale, Employee Experience/Employee Relations Market Leader, Cargill
Devin Tretiak, Employee Relations Sr Specialist, Cargill
Richelle Stewart – Secretary Treasurer, UFCW 401
Ricardo de Menezes, Director – Southern Alberta, UFCW 401
Devin Yeager, Coordinator - Food Processing, Packaging and Manufacturing, UFCW 401
Joe Atwood, Union Labour Relations Officer, UFCW 401