



GSU News

Everyone does better when EVERYONE does better Issue 3 - 2014

May the New Year bring you:

- ~happiness and peace,
- ~success in whatever you do, and
- ~prosperity for you and those you love.

Happy New Year and all the best in 2015 from the officers and staff of Grain & General Services Union.



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Joint Executive Council meets, prepares for bargaining in 2015

On November 1, 2014 GSU's elected Joint Executive Council (JEC) met in Regina to review the union's administration and plans for 2015.

The JEC (which is GSU's board of directors) was provided with reports on the union's activities, finances, and an action plan for collective bargaining in 2015.

"GSU began implementing its bargaining action plan this fall, including establishing a communications network and asking union members to begin identifying their bargaining priorities," GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner said.

A bargaining preparation conference of union delegates from Locals 1, 2, 14 and 15 will be held in Regina on February 5 and 6 at the Ramada Hotel and Convention Centre where the next stage of preparing for bargaining will begin.

"A key element of preparing for bargaining in 2015 is the feedback members provide when they

identify their priorities and ideas for improving their collective agreements," said GSU president Carolyn Illerbrun. "The whole bargaining process begins with the participation of members."

"We have the resources, including our affiliations with our labour partners such as ILWU Canada, to give us a leg up to continue to do what we've always done; which is to represent working people," said GSU vice-president Jim Brown. "The union advantage is clear in our wages, benefits and working conditions."

The JEC approved a collective bargaining action plan and allocated resources to get the job done. JEC representatives were advised that GSU has a sound financial foundation, including the GSU Defense Fund, and is in very good shape to act on its bargaining responsibilities with all of the companies employing GSU members.

The JEC will meet again in the spring of 2015.



The inside scoop

We're getting ready for bargaining in 2015

Being the member of a union allows you to work with other union members to bargain your terms and conditions with your employer on equal footing.

GSU will begin bargaining the renewal of collective agreements with seven new employers in the last half of 2015. This is unprecedented for this union. As a result, it seems a pretty good bet that 2015 will be both exciting and challenging.

I am confident that GSU members, elected officers and staff are up to the tasks lying ahead. We've never shied away from difficult tasks and we're not about to start now.

I urge members to take the time to make their bargaining priorities known to the GSU officers who take on the job of negotiating new collective agreements. Your input and support are the key ingredients of successful bargaining and good collective agreements.

Whether your local is bargaining this year or you are currently enjoying the terms of your collective agreement, get involved in maintaining and improving the terms and conditions of your employment by participating in your union.

2015 will be a busy year.



Hugh Wagner
General Secretary



GSU News

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Sign-up for our bargaining preparation conference

February 5 & 6 Bargaining Preparation Conference of Union Delegates

Locals 1 (Viterra), 2 (Viterra Head Office), 14 (Richardson) and 15 (CPS)
Preparing for bargaining will begin. Contact your staff rep for more information
or to register.

Contact your elected officers or a GSU staff rep or visit our web page at www.gsu.ca for information about
this event and other upcoming events.

Work and life balance:

GSU gets train spotting issues on the table

GSU members working at inland grain terminal elevators consistently report that railway performance leaves much to be desired.

When cars will actually be spotted at elevators seems to be a guessing game that wreaks havoc with employees' work schedules and their reasonable expectations of being able to plan and actually have a life away from work.

Car spotting information is often switched several times before an actual and reliable time can be nailed down. In the meantime, employees adjust their schedules time and again in order to accommodate.

It also seems that the 24 hour loading incentive paid to grain handling companies by the railways is part of the problem as the shipper is paid a big premium for loading the train and expects employees to adjust accordingly.

In response to complaints from GSU members working for Viterra, GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner and Staff Rep Steve Torgerson met with company management on December 17.

"This is just the start of getting the issues identified and finding solutions," Wagner said. "I expect more work will need to be done, but I'm also

pleased that management is aware of the problem and understands it needs to be fixed."

"This is the twenty first century after all and it is a priority to make sure that employees are able to enjoy their right to a life away from work instead of being yanked around by the railways."

If you work in a grain elevator and are experiencing the hurry-up-and-wait-game, let GSU know.

Your communication with GSU will be strictly confidential.

Work-life-family balance influences employee health

According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), work-life balance is an organizational factor that impacts organizational health, the health of individual employees and the financial bottom line, including the way work is carried out and the context in which work occurs.

The following excerpts are taken from the CCOHS website.

Balance

Work-life balance is a state of well-being that allows a person to effectively manage multiple responsibilities at work, at home and in their community.

Why it is important?

- reduces stress and the possibility that home issues will spill over into work, or vice versa
- allows staff to maintain their concentration, confidence, responsibility, and sense of control at work
- results in enhanced employee well-being, commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviours (behaviours of personal choice that benefit the organization), job performance and reduced stress

What happens when it's lacking?

When work-family role conflict occurs, health and

well-being are undermined by accumulating home and job stress. This imbalance can lead to:

- constant tiredness
- bad temper
- inability to progress
- high job stress resulting in dissatisfaction with work and being absent either physically or mentally
- these effects can then lead to additional stress-related illness, as well as higher cholesterol, depressive symptoms, and overall decreased health. The impact on the organization can include increased costs due to benefit payouts, absenteeism, disability, and turnover.

SOURCE AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/mentalhealth_risk.html

Should your employer attend your doctor appointments?

Recently GSU received two complaints from members who were injured at work. In both cases, employees had to contend with management wanting to attend an appointment with the injured employee's doctor.

When an employee is injured at work the first priority is to get the injured worker medical attention. If the situation requires first responders, ambulance service, or someone in management or a co-worker to attend to the injured employee and escort them to an appropriate medical facility, then that is what should happen.

When the injured employee is examined on arrival at the medical facility or subsequently attends an appointment with a physician or other healthcare provider, management does not have a right to attend or to ask questions about the severity of the injury and when or if the injured employee can return to work on light or modified duties.

Let's say you were at work and did something that gave you a jolt. The next morning your back pain is severe. The first thing to do is to get proper medical attention. The next thing to do is to inform your employer you will be late for work or not at work at all as a result of your pain and your efforts to deal with it. If you've been able to arrange a medical appointment or if you're still trying to do so, inform your employer.

When you attend the medical appointment, the employer or management

does not have a right to attend. It is your right to attend all consultations with your physician or other healthcare providers without any attendance or intrusion by management.

Courts and labour arbitrators have made strong statements in favour of medical privacy in the workplace and its importance.

In the case of *Hamilton Health Services versus Ontario Nurses Association**, the arbitrator stated:

"Both subjectively and objectively, personal medical information is confidential personal information. The confidentiality of the doctor/patient relationship and personal medical information is universally and legislatively recognized as one of the most significant privacy rights in modern Canadian society."

What seems to be behind extraordinary management

efforts to intrude on employees' right to privacy in the physician/patient relationship are employer policies that emphasize avoiding workplace incident reports and taking responsibility for ensuring the workplace is healthy and safe.



Do you have questions or problems regarding a work-related injury? Call your GSU staff rep.

GSU will assist you to ensure you have been treated fairly under the terms of your collective agreement. We can also assist you with Workers' Compensation Board appeals or other problems with claims.

Your inquiry will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. You are not obligated to file a grievance and we will not act on your behalf without permission from you.



Local 4 members make the most of dues rebate

The dues rebate program provides modest funding to GSU's locals and sub-locals.

Members are encouraged to use the funding for social activities within the local, to raise the profile of the union within communities, and promote the union within the membership.

Clockwise: Terry Schultz serves as barbeque grillmaster after striking a pose on the course. Ken Kendall takes a swing. Members gather around the buffet table with their family and co-workers after enjoying an afternoon of golf.

GSU Local 4 (Grain Millers, Yorkon) executive officers are always trying to find ways to include members in the activities of their Local and the union. In 2014 the local executive set a goal to use the local's annual rebate to benefit the most members using as many member suggestions as the budget allows. The majority of Local 4 members are shift workers, and that is always top of mind when plans are being made for the local.

The first item on members' wish list was access to GSU camo hats with Local 4 embroidered on the back. The hats were designed, purchased, and made available to members at cost.

On June 22 members held a golf and supper night, and on August 18 a family barbeque was held at the Yorklake Regional Park. Local 4 president Terry Schultz headed up the barbeque, co-ordinating the purchase of burgers, hot dogs, buns, condiments, drinks, and picking-up the food and tables for picnic guests. The barbeque also had a pot-luck flair with Local 4 members rounding out the menu by bringing all the side dishes. No one went hungry with a variety of salads, fruit and veggie trays, perogies, watermelon, and even some candy for dessert.

The barbeque was such a success that there has already been talk about the next BBQ as well as other options for this winter.





Way to go, Bill C-525

You just made it a lot harder for workers to join a union, but much easier to leave

The Senate's December 16 passing of Bill C-525, the Employees' Voting Rights Act, makes it harder for workers to certify a union and easier to decertify unions in federally-regulated industries.

Neither employers nor unions sought these changes, and neither employers nor unions identified a single problem in the current industrial relations that required these legislative amendments. In fact, virtually

all industrial relations authorities in Canada have warned against Bill C-525 and the process through which the government is upsetting the balance in federal labour relations.

"This legislation is really about denying Canadian workers the right to collective bargaining with their employer," said Canadian Labour Congress president Hassan Yussuff. "It is an invitation to employers

to interfere with workers' democratic right to choose representation, and it will destabilize federation labour relations."

The Bill was introduced by MP Blaine Calkins who chose to submit it as a private member's bill rather than use the decades old process of amending the Canada Labour Code through consultation between employers, labour and government.

Allowable dust levels in grain elevators to be reduced to 4 milligrams per cubic meter

In a conference call on November 4, Hon. Kellie Leitch, the Federal Minister of Labour and Minister of the Status of Women updated the members of the Canada Labour Code Part 10 working group. The Part 10 working group has been meeting for more than five years trying to update the regulations covering allowable levels of grain dust in grain elevators. Lawrence Maier, staff rep for Grain and General Services Union, is a member representing workers on this committee, as is Andrea Paert from the Canadian Labour Congress.

The current limit of 10 milligrams per cubic metre was set almost 45 years ago, over the opposition of all of the grain elevator companies who thought it was too low. Grain

and General Services Union fought hard at that time to get some regulations in place to protect the health and safety of all elevator workers.

During the last five years Maier and Paert worked to set a safer level, while the Western Grain Elevator Association stubbornly fought to stop any and all actions that could improve the working environment.

Over the objections of the WGEA, the Minister Leitch ruled that science and the studies are clear. She stated that the allowable dust levels in grain elevators would be reduced to 4 milligrams per cubic meter. As a doctor herself, Minister Leitch stated she believed the level should be the same as the rest of the jurisdictions in Canada,

and that the proof was overwhelming that the old level was too high for a safe work environment.

This decision affects all grain elevator workers in Canada.

"One of the core principles of GSU's founders was the pursuit of a much safer and healthier work environment. GSU has continued to adhere to this principle for the better of all workers in the industry," said GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner. "The federal minister's announcement of new grain dust exposure limits is another accomplishment in which GSU played a major role. Hats off to Lawrence Maier and Andrea Paert for their persistence."

Much to see, much to learn at SFL Convention

Over 600 delegates gathered at the 59th Annual Convention of the Saskatchewan Federation October 29 to November 1 in Regina. GSU members, officers, and staff are eligible to attend, and this year 23 individuals gathered together to form GSU's delegation.

At convention, national union leaders such as Linda Silas, president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, and Paul Moist, president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, presented on issues of healthcare and privatization. Experts such as author Nora Loreto, Simon Enoch from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and Upstream's Rachel Malena-Chan presented on topics ranging from engaging young workers to the benefits of public liquor sales. Fifty-two resolutions were debated, including resolutions on end of life care strategies, the temporary foreign worker program, and door-to-door delivery of mail.

2014 was an election year, and we extend congratulations to former GSU member and staff rep Larry Hubich who was acclaimed for his () term as Saskatchewan Federation of Labour president.

"It's great to get gather GSU members together in one venue at one event in a union environment like the SFL convention," said GSU vice-president Jim Brown. "GSU is a very diverse group, but even with all our different occupations we have the same goals. It's great to get together to renew acquaintances and meet new ones at this event."



(L-r) GSU staff rep Steve Torgerson and Local 2 (Viterra Head Office) officer Kevin Wagner.

What was your SFL convention highlight?

Michelle Houlden, GSU vice president: "I was impressed with the SFL camp presentation. Kids who were rethinking whether they had the confidence to spend a week with strangers up until the moment they arrived at Calling Lakes were so inspired by their time there that they were able to get up on stage and talk about it in front of 500 people."

Dorothy Merk, GSU staff: "When the underground miners marched into the convention room with the lights on their hard hats it made me consider how dangerous their occupation can be. That made the following candle lighting ceremony in recognition of worker's who were injured or killed on the job, or who had passed away as a result of work-related illness, very moving."



(L-r) Local 8 (Advance) members Rene Audette and John Mustatia, and Local 1 (Viterra) officer Brian Lark.



Our gift this holiday season

I think a unionized job is a gift. A gift that comes with a living wage, health benefits, a pension plan and job security. Priceless, when you think about it.

But belonging to a union means so much more than the positive effects it has for us and our families. It means we have the ability to do something good for others.

I believe that because we have the ability to do something good for others, we have the responsibility to do so. My unionized job gives me a decent salary, so I support other businesses who hire unionized labour and avoid those who take great strides to prevent their workers from organizing (I'm looking at you, Wal-Mart). My unionized job comes with a 35-hour work week so I have time to volunteer my services as a designer for schools and non-profit groups. At work I volunteer my time for our occupational health

and safety committee and as shop steward. It means we donate regularly, whether it's used household items or money or food for the food bank (or in my husband's case, blood — he's about to get his 75 pin!) We teach our kids to think of others who aren't as fortunate and to help out in small ways, whether it's remembering to always leave a good tip or snowblowing our elderly neighbour's driveway and garage entrance.

The best part is I'm pretty sure most unionized workers think this way and do these things. We understand the power we hold collectively to do good things and we choose to get up and do them. It's the best way to show those who call unionized workers "lazy and overpaid" what it really means to belong to a group like this. Do good for others. And if you happen to be wearing your amazing GSU t-shirt while you're doing it, all the better. :)

Belonging to a union is a gift. Let's remember to share that gift with our communities throughout the year and show them how appreciative we are. Because together, we are strong.

On behalf of the GSU executive committee of Grain and General Services Union, I wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and hope we all have a happy, safe and peaceful New Year.

In solidarity,
Michelle Houlden
GSU vice-president



GSU offices will be closed on New Year's Day.

Ridonkulous Street Slang **urban** DICTIONARY

Flabs

If you are a bit chunky and don't have abs, then you might have flabs ... those bits of fat that seem to hang in awkward places around your stomach.

"Whoa! Check out the flabs on Kenny... He really should put his top back on."

The urban dictionary is a little nasty, a lot funny, and not for the faint hearted. Check it out at urbandictionary.com.