

UCT Conference 2018 - Incoming President's Speech
Delivered by UCT President Chris Phelan – July 4, 2018

Change is the law of life. Those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future. - JFK

Good afternoon, I'm Chris Phelan, and **I am honoured** to be serving as president for an organization I truly love, United Commercial Travelers (UCT). I've been a member of this organization for over 20 years and it's a very important part of my life. I've had the privilege of working side by side with many of you over the years.

Those of you who know me know that my home is Calgary, Alberta, Canada. I've been married for 44 years to the love of my life, Corey; I'm also father to Carley and Kerry; grandfather to Evan and Owen; and step-grandfather to Layla and Carter.

I've been employed by CKF Inc. for the past 35 years and am currently the director of sales where I oversee business in the USA and Canada. CKF Inc. is a company that manufactures food packaging products. While I'm passionate about my family and my work, I'm **so excited** to have the opportunity to serve you and our UCT family.

The possibilities this organization has for the future are so exciting. When I look back on the impact we've made together I'm blown away. Over the last 130 years, **we've lived up to our brand values!** United Commercial Travelers **truly is** where community and compassion unite. I'm reminded of places like Springfield, Missouri, where a **\$10,000** donation from UCT helps Truman Elementary special needs students' run their own cafe. The confidence and skills developed in that space are something special!

Special Olympics is something that is near and dear to many members. UCT was once a sponsor of two International games, donating \$500,000 and countless volunteer hours in | South Bend, Indiana, and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Back home, I get to see our donations in Calgary North Council 1015 used and helping so many.

In Edmonton, Council 1016 built an entire gym and pool and meeting rooms facility.

The big donations are great, but so are the individual contributions from our members.

Giving back to a charity or a cause you believe in, is an important part of your UCT membership. The difference we make – together within our local councils or individually as a member – is tangible. The events, the food, the toys, all the items given out at community centres – I hope you drive by them in your city and feel a sense of pride.

What really gets me though is the impact we've made that you can't see so easily.

UCT has been awarding scholarships to deserving students for over 50 years. Did you know, that over the last 10 years alone we have helped 1,700 kids pursue their dreams and get a college education? **1,700?! And that's just at the international level – that doesn't include what we give through the local councils!**

Thanks to UCT, **thousands of kids** are now breaking the cycle of poverty, providing for their families, and sharing their talents with the world. Thinking about those kids gets me every time. And today, I look around and see opportunities for us to grow our business so that we continue to change people's lives.

As one of the longest standing fraternal organizations, the possibilities for future growth are **endless.**

I'm so proud of our 130-year history! Being an active member, I've seen this organization evolve and address challenges head on over the years.

Fellow members, we've got a new set of challenges ahead of us that will need to be addressed. Many of you have seen the trends in our membership declining. Our members are the heart and soul of the organization. Without members like you who are stand up citizens contributing to the

economy and giving back, UCT **could not exist**. We need to share the unique value of UCT with our networks and seek out people who will be a good fit for our organization.

I've got to be honest with you - **and that's one of the things you can expect from me over this next year**. I'm going to be honest with you about the fact that our current ability to operate and make the kind of impact we want to make is at stake. We've heard about the changes surrounding corporate governance and the steps we need to take. We're also going to make some significant changes to our business in Canada and in the U.S. Rest assured, these changes are good for the future of UCT.

The world is changing, and the places UCT does business in do not look the same as they used to. There's a **lot more competition** out there than there once was. We've seen our membership decline over the last 5 years. We're struggling to fill officer positions at the local, regional and international levels.

If we do nothing, our membership will continue to decline. This will put a lot of pressure on those of us still involved. Doing nothing means **we will struggle to give to the communities and causes we all hold so dear**. It means that UCT, an organization that has given so much to me, to you and to our communities - may one day cease to exist.

This is not a false claim. We've seen institutions like Toys R' Us and Sears liquidate and officially close.

But we **won't** let that happen to UCT, will we?

Now, I like things the way they are too. I like the model we've created here at UCT. I want us to maintain our values, **our mission and our vision**. I want us to take what's great about UCT and bring in the next generation of **leaders** and people who will ensure this organization, **this company, that not only has a track record for providing quality insurance but also for changing people's lives, lives on**.

My fellow members, I've been here before. In my business, we were impacted by environmental pressures and consumers wanting a more sustainable food packaging product. As a company

we looked around and saw the trend building momentum. We saw our competitors struggle. We **knew** we would have to evolve or risk losing business. My company, which also has a long, celebrated history, worked incredibly hard to **evolve** and address the challenges in front of us by developing new products in new markets and through acquisitions. I'm proud to say that today we still have strong customers and a **commanding hold** on our market share.

Change isn't easy, but for organizations to stand the test of time, it's critical. I think we all know that UCT is too important an organization not to do the hard thing and make the necessary changes.

This evolution will be challenging, but it will also be rewarding.

Changing and achieving success is possible by **all of us** working together and sharing the UCT story with our networks.

The UCT story is the mission we members live **every day**. UCT is an international member benefit organization uniting people with a common passion for good citizenship and volunteerism to improve local communities.

This story **must be shared!** We've relied on a sales team to sell insurance and drive revenue. Believe me, we have great insurance agents and products, but with technology, increased competition for charitable involvement across North America, and more competition in the insurance industry, **we need a new approach**. We all need to come together to ensure we have revenue and a strong membership.

There are so many benefits to being a member. The obvious ones of course are the travel and prescription discounts, as well as scholarships and community service opportunities. For many of us that was what got us in the door, but what has **kept** us here? I've been a member for over 20 years, and I know many of you have been members for **twice** that long. So why? What's kept you coming back year after year?

Well, if you're anything like me, it all comes down to people. The **people** involved in UCT are second to none. They are business and community leaders. People who care enough to give

back to their community.

This is the story of UCT that our friends, neighbours and colleagues need to know. It is **amazing** that, while there is so much that can separate us, our UCT story of **community** and **compassion** has the ability to connect us across states, provinces and countries!

It also has the ability to connect generations.

Let's look to our members and future members to hear their ideas. They may sound wild at first, but we **owe it to them** and the founders of UCT to listen. I'm calling on all of you as members to find the next generation of UCT. **You** know the history, the ups and downs we have endured.

You have **so much** to offer them as mentors. They have much to offer us too.

I have so much confidence in this group of people that we can once again come together in order to be successful.

We have so much history to draw from and when you pair that with our greatest resource - that's you - we are unstoppable.

So, we know what we need to do: Share the UCT story to our networks - **we should be proud!**

I'm calling on all of you to **boost membership** at your local councils.

Being part of UCT is so much more than buying insurance or being a member!

I want to remind you that we are a **bold** organization. That we have been through this before. Evolving - while staying true to our values - is what has kept UCT in business for more than a century!

Looking back on our history - we were business and community minded **long before** that became a trend! More than 50 years ago, we recognized that people with disabilities had special needs and required special assistance from teachers. UCT launched a scholarship program for people to become trained to teach kids with intellectual disabilities. This was **8 years** before Special Olympics began. **We were ahead of our time!**

Fellow members, this organization gives **so much**. It's time for us to give **all** that we can back to it.

I look forward to connecting with as many of you as possible here in Savannah and throughout my year as UCT President.

Now, I must ask: will you help me make UCT **even better**? **Stand up if you'll join me and commit to UCT and to its future!**