



# General Secretary's Report to Elected Officers and Members

I welcome the opportunity to again report to GSU members on the business of your union.

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## GSU Finances

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GSU is in good financial shape. The financial update provided to the Joint Executive Council (JEC) at their September 15 and 16 semi-annual meeting indicates that revenues and expenditures are on track, and while the union will not likely have a large operating surplus in the 2011 fiscal year, a balanced budget or a small deficit will emerge at year end. All of GSU's financial commitments are current, and the union continues to have a solid financial base, as illustrated by the balance sheet in the audited financial statements.

The JEC and the Board of Directors of the GSU Defense Fund have approved a \$75,000 addition and extension of a loan to GSU to finance renovations to the union's office building in Regina. The loan will be repaid with interest at six percent per year with loan payments of \$3,065 per month, to commence October 1, 2011, and run to May 31, 2014.

In 2011, GSU continues to have significant grievance arbitration and associated legal expenses as a result of ongoing disputes with employers (primarily, but not exclusively with Viterra) and increased grievance activity.

## Grievances and Arbitrations

A recent arbitration win by GSU over the administration and calculation of vacation pay on overtime worked is being appealed to the Court of Queen's Bench by Viterra, in spite of collective agreement provisions which say that arbitration decisions are final and binding. If the court upholds the arbitration decision (awarded at the end of June), in excess of \$200,000 will be recovered and paid to employees working in GSU's two Viterra bargaining units. Queen's Bench will hear the employer's appeal on September 20, 2011.

Other grievances submitted by GSU successfully challenged and renovated Viterra's administration of sick leave. A policy grievance over administration of overtime and general holidays is headed to arbitration. Numerous other grievances by individual

employees, covering a variety of issues ranging from rates of pay, job elimination rights, lay off rights and entitlement to double-time overtime, have worked their way through the grievance procedures and are heading to arbitration.

## Education and Involvement

GSU continues to commit resources to union education, community involvement, and member recognition. In February 2011 another successful union steward educational was held with more to follow.

In addition, the JEC has set aside resources for continued leadership training and involvement in defending GSU members' union representation rights. Additional leadership and shop steward training sessions are being planned for this fall.

To date, slightly more than half of the \$30,000 the JEC earmarked for 75th anniversary activities by Locals and Sub-locals of the union in 2011 has been allocated and spent. Locals and Sub-Locals who have not yet tapped their allocation are encouraged to arrange anniversary activities for this fall.

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 labour movement and we encourage more members to get involved.

The annual convention of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour will be held October 19, 20 and 21 at TCU Place in Saskatoon. GSU members who are interested in being a union delegate to the convention are encouraged to contact their elected officers or their GSU staff rep. We'll do our best to facilitate your attendance by arranging union leave and accommodations.

It is the intention of your elected union officers and union staff to continue providing the representation and services GSU members have a right to expect.

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### **GSU Defense Fund**

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The most recent investment managers' reports and available financial numbers indicated that the GSU Defense Fund has estimated assets of \$2.7 million based on market values. However, it is anticipated that the September 30, 2011, investment statements from Investors Group and RBC Dominion Securities will reflect the impact of the recent turmoil in financial markets, and asset values will have declined.

At its autumn 2011 semi-annual meeting of the JEC, your elected representatives also debated whether to recommend continuing or ceasing the

additional dues being paid into the GSU Defense Fund at December 31, 2011.

As a result of their review and debate, the Council voted to send the following resolution to the autumn 2011 annual meetings for a decision by GSU members:

Moved and seconded by the Joint Executive Council of Grain and General Services Union (ILWU • Canada):

*"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, 2012, subject to review by members of the union at the 2012 annual Local and Sub-Local meetings."*

Each Local or Sub-Local meeting is asked to conduct a recorded vote on the resolution and to report the results of their vote to the General Secretary of GSU.

The fall 2011 annual GSU Local or Sub-Local meetings are the opportunity for union members to decide whether Defense Fund dues will continue in 2012.

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### **Advance Employees' Association affiliates with GSU**

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One of the most promising and exciting developments for GSU in 2011 was the decision by the members of Advance Employees' Association to approve affiliation with GSU. The addition of the 200 plus employees who work for

Advance Engineered Products Ltd. at the company's Regina and Saskatoon plants is a very welcome addition to the GSU family. It was an honour and a pleasure to introduce the elected officers of AEA/GSU Local 8 to the JEC meeting on September 15, where they were seated as voting members of the Council.

We look forward to working with this solid group of working people in building a sound and enduring relationship. Notice to bargain the amendment of the collective agreement covering the 180 Advance employees working at the Regina plant has been served on the employer, and it is expected we will begin meeting with management in October.

### **Constitutional Amendment**

In the meantime, GSU members attending the 2011 Local and Sub-Local annual meetings are asked to vote on the following constitutional amendment resolution being submitted by the JEC.

Moved and seconded by the Joint Executive Council of Grain and General Services Union (ILWU • Canada):

*"Be it resolved that effective July 1, 2011; and retroactive to that date, that section 8.8 of the Constitution of Grain and General Services Union (ILWU • Canada) be amended by deleting the current words and replacing them with the following words, "Comprising members of the Advance Employees' Association (AEA) In Regina and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Three (3)*

*elected officers designated by AEA shall be the Local's representatives on the Joint Executive Council of Grain and General Services Union (ILWU • Canada)."*

Each Local or Sub-Local is asked to conduct a recorded vote on the above constitutional amendment resolution and to report the results of their vote to the General Secretary of GSU.

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### **Union Communication, Education and Information**

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As reported above, GSU has a proactive education program for elected officers and stewards.

Devoting the effort and resources to union education is an essential part of what we do. Union members who are informed of their rights and who act on their rights achieve superior results day-to-day, as well as when the time to bargain renewed collective agreements hits the agenda.

Just consider the vacation pay on overtime work arbitration victory where the alertness, action and perseverance of one member resulted in shedding light on more than \$200,000 that is owed to employees by their employer.

Ensuring equitable and consistent employment practices is one of the parts of a union's work. Bringing attention to injustice or unfair practices is where you come into the picture. Our motto is that what we have for ourselves we want for all others, and an injury to one is an injury to all.

It is essential for us to re-dedicate ourselves again and

again to those principles by getting off the fence, and getting involved in the struggle for labour rights and a just society. We can't have one without the other, and we can't possibly maintain our good fortune—or improve on it—if others around us are constantly being left out, or being subjected to attacks on their rights.

Internal union communication is a constantly evolving part of the organization's function. We continue to publish a hard-copy newsletter, periodic electronic information supplements, and maintain an up-to-date website. We are not content, however, to assume these methods will keep members informed and in touch with their union.

One of the most effective ways to generate discussion about issues and solutions is when we discuss these issues with one another. This conversation can occur at work, or after work, in more comfortable environments. Getting people to talk with one another about the issues is the essential component of what some have called the "labour-to-neighbour" approach to union communication.

The essential question is what do you think we could—and should—be doing with regard to GSU communications and representation? We represent you, and we ask that you tell us what you want to see happen.

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### **Representation and GSU 2012 Policy Convention**

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Collective bargaining is one of the primary purposes

of GSU and starting this fall and going into 2012 bargaining amendment, renewal, and settlement of collective agreements will be a big item on the union's agenda.

Standing up for your rights and ensuring the contract is followed as it applies to you, your co-workers and your workplace is an important part of the process. We can grieve problems between agreements, but ultimately the real solution is changing the contract. We must be ever vigilant and work together to make sure our changes happen, or stand separately and watch as changes are made for us.

Fielding questions, processing grievances and meeting with employees/employers to sort out workplace issues occupies the lion's share of time worked on behalf of employees represented by GSU. This work doesn't have the same kind of newsworthy appeal as a tough round of bargaining, but if it isn't carried out everyone loses. And, it takes time to produce results.

GSU is committed to informing you as much as possible about the work your team engages every day and every week. If you want to know what is going on any working day, check out the GSU website at [www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca). If your collective agreement is up for renewal, make sure your ideas for change get on the agenda. Your elected officers aren't mind readers. They need you to speak your mind about what should be pursued at the bargaining table.

Another way to get involved and to make sure your voice is heard in your union is by

making sure your GSU Local or Sub-Local sends its full contingent of delegates to the GSU Policy Convention, which will be held at the Black Strap Resort complex near Dundurn, Saskatchewan from March 22 to 24, 2012.

GSU Locals and Sub-Locals are entitled to send a total of 60 delegates to the convention, where the business of the union and the issues of the day will be debated and decisions will be made. A convention call will be issued early in the New Year, but now is the time to begin planning for full participation. I urge you to make the 2012 convention a priority. I plan to be there, and I hope you do, too.

If you have ideas, resolutions, or other suggestions for making the 2012 GSU Policy Convention the

relevant event it should be, now is the time to get involved.

As we plan and prepare for the future, the elected officers and GSU staff intend to work with members from around the union in a concerted effort to improve communication and member participation, with a view to making your life at work safe and rewarding. We have many challenges to overcome as we always have had, but together, we can do the job and achieve our goals.

GSU members' creativity and resilience has always been the union's mainstay. Let's keep it that way.

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### Conclusion

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In this report I have attempted to report briefly

on your union's business and present what needs to be done. Serving the membership can be a challenge, but it is always a pleasure.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on behalf of GSU, in the cause of workplace democracy, which your union—and only your union—advocates in your workplace.

Solidarity,



Hugh Wagner  
General Secretary

If you have questions about this report, your collective agreement, or issues in your workplace, don't hesitate to contact a staff representative in either GSU office.

## Grain and General Services Union (ILWU • Canada)

**Phone Toll-free** 1.866.522.6686

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

**Web Page** [www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca)

### Regina

2334 McIntyre Street  
Regina, SK S4P 2S2  
Phone 306.522.6686

### Saskatoon

2154 Airport Drive  
Saskatoon, SK S7L 6M6  
Phone 306.384.7314

PRESIDENT Carolyn Illerbrun [Viterra - Shaunavon]

VICE -PRESIDENT Jim Brown [Viterra - Balgonie]

VICE -PRESIDENT Mandy Windecker [Western Producer Publications - Regina]

GENERAL SECRETARY Hugh Wagner [Regina] • email [gsu.wagner@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.wagner@sasktel.net)

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY Lynn Woods-Nordin [Regina] • email [gsu.woods@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.woods@sasktel.net)

GSU STAFF REPRESENTATIVE Lawrence Maier [Regina] • email [gsu.maier@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.maier@sasktel.net)

GSU STAFF REPRESENTATIVE Dale Markling [Saskatoon] • email [gsu.markling@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.markling@sasktel.net)

GSU STAFF REPRESENTATIVE Steve Torgerson [Regina] • email [gsu.torgerson@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.torgerson@sasktel.net)

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT Dorothy Merk [Regina] • email [gsu.merk@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.merk@sasktel.net)

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Brittany Weber [Regina] • email [gsu.weber@sasktel.net](mailto:gsu.weber@sasktel.net)