



December 19, 2024

Michael Medline  
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)  
Empire Company Ltd.  
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## **RE: CONSEQUENCE FOR THREATENING AND BULLYING ALBERTA SAFEMART EMPLOYEES**

Dear Mr. Medline,

I am writing today on behalf of the Alberta labour movement to urge you in the strongest possible terms to back away from your despicable plan to force individual Alberta Safeway workers to repay thousands of dollars in wages that were lawfully paid to them.

Someone on your team has clearly given you bad advice. They may think that it's clever to use the threat of wage claw backs as a bargaining tactic to divide the workforce and force the union to accept concessions. But make no mistake – this strategy of threatening and bullying your Alberta Safeway employees will backfire.

Can you not read the room? Canadians are fed up with large corporations who have used the pandemic and the supply shocks caused by global events, like the war in Ukraine, as a pretext to jack up prices far beyond the cost of inputs.

The anger and frustration being felt by Canadians is particularly acute when it comes the price of groceries. Inflation may be moderating, but grocery prices are still 20 per cent higher than they were just three years ago. At the same time, big grocery chains, like

yours, have doubled their profit margins and your company, Empire Company Ltd., has been recording profits of more than \$200 million every quarter for the past four years. If you persist with your aggressive strategy to bully your own employees, we will respond in a number of ways.

First, we will come together as a labour movement to support the workers who you've targeted for wage claw backs. If you drag them through small claims court, we will make sure they have the resources to defend themselves. Trust me, our unions and members are looking for issues like this to mobilize around.

Second, we will make sure the public hears about what you're doing to your employees. Think of the optics: multibillion dollar grocery chain that has been price-gouging consumers to make record profits impoverishes its own employees by forcing them to return wages that were legally paid to them. This is Hollywood villain stuff. Do you really want to set your reputation and corporate image on fire?

Third, we'll get you bumped from the list of Canada's "Top 100 Employers," a designation that you clearly value. Don't think we can do it? Watch us.

Finally, we can either encourage or discourage our hundreds of thousands of members about where to spend their grocery dollars. We'd love to encourage them to shop at stores that are unionized, and which pay and treat their employees fairly. But if we have to discourage them from shopping in certain stores, we will. Please don't make us do that to Safeway, where many of our members have been loyal customers for years.

At this point, I'll reiterate my initial suggestion: back away from your plan to claw back wages from your Alberta Safeway employees. Whether you actually go through with this threat or are simply using it as a bargaining tactic to get three years of zero wage increases out of the union (during a cost-of-living crisis!), it's still clearly a dickhead move (pardon the strong language, but it's appropriate in this context). Don't be that guy.

In conclusion, on behalf of all of our thousands and thousands of members from across the province, we wish you a Christmastime epiphany in the style of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." You can be the old Scrooge, who never missed an opportunity to screw

customers and workers, or the new and improved Scrooge, who understood that being a decent human and a successful businessman are not mutually exclusive goals. Here's hoping that you opt for the latter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gil McGowan', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gil McGowan  
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