



GSU News

only YOU can make GSU your union

Issue 2 - 2012

Share your thoughts!

You could win Labour Day Classic tickets or Justin Bieber tickets

The government of Saskatchewan is reviewing the Labour Standards and Trade Union Acts.

We want to hear what GSU members have to say about:

- lower vacation entitlement
- longer work weeks
- higher threshold before overtime is paid
- receiving union benefits but opting out of paying dues.

Let us know what you think by completing our on-line poll and we will enter you to win your choice of either two tickets to the Labour Day Classic or two tickets to the Justin Bieber concert in Saskatoon.

Visit www.gsu.ca for details.

Entry deadline is July 27.

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Vacation entitlement, your work week, keeping your union —what's up for change in the Sask. Labour Law review?

On May 2 the Honourable Don Morgan, Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, announced a sweeping review of Saskatchewan's labour laws at the same time as he released a consultation paper referencing 15 separate pieces of provincial legislation—including the Labour Standards and Trade Union Acts.

In total, the labour legislation being considered by the Government of Saskatchewan comprises 900 pages and is the most open ended review of legislation on any subject(s) ever undertaken by government in the province. The consultation paper released by the Minister asks 117 questions which seem to suggest that in spite of the review process, the current provincial government has already decided where it wants to go.

The review process has been criticized for the very short 90-day time frame allowed for public input and for the lack of transparency with regard to legislation apparently drafted by government but not disclosed to date.

Working people in Saskatchewan should be concerned about the review



of labour legislation, particularly as it pertains to labour standards, minimum wage laws, and our rights to join or form and operate unions.

There are a number of questions we should ask ourselves and there are 117 questions in total that have been raised by our government in its review of Saskatchewan labour legislation.

- Do we want lower labour standards in our province with its booming economy?
- Do we want lower vacation entitlement or fewer statutory holidays?

(Continued on page 6.)

Grain & General Services Union represents a wide cross section of the workforce.

Our members include ag centre and grain elevator workers, accountants, laboratory workers, welders, information technologists, journalists, and more. Not many people are aware we also represent divers and processing plant employees from the Wild West Steelhead fish farm in Lucky Lake.

GSU members working at Wild West Steelhead are involved in all stages of production of premium steelhead trout, from egg incubation to finished, boneless fillets, ready for the consumer.

This GSU local is now in bargaining. Read their bargaining update inside on page 5.



The inside scoop

**WOUNDED
WARRIORS
WEEKEND**
★★★★★



From August 23 to 27 something new and unusual will be taking place in Nipawin, Saskatchewan. It's called the Wounded Warriors Weekend.

The community, unions, and businesses are coming together to support a weekend of awareness, recognition and thanks with regard to the sacrifices that members of our armed forces have made in the name of our country.

Our wounded armed forces people often face extremely difficult circumstances when they return from missions overseas as they cope with grave and often permanent physical injuries or the invisible injury of post-traumatic stress disorder.

GSU is proud to be a sponsor of the Wounded Warriors Weekend. In fact, GSU and ILWU Canada were among the first sponsors and certainly the first sponsors from organized labour.

Learn more about this extraordinary event by visiting the event web site at www.woundedwarriorsweekend.org.

Hugh Wagner
GSU General Secretary



GSU News

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Upcoming events

Local 1 (Ops & Maintenance SK, Viterra) and Local 2 (Regina Head Office - Viterra) officers to meet

Notice to bargain has been served (see related story, page 5) and your elected officers will soon meet to prepare your bargaining proposal package.

If you have any thoughts, suggestions, or bargaining proposals as we get ready for bargaining you should share them with your elected GSU officer or with your staff rep.

Geneva Houlden is our 2012 Sask. Federation of Labour Summer Camp registration winner

Geneva Houlden is the lucky GSU camper who will have her registration paid for the SFL Summer Camp.

Geneva is the daughter of Local 5 (Western Producer) member Michelle Houlden.

This year's camp will take place Aug. 5-11 in Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask. Congratulations, Geneva!

GSU's response to government paper on labour legislation

On May 2 the government of Saskatchewan released its discussion paper on labour legislation in the province. GSU will be making a submission to the Minister of Labour in response.

Read the discussion paper on our web page - www.gsu.ca.

If you have comments you'd like to share, email them to us at gsu.regina@sasktel.net by July 27.

Upcoming events are also posted regularly on the GSU web page at www.gsu.ca.

Dealing with Stress

Stress is a fact of daily life and is the result of both the good and bad things that happen. Too much stress can cause serious health concerns, but there are many ways of dealing with stress that can reduce your risk.

Symptoms of Stress

Signs that you are over-stressed may include:

- Irritability, sadness or guilt
- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in weight or appetite
- Difficulty in concentrating or making decisions
- Negative thinking
- Loss of interest, enjoyment or energy in things you used to enjoy
- Restlessness.

Strategies for dealing with stress

Understanding stress

Notice and remember when you experience the signs of stress. This will help you figure out what triggers stress in you. It may be:

- Major events such as getting married, changing jobs, moving your home, getting divorced or coping with the death of a loved one
- Long term worries such as financial problems, your children's future, your job or an ongoing illness
- Daily hassles such as traffic jams, rude people, machines that don't work.

Coping with stress

Because everyone is different, there is no single way to cope with stress.

- **Identify your problems.** What is causing your stress? Is an unimportant surface problem masking a deeper one?
- **Work on solutions.** Start thinking about what you can do to relieve the problem. Take control over the issues you can manage. This might mean looking for another job, talking with a health professional

or a financial counsellor. Also ask yourself what will happen if you do nothing. When you make changes to deal with the issue, you take pressure off yourself.

- **Talk about your problems.** Friends, work colleagues and family members may not know you are having a hard time. Talking to them about it may help. By venting your feelings, you will relieve some stress. And they may suggest solutions to your problems.
- **Learn about stress management.** In addition to health professionals who specialize in stress, there are many helpful books, films, videos, courses and workshops available to help you learn stress management techniques.
- **Reduce tension.** Physical activity is a great stress reducer. Walk, do some exercises or garden to relieve your stress. Learn relaxation exercises that will take the pressure off, such as deep breathing and stretching your whole body.
- **Take your mind off your problems.** By reading, taking up a hobby or becoming involved in sports, you can give yourself a 'mental holiday' from stress. It will also give you distance from your problems, so that they become easier to solve.
- **Try not to be too hard on yourself.** Stress can cause lots of negative thinking. You may notice yourself saying things like "I can't, won't, should, must". Be realistic. Find realistic solutions you can achieve in steps that will bring success.



Stress prevention

Once you have lowered your stress level, use techniques that will help prevent it from building up again.

- **Make decisions.** Worrying about making a decision causes stress.
- **Avoid putting things off.** Make up a weekly schedule that includes leisure activities as well as things you must do.
- **Delegate to others.** Let others take on some of the tasks you have set yourself so that you are not trying to do everything yourself.
- Keep your thinking positive and realistic.

Information from Health Canada website: www.hc-sc.gc.ca. Edited for space.

your collective agreement

Protect your collective agreement by enforcing it.

For example, if your collective agreements provides for call-out pay and you don't put in for call-outs every time you are called out, you may be creating a workplace practice and making it more difficult for you and your coworkers to collect call-out pay in the future.

The clauses in your agreement have been bargained by your union. Use them so you don't lose them.

If you have questions about your agreement or how it applies in your workplace, contact your Local officers or your GSU staff rep.

All inquiries are confidential. All GSU services are provided to you as part of your union dues.

Did you know ...

Contacting GSU does not mean you are obligated to file a grievance. If you need advice or ideas about how to handle a workplace situation, contact us. We are here to assist you in any way we can, but we will not contact your employer or act on your behalf without consultation, direction, and approval from you.

Executive Grievances on double-time overtime and stat holiday pay — Local 1 (Viterra Country Operations and Maintenance, SK)

Update

**By Hugh Wagner,
GSU General Secretary**

Following numerous complaints from Viterra country operations employees, in April 2011 GSU filed an executive grievance regarding when double-time overtime kicks in and about employees being shorted hours if they worked a compressed work week and a stat holiday fell on a regular day of work and they did not work on account of the stat. In these instances employees working modified work weeks are being credited with 8 hours as opposed to their regular daily hours of 13.3, 12 or 10, as the case may be.

As the grievance worked its way through the process it was eventually split into two grievances at company management's request – one regarding when double-time overtime kicks in and the other addressing the stat holiday pay issue.

On behalf of the Viterra employees represented by GSU we've attempted to resolve these grievances in a way that is consistent with the Canada Labour Code and the collective agreement. After all, the issues we are addressing are about treating

employees fairly and consistently.

The arbitration process of the stat holiday pay grievance was already underway and the double-time overtime grievance was scheduled for arbitration on August 20 and 24.

On June 18 Viterra management informed GSU and employees at the seven grain handling locations where modified work weeks are in place, that the Company intended to cancel all of the modified work week schedules effective July 29, 2012.

Unfortunately the notice that modified work schedules would be cancelled caused considerable concern for affected employees as it would undo the degree of predictability in work schedules at the seven affected grain handling locations.

Since this issue blew up again, GSU's staff reps and I have been communicating with members at the affected locations and with our local elected union officers. It is clear for the most part that employees working modified schedules do not want to go back to straight eight-hour shifts.

In a further effort to try and resolve this issue on June 22, I met with Viterra management and the following resolution of the grievances was reached.

1. Viterra management will withdraw their announced intention to cancel modified work schedules on July 29, 2012.
2. In return, GSU will withdraw the stat holiday pay grievance in favour of resolving the issue at the bargaining table.
3. The double-overtime issue will be resolved as proposed in the grievance retroactive to April 1, 2012.

These weren't easy decisions to make, but ultimately we felt that balancing the various interests and trying to resolve the stat holiday issue at the bargaining table was the best course to follow.

I would appreciate knowing your thoughts. Email me directly at gsu.wagner@sasktel.net or call me 1.866.522.6686, ext. 229.

~ Hugh Wagner, General Secretary
Grain & General Services Union

You said what? Questions, observations, and tips from GSU members

I wish I would have known how approachable my staff rep was and how reassuring it was to talk to them.

I would tell others going through their own battles with management that you don't need to do it alone. There is a support team to help you at GSU.

GSU staff are located in Regina and Saskatoon, and they are available to help you and your co-workers navigate through any workplace problems you might have.

No problem is too big, no problem is too small, and as far as we are concerned there is no such thing as a dumb question.

We will take time to explain all your options and help you make the decision that's best for you. And we

won't talk to your employer or on your behalf without your guidance and consent.

GSU staff are completely independent from your employer, you can rely on us to protect your privacy and provide you with the best quality advice and assistance.

We pride ourselves on being down-to-earth and approachable, so next time you have a workplace concern, don't hesitate to contact us.

Bargaining underway in five GSU locals

Your collective agreement is your charter of rights at work. The GSU's goal is to expand on and improve collective agreements through effective collective bargaining with employers.

You can help keep your collective agreement strong. Take an active role in developing the bargaining proposals which will be taken to the bargaining table with your employer. Attend bargaining report meetings, vote on settlements, and support your bargaining committee as they work toward changes to secure and strengthen your collective agreement.



**Together we bargain.
Divided we beg.**

Local 1 - Viterra (Operations & Maintenance, SK) and Local 2 - Viterra (Regina Head Office)

As decided by the Executive Committees of GSU Local 1 and Local 2, on July 6, 2012, notice to bargain was served with regard to the amendment and renewal of the union's collective agreements with the employer.

The two collective agreements between Viterra and GSU expire Oct. 31, 2012. As provided in the Canada Labour Code, GSU has given bargaining notice in order to protect employees' rights and to begin the process of amending and renewing the collective agreements.

GSU's first order of business will be to ask for full disclosure with respect to the plans afoot and the impact on employees represented by the union in the takeover of Viterra by Glencore.

One of the primary issues GSU has raised with its leadership is the takeover process and how it will affect employees. At the same time, contractual issues have been raised in union meetings throughout the province and it is clear that employees want to see changes in their workplaces that acknowledge their contribution to the enterprise with a balancing of work with their right to a life away from work.

"Whether GSU is bargaining with Viterra, Glencore, Agrium, Richardson International or all of the above, our objective is to reach collective agreements that provide employees with balance and fairness," said GSU general secretary Hugh Wagner. "GSU will be

seeking improvements that reflect employees' needs in a situation where some people higher up the ladder have experienced significant windfalls while the 99% will continue to work for a living."

Bargaining dates have not been set. Updates will be published as the bargaining process proceeds.

Local 6 - Wildwest Steelhead, Lucky Lake

After several delays, the two sides met June 25 at the Lucky Lake fish farm.

Union and management committees have met four times, and while neither side has an exhaustive list of proposals the two sides remain apart in terms of monetary issues such as wages increases, overtime for outside workers, and classification adjustments.

The union's bargaining committee members are Gord Grande and Candice Botham. GSU staff rep Dale Markling assists as bargaining spokesperson.

The agreement expired on Feb. 29, 2012.

Local 7 - Heartland Livestock

Bargaining at Local 7 (Heartland Livestock) has been delayed by the absence of a member of the bargaining committee. We hope to resume meeting during the week of July 30. Progress has been slow, and there are a number of outstanding issues—including wages.

Management's proposal to end the variable pay program makes it difficult to respond regarding wage increases and length of contract.

The Union committee is working to determine if loss of the bonus will require a higher wage increase just to keep up.

There will be a full report to members immediately after the next bargaining session.

Local 9 - HiPro Feeds, Chilliwack

Bargaining at this new Local kicked off July 12 and 13 after a long delay.

The Union committee intends to address a large number of issues that were topmost in the members' minds when they joined GSU, such as:

- a more transparent wage schedule,
- better benefits, and
- trusted and reliable standards for posting jobs, promotions and assignments.

Members are also concerned there is no ability to challenge unilateral management decisions or dispute unfair treatment or policies.

The Union is already challenging a number of problems, including unfair discipline and the misuse of a temporary hiring agency to try to get around the union certification.

GSU's bargaining committee is looking forward to resolving these quickly and moving toward a more co-operative approach toward employees.

A bargaining report will be sent to members soon.

On the road with GSU's Riddlemeister

The Riddlemeister has travel fever again and has been on the move, annoying people up and down the roads of the West like a bad heat rash.

He filled his flower pots in Goodsoil, tried to take off in Landing, and slowed down in Rapid View. He also spent some time in Buffalo Narrows stuck behind a wide load. There happened to be an Elvis impersonator playing at the B.N. Bar and Swill, where the floor was pre-coated with sticky so your peanuts wouldn't roll away if you dropped them.

Our hero began to swap Elvis trivia with the fake Elvis, who happened to double as a sumo wrestler in his spare time.

"I think you look more like Elvis's twin brother than Elvis himself," said the Rid between getting slapped in the face and sat on.

Waddaya think, folks?

Tell us the name of Elvis's twin brother and we'll get you something stupendously okay.

We can do better than that. Get your answer to GSU's Regina office by August 3 and your name will be put in a draw and you could win two tickets to the Riders Labour Day Classic game against the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.

Good luck!

It pays to check the GSU web page.



Congratulations to GSU members Don Kammer and Rob Brochu who won Rider tickets - just because they checked the GSU web page and sent us an email reply.

Check the web page. You never know when we will give something else away.



Thank you to everyone who applied for a GSU scholarship.

The GSU scholarship committee will meet over the summer months and all scholarship applicants will be advised of the committee's decision by September 15.

Are you thinking ahead to our 2013 scholarships? Basic scholarship eligibility information is available under the member services/scholarship tab on our web page at www.gsu.ca.

Sask. Labour Law review

(Continued from page 1.)

- Do we want longer work weeks and a higher threshold of hours worked before overtime pay is required to be paid by employers?
- Should government (federal or provincial) legislate how union dues are spent, or should it remain the business of the people who pay the dues?
- Should people who work for an employer where the workplace is unionized be able to opt out of paying union dues and still receive the benefits of collective bargaining, without contributing to the cost?
- Should it be more difficult or easier for workers to form or join unions?

GSU will be submitting a brief on behalf of your union. You can have

your own individual input by email to labourlegislationLRWS@gov.sk.ca or you can visit the GSU web site at www.gsu.ca to gather more information and respond to an on-line poll about the issues.

"There is nothing wrong, in and of itself, with reviewing and consulting the community with regard to labour legislation, but all of the cards should be laid on the table for everybody to see," said Hugh Wagner. "After allowing for a thoughtful and reasonable time for comment—including plenty of opportunity for public debate—the government should only proceed to legislate change where there is a clear measure of agreement on the part of the parties affected or where there is a clear fact based communal issue to be addressed."

Check the GSU web site for updates at www.gsu.ca.

Ridonkulous Street Slang
URBAN
DICTIONARY

friending spree

Randomly adding anyone you come across on a social network, including complete strangers

"Hey - Paul's on a friending spree, he's got a 1,000 friends already on his facebook."

The urban dictionary is a little nasty, a lot funny, and not for the faint hearted.

You can check it out online at urbandictionary.com.