



# 2012

## General Secretary's Report to Elected Officers and Members

*As presented to the Joint Executive Council  
of Grain and General Services Union (ILWU • Canada)*

### GSU Finances

I am pleased to again report that GSU is in good financial shape. The financial update provided to the Joint Executive Council (JEC) shows that revenues and expenditures are on track with the operating budget presented to GSU's policy convention in March. All of GSU's collective bargaining, representational obligations, and financial commitments are current and the union continues to have a solid financial base.

Repairs and renovations to the union's office building in Regina have been completed under budget. The loan to pay for the renovations is being repaid to the GSU Defense Fund with interest at six percent per year and loan payments of \$3,065 per month that commenced October 1, 2011, and run to May 31, 2014.

In 2012 GSU continues to experience significant grievance arbitration and associated legal expenses. The rights and benefits bargained into collective agreements require constant monitoring and enforcement while members experiencing

difficulties require assistance and support.

The June 2011 arbitration win by GSU over the administration and calculation of vacation pay on overtime worked by Viterra employees in the two union bargaining units was upheld by the Court of Queen's Bench following an appeal by Viterra heard by the court on September 20, 2011

Apparently unable to admit it was wrong, the Company then appealed the Court of Queen's Bench decision to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. This appeal will be heard October 30. Meanwhile the total amount of money owing to eligible employees and being held in trust is nearing \$500,000.

GSU continues to commit resources to union education, community involvement, and member recognition. A major union education initiative for GSU members is being planned for February 2013. We urge all members to watch for the advertisements in the new year and to consider participating. The education program will be held on regular days of work – not weekends – and participating members' wages will be

covered by GSU along with living expenses.

In addition to collective bargaining, servicing, and representation GSU's officers, members and staff continue to be active participants in the labour movement. We encourage all members to get involved in the work of promoting and defending the right to unionize and free collective bargaining.

### GSU Defense Fund

The most recent investment managers' reports and available financial numbers indicate that the GSU Defense Fund has estimated assets of \$2.7 million based on market values. At their May 24, 2012, meeting the directors of the Defense Fund decided to end the long investment management relationship with Investors Group in favour of having the whole portfolio managed by RBC Dominion Securities. The directors' decision to go with RBC was based on better demonstrated investment returns and lower management fees.

In addition, at their May meeting the directors approved the transfer

of \$100,000 to the GSU certification protection account to be used to pay for expenses incurred to defend employees' union representation and collective bargaining rights in the aftermath of a takeover of Viterra Inc. including the bargaining and renewal of collective agreements with Viterra and Hi-Pro Feeds.

At its semi-annual meeting the Joint Executive Council debated whether to recommend continuing or ceasing the additional dues being paid into the GSU Defense Fund at December 31, 2012.

As a result of their review and debate, the Council voted to send the following resolution to the autumn 2012 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, 2013, subject to review by members of the union at the 2013 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.

## **Union Leadership and Our Community**

As reported above, GSU is planning a major education initiative for present and future leaders of the union.

Devoting the effort and resources to union education is an essential part of what we must do in order to continue providing effective representation to employees. Union leaders and members who are equipped with the necessary information and tools achieve superior results.

Ensuring equitable and consistent employment practices is one part of a union's work. Bringing attention and action to correct injustices or unfair practices is our mission. An injury to one is an injury to all.

It is essential for us to re-dedicate ourselves to the values of community and mutual support. When consideration is given to the relentless and growing attacks on unions and other democratic institutions we would all do well to get involved in the struggle for labour rights in a just and more equitable society. 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.

In the next short while the Government of Saskatchewan will unveil its plans for changes to provincial labour legislation. We must do our best to convince government leaders that there is nothing of value to be gained for our communities by watering down labour standards laws or by making it more difficult for working people to join unions of their choice or for unions to carry out their work on behalf of members, even when it means opposing government

actions and policies.

Saskatchewan may very well be a window into the future of organized labour in Canada. Let's do our best to make sure Saskatchewan again becomes the best case example of progressive and pro-union labour legislation and not the next jurisdiction to join in the race to the bottom that has infected so many states of our great neighbour to the south.

The welfare of the poor and middle classes is inextricably bound up with the welfare of organized labour. Our job is to educate our families, friends and neighbours about that essential truth.

All of which begs the question of what you think we should be doing to promote good labour laws and strong unions.

## **Current Collective Bargaining**

Collective bargaining is one of the primary purposes of GSU. Bargaining the amendment, renewal, and improvement of collective agreements will be a big item on the union's agenda this year and next.

Earlier this year AEA/Local 8 bargained the renewal of a two-year collective agreement with Advance Engineered Products Ltd. covering the Regina plant operations. This was followed by a settlement of a new two-year agreement covering Local 6 members working for Wild West Steelhead.

Bargaining on behalf of Local 7 members working for Heartland Livestock Services has been grinding on for quite

a while with no imminent end in sight. Perhaps the arrival of the autumn season will convince the employer it is time to get things done.

Meanwhile, bargaining with Viterra is fully underway on behalf of Locals 1 and 2 amidst the currently stalled Glencore takeover. The level of uncertainty being experienced by employees is unprecedented and GSU is doing its best to address the situation with bargaining proposals that will bolster employees when the impact of the takeover and related transactions begin to unfold.

An update on the current status of bargaining with Viterra will be provided at Local 1 and 2 annual membership meetings this fall.

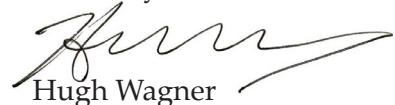
GSU is committed to informing you as much as possible about the work your team engages every day and every week. If you want to know what is going on any working day check out the GSU website at [www.gsu.ca](http://www.gsu.ca). If your collective agreement is being bargained check the website for updates.

There are many challenges and challenging days ahead, but together we can do the job, make progress and hopefully leave the world a better place for those who come after us. I am confident our collective resources of community, creativity and resilience will continue to see us through.

I've attempted to keep this report brief while touching on some of your union's

main business items. If there are issues of importance not addressed in this report, please ask. I look forward to continuing to work with you in the causes of workplace democracy and progress for working people.

Solidarity,



Hugh Wagner  
General Secretary

*Approved by the Joint Executive Council at its Nov. 2, 2012 meeting in Regina, SK.*



**Call toll-free**

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**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.**

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.



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