



# 2013

## General Secretary's Report to Elected Officers and Members Grain and General Services Union (ILWU • Canada)

I welcome the opportunity to report to GSU members on the business of your union. Please ask all the questions you have regarding GSU's administration, finances and operations. This is your union. Make the most of it.

Traditionally, GSU's Joint Executive Council (JEC) meets in advance of the fall annual meetings of the Locals and Sub-locals. This year GSU's Executive Committee decided to hold the JEC semi-annual meeting after the membership meetings so that Council representatives attend with a new mandate and a clear sense of the members' priorities.

### **GSU Constitution and Bylaws**

As a result of the divestiture of agro and grain handling operations by Glencore/Viterra to Agrium, Richardson International and Federated Co-operatives Ltd (FCL), in April the Joint Executive Council exercised its authority under Section 6 – Changes in Organization Structure of GSU's constitution to establish two new Locals.

Members of GSU working in the union's Saskatchewan bargaining units of employees of Agrium Ltd. and Richardson International will be represented under Local 15 and Local 14 respectively.

The unfolding situation with regard to FCL will require careful consideration by the JEC in order to determine the best structure for member representation.

Inevitably adjustments will be required to meet the needs of members as the final form of the divestitures becomes better known. It is anticipated that the final form of constitutional amendments will be in place for consideration by delegates to GSU's policy convention in March 2014.

### **GSU Finances**

GSU continues to be in good financial shape. All of GSU's financial commitments are current and the union continues to have a solid financial base.

In 2012, GSU had lower but still significant legal

expenses as a result of work related to the Glencore/Viterra divestitures, labour relations board applications, and general advice related to members' rights. Given numerous unknowns in the current environment it is not expected expenses will decline in fiscal 2013.

### **GSU Administration and Education**

From March 6 to 8 an education workshop was held for 35 members from around the union. Based on participants' feedback the workshop was a success.

A second two-day workshop is scheduled for Nov. 27 and 28 in Regina. Members who would like to participate are encouraged to contact an elected GSU officer, a Staff Rep or the union office in Regina. The number of participants will be limited to 50.

In addition to collective bargaining, servicing, and representation it is essential to nurture the linkages and forge the relationships that renew and strengthen your union. To this end GSU continues to

be an active participant in the community and the labour movement, and we encourage more members to get even more involved in contributing to communities.

GSU's Community Connections initiative is another way for the union to give back to the communities our members live and work in. Building community is essential to the well being of our society. Prosperity is good for those who are able to share in a growing economy, but strong communities are the bedrock of democracy for working people.

## **Saskatchewan Employment Act**

In May the Government of Saskatchewan passed the Saskatchewan Employment Act. When it becomes law this autumn it will replace 15 separate pieces of labour legislation in the province, including the current Labour Standards Act and the Trade Union Acts.

Reviewing, updating and improving legislation and regulations isn't a bad thing if carried out thoroughly, fairly, and in a balanced way. Unfortunately none of these attributes apply to the emergence of the Saskatchewan Employment Act as the government of Saskatchewan only allowed 90 days for the public to make written submissions at the height of summer in 2012. Even then, it appears

the government listened much more closely to a small segment of one side of the dialogue.

Was 90 days enough time to consider 15 Acts and over 900 pages of legislation? It doesn't seem so as the resulting Saskatchewan Employment Act is complex, unclear, and unfinished with many of the regulations which will affect Saskatchewan workers yet to be determined.

The Act throws into doubt basic labour standards such as meal breaks, two consecutive days of rest, the 8-hour day, the threshold for paying overtime and call-in pay. With regard to labour relations, the Act is one-sided as it undermines employees' collective bargaining rights and stable labour relations.

As written and passed, the Saskatchewan Employment Act deferred a lot of the legislation's meaning and intent to "Regulations". It is important to note that "Regulations" are not subject to review or debate in the legislative assembly as they are only subject to approval by the Cabinet and a short 30-day period of public notice.

In the rushed 90-day consultation process in summer 2012 government asked for input without ever putting into writing what it intended to do. Then between July 31 and the beginning of December 2012 government miraculously produced the 191 page Saskatchewan Employment Act which

dramatically re-writes more than 65 years of labour legislation.

Now it's happening all over again in relation to the Regulations intended to accompany and give meaning to the Saskatchewan Employment Act.

On July 26 the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety announced a 90-day consultation period that closed on September 27. Once again the government has not disclosed its intentions in connection with Regulations nor has it shared what is already being drafted.

This is a lot like putting the cart before the horse. Government can do much better in fulfilling its duty to conduct itself carefully, thoughtfully, and with the utmost transparency when it proposes to do things that affect or impair our rights.

By comparison, the government of Saskatchewan is taking much more time and allowing for much more input in relation to the legislation governing livestock branding.

The backbone of our economy and democratic society is a strong middle class. Two of the main pillars of the middle class are progressive labour standards and effective unions of working people who strive to generate a good and growing standard of living.

Legislation and regulations that weaken these pillars

will ultimately weaken our economic progress, damage our shared prosperity and undermine our communities.

All we have to do is consider the effects of what has gone on for far too long in the United States in order to have grave concerns that the Saskatchewan Employment Act is propelling us in that direction.

## GSU Defense Fund

Currently the GSU Defense Fund has overall assets of \$3,000,000 based on market values

Since the Joint Executive Council will not be meeting until November 29, the

Executive Committee of GSU met on September 12 and approved submitting the following resolution to GSU members' 2013 annual Local and Sub-Local meetings regarding continuation of the additional union dues being paid into the GSU Defense Fund:

“Be it resolved that the additional dues being paid into the GSU Defense Fund by members/ employees represented by GSU shall continue until December 31, 2014, subject to review by members of the union at the 2014 annual Local and Sub-Local meetings.”

Each Local or Sub-Local is asked to conduct a recorded

vote on the resolution and to report the results of their vote to GSU's General Secretary.

## Grievance Arbitration Update

Most grievances— whether filed by individual union members or filed by your union as executive or policy grievances—are resolved during the grievance procedure. Nonetheless, a number of grievances end up at arbitration as provided for in the collective agreements between GSU and the various employers.

Currently seven arbitrations have been scheduled to hear GSU members' or union



### Call toll-free

1.866.522.6686 (Regina)  
1.855.384.7314 (Saskatoon)

### Email

[gsu.regina@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.regina@sasktel.net)

### Web

[www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca)

## If you need help in your workplace, call GSU toll-free and a GSU staff representative will assist you.

Anyone can have problems in the workplace. Maybe your manager cancelled your vacation, you were denied sick leave, or you are expected to perform work and you aren't sure you will be safe.

Perhaps you have questions about your pay cheque, lay-off, being on-call, or a worker's compensation issue.

Information and guidance from a GSU staff representative may be helpful – or necessary – before making important decisions about retiring, signing unique work contracts, or terminating your employment.

In all cases, it is good to know where to go for advice.

**All inquiries are confidential, GSU does not subscribe to call display, and we won't act on your behalf without your consent.**

**This service is provided to you as part of your union dues. There is no additional charge for assisting you.**

executive grievances. Several more grievances are likely to make it on to the arbitration list over the final quarter of 2013.

The grievances being arbitrated range from disciplinary matters to double-time overtime pay to job classifications to the effect of performance evaluations on pay increases and employee rights to transfer options in the Viterra divestitures.

A unique feature of the employment relationship with a unionized employer is the ability to raise issues or challenge management actions, receive professional assistance from union staff reps, and ultimately have access to third-party arbitration. Non-union employees do not have similar rights.

## **2014 Policy Convention**

In March 2014, GSU will hold its eleventh Biennial Policy Convention and delegates from around the union will gather to review and develop the union's policies and strategic plans.

We urge members to make attendance and resolutions to GSU Policy Conventions, Local meetings and other union activities a priority. The world is a constantly changing place and it is essential for unions to adapt and change while continuing to promote the core values of collective action, community, equality and unity.

We are the middle class and only by sticking together will

we be able to pass onto to our children a decent society where hard work and contributing to the community result in a decent standard of living.

## **Collective Bargaining**

Agreement renewal collective bargaining is always on the agenda for GSU and this fall is no different as five Locals have already served or will serve notice to bargain before the end of the year.

First off the mark is GSU Local 5 (Western Producer) where the collective agreement expired at the end of July and bargaining is expected to commence in the next short while.

Local 8 collective agreements with Advance Engineered Products in Regina and Saskatoon expire on October 31. Bargaining is expected to begin at both locations in the coming weeks as proposals are finalized and dates for commencing are set with Company management.

Meanwhile, the collective agreements covering GSU Local 12 (Hillcrest Farms) and Local 13 (IATSE 295) expire on December 20 and December 31, 2013, respectively. Notice to bargain will be served this fall.

Finally, the collective agreement covering GSU Local 6 (Wildwest Steelhead Lucky Lake Fish Farm) expires at the end of February 2014 and notice to bargain will be served during the open period.

## **The Political Economic Climate**

It seems these days that the political economic climate for organized labour or civil society is growing increasingly hostile.

A concerted right-wing assault on civil rights, labour rights and trade union rights is testing just how far we can be pushed before we push back.

All we have to do is consider what has happened or may be happening in relation to labour legislation federally and provincially, the attacks on defined benefit pension plans and Old Age Security or monitoring of email, text messages and private phone calls to get a sense that the rights of working people and citizens are under a concerted and well-organized attack.

Those who campaign against unions and civil rights are well funded by elements of the one percent of society who hold the wealth and power. Their campaign is aided by our own apathy and distraction.

The most reliable and endurable defenders of our society are the union movement, environmentalists, and our allies.

The union movement was founded on the principles that what we have we want for all others and an injury to one is an injury to all.

We can't possibly sustain our good fortune or improve



on it if others around us are experiencing the destruction of their rights and welfare as citizens of this country.

If we sacrifice our environment and our freedom in the name of perceived security or material success we will ultimately be left with nothing.

Whatever happens we should not let adversity or bad legislation get us down or turn us away from what we do best.

Let's prove to ourselves and our opponents that we will find the ways and means to persevere. Indeed, we will find the ways and means to do better than persevere. We will find the ways and means to succeed and to grow.

## New Relationships

2013 has been a year of change as we've witnessed the unfolding of Viterra's divestitures in the wake of the Glencore takeover.

Where we once had two bargaining units (Locals 1 and 2) we now have four, five or maybe more as we seek to build solid business relationships with Agrium (CPS), Richardson Pioneer and Federated Co-operatives.

We haven't experienced any major glitches with Richardson Pioneer to this point. The Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) hasn't yet issued a decision in response to Richardson's application to establish an all-Saskatchewan

bargaining unit of its country operations and maintenance employees in the province.

GSU's first priority is to protect the rights and collective agreements of the employees we currently represent. At the same time, GSU is open to Richardson's non-unionized employees who want to experience the union advantage, including the benefit of having a collective agreement and defined employment rights. They too might welcome being paid for overtime, being paid salaries equal to GSU members, or having the protections and income security in GSU's collective agreement.

The Agrium takeover of the bulk of Viterra Ag retail operations appears to be set for October 1. Here, too, the objective is to build a respectful business relationship with the new employer while defending and improving on the collective agreement gains made by GSU-represented employees.

Agrium's non-unionized employees are also welcome to experience the union advantage.

For the employees passing through Federated Co-operatives Ltd. to local co-op associations, the way forward is a little less clear. Successor rights and continued coverage by the collective agreement is clear, but what form that ultimately takes is not certain at the moment. Whatever lies ahead, GSU will protect the interests of the employees making the transition.

Members who have questions about these transactions should not hesitate to contact an elected union officer or the GSU offices. And, members who want to share information about GSU with non-unionized counterparts should certainly do so. If you need assistance or materials give us a call or send us an email and we will do our best to assist you.

## Conclusion

As always it is a pleasure and often a challenge to serve you. Thank you for the opportunity.

Solidarity,



Hugh Wagner  
General Secretary

GSU members set the direction for the union, so it's important that you tell us what we are doing well and what you would like to see done differently.

If you can see room for improvement, tell us.

Thank you for taking time to attend your membership meeting.



**GSU toll-free:** 1.866.522.6686 (Regina)  
or 1.855.384.7314 (Saskatoon).

**Local calls:** in Regina phone 306.522.6686 or in  
Saskatoon phone 306.384.7314.

**GSU email:** [gsu.regina@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.regina@sasktel.net)

**GSU – Regina Office**

2334 McIntyre Street, Regina, SK Canada S4R 3S9  
Phone 306.522.6686 • Fax 306.565.3430

**GSU – Saskatoon office**

2154 Airport Drive, Saskatoon, SK Canada S7L 6M6  
Phone 306.384.7314 • Fax 306.384.1006

**GSU Executive Committee:**

Carolyn Illerbrun, GSU president  
Jim Brown, GSU vice-president  
Mandy Windecker, GSU vice-president

**GSU Staff**

Hugh Wagner, general secretary  
Phone 306.522.6686, ext. 229  
Cell 306.536.3414 • Email [gsu.wagner@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.wagner@sasktel.net)

Lynn Woods-Nordin, assistant general secretary  
Phone 306.522.6686, ext. 231 • Cell 306.535.7133  
Email [gsu.woods@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.woods@sasktel.net)

Lawrence Maier, staff representative (Regina)  
Phone 306.522.6686, ext. 227 • Cell 306.536.8826  
Email [gsu.maier@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.maier@sasktel.net)

Dale Markling, staff representative (Saskatoon)  
Phone 306.384.7314 • Cell 306.229.9299  
Email [gsu.markling@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.markling@sasktel.net)

Steve Torgerson, staff representative (Regina)  
Phone 306.522.6686, ext. 226 • Cell 306.529.5925  
Email [gsu.torgerson@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.torgerson@sasktel.net)

Dorothy Merk, executive assistant  
Phone 306.522.6686, ext. 223  
Email [gsu.merk@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.merk@sasktel.net)

Brittany Weber, administrative assistant  
Phone 306.522.6686, ext. 225  
Email [gsu.weber@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.weber@sasktel.net)